

## The new secretary general of the I.O.C

Rather than occupy a position, he intends to fulfil a function. And if, for several weeks — to quote a friendly journalist who was momentarily worried without cause — “a great silence descended on Mon-Repos”, the reason is precisely that the new secretary general of the I.O.C. was determined, by studying the past and pending files, to get to know the Olympic Movement from the inside before trying to serve it on the outside.

Neither new situations, nor any long-term projects hold any fears for Mr. Johann W. Westerhoff. Throughout his already very full life, he has tackled both and always with success.

### **A man of action**

Perhaps it is his date of birth — May 1st 1915 — that makes him love work and makes work smile on him. So much so in fact that when he took on the post of secretary general of the I.O.C. it was not one, or two, but three careers that he already had to his credit.

When in 1950 on his return from Indonesia, his birthplace, he settled in Holland, his native country, all he brought with him was his certificate from the Military Academy, a knowledge of several Indonesian dialects in addition to Dutch, English, German and a little French, and excellent physical health acqui-

red through the intensive practice of equestrian sports (he was selected to take part in the horse jumping at the 1940 Olympic Games which were not held because of the war), swimming, waterpolo, rowing, boxing, fencing and athletics (high jump and middle-distance running). All this is a great deal when it comes to the formation of character but very little when it comes to earning a living for oneself and one's family.

One fine morning Johann Westerhoff enters a big American industrial company with multiple branches and activities to start right at the bottom of the ladder, clad in workman's overalls.

Six months (of silence) later, he has seen everything there is to be seen, understood everything and is appointed to an executive post in Paris in the company's purchasing department for Europe. A year passes, the time to polish up his French, and a new promotion brings him back to Holland as manager of a most important sector of the firm.

In Rotterdam, eighteen months later, a Dutch rubber industry offers him a position as export

manager. Nothing very extraordinary in that, except that this particular industry exports nothing as yet and everything has to be built up from scratch. Twelve years later, when Mr. Westerhoff retires, he has opened fifty-seven markets and the factories have trebled in number...

He has known and loved the feeling of camaraderie and discipline and the team spirit that exists in the army. He has experienced the fever of commercial competition. Here as elsewhere, he has seen men as they really are — sometimes very great, sometimes pitiful, often just “men”. However neither military service, nor business is worth the sacrifice of a person's whole endeavour, his whole life. And Mr. Westerhoff decided to buy a farm in Switzerland, where he came in 1965 to train horses — which he loves more than anything else — and to live there according to the rhythm of the seasons.

#### **Prelude to Olympism**

J. W. Westerhoff, in the margin of his professional life, very quickly opposed to the “Time is money” slogan of people who are forever in a hurry and always trying to outdo their neighbours a marked liking for generous ideas which take shape in disinterested movements. In 1954 he was elected vice-president of the Dutch Veterans' Association of which, since 1958, he has been the permanent delegate at the World Veterans' Federation.

Simultaneously, he occupied the position of manager and member of the Executive Committee of the World Veterans' Foundation, while continuing his riding activities by taking part in horse shows (in 1964, at Enschede, he came seventh in his last international jumping competition-C.H.I.O.), at the same time being secretary and then president of the Dutch Horse Jumping federation and a member of the Executive Committee of the Dutch Federation of Equestrian Sports.

Under his impetus, these humanitarian and sporting activities were combined in the federation he created for the sport of the disabled in Holland first of all, in 1961, then in the International Sports Organization for the Disabled, founded in Paris in 1963 under the auspices of the Veterans' Federation which, perhaps it is not generally known, numbers some twenty-two million members in over one hundred countries.

Johann W. Westerhoff believes so strongly in this international brotherhood that he willingly gave up a retirement, which although premature was nevertheless already well deserved, in order to serve the Olympic Movement.

We congratulate him here on his decision, wishing him the warmest of welcomes to the general secretariat of the I.O.C. where tasks await him which, in order to be accomplished, demand those organizing talents, that love of change, that dynamism combined with wisdom, that experience of things and people, and those sporting gifts that are the essential traits of his personality.

*M. M.*

