

## THE OLYMPIC TURNING POINT

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For the International Olympic Committee, this year, 1969, will be full of discussions and serious decisions which will determine the future of the world's greatest sports body.

At the meetings which will take place in Lausanne, Warsaw and Dubrovnik, whether between the special commissions, with the International Federations or the National Olympic Committees, not only will the actual situations and facts but also the principles will be discussed.

In fact, as Pierre de COUBERTIN wrote : "*Olympism is not a system but a state of mind*". Therefore, when tackling the problems which confront it, the International Olympic Committee must try and preserve this state of mind if it wants to remain loyal to its traditions and ethics.

On the 1st and 2nd February the Executive Board will of course examine the reorganization of its administration. It will also discuss, apart from the subjects of present interest, the meeting it proposes to convene in Lausanne on the 25th and 26th May with the International Federations, which should not fail to tighten the bonds between these two parties.

Among the current problems there is one about which the International Press is particularly avid and on which we would like to dwell: the one concerning the Winter Games. We know that a Commission for the Olympic Winter Games, under the presidency of Jonkheer Hermann VAN KARNEBEEK, member of the International Olympic Committee for Holland, has to present its report at the 68th Session of the International Olympic Committee which will be held in Warsaw on the 31st May onwards. So, the fate of the Winter Games will be decided.

The recent stand made by the International Skiing Federation - one of the five Federations represented at the Olympic Games - concerning its members and particularly its alpine skiers, places this organization, as from the moment it allows its best champions to be paid during competitions, out of the Olympic orbit.

The reasoning worked out by the head of the Skiing Federation revolves round the following points : training

requires more and more time, competitions are held continuously for several months of the year, very heavy expenditure on equipment for the competitors, scientific research into more suitable and technically advanced equipment, dangers risked by skiing champions on the ultra-fast runs and whose purpose is to cover the distances faster and faster.

One can see their point : we are now far removed from the Greek athletes who all struggled equally in their nudity. Contests with the most advanced equipment possible, transform muscular confrontations into battles between experts for the best mechanism. We leave Olympia to go to Le Mans or Indianapolis. We all have a great admiration for racing drivers and flying aces. Nevertheless, they are not part of the Olympic family. They belong to another world.

Those at the head of the movement founded by COUBERTIN can never remain neutral in the face of what many consider to be a degradation of the sporting spirit and ideal.

President Avery BRUNDAGE has many times declared, as did his predecessor at the head of the International Olympic Committee Baron de COUBERTIN : *"Sport is a game, a recreation. If it becomes a profession it will lose all its educational qualities. The Olympic Games are open to the youth of the world who agrees honestly and joyfully to follow our precepts. Thus all athletes are confined by the same rules, identical duties and similar obligations. Therefore if some are paid, privileges will creep in and where there are privileges, equality vanishes. Moreover, whereas a mere handful of athletes in the world earn their living on the sports slopes, hundreds of millions partake in the physical activity of their choice simply for their own pleasure and health, These two concepts of sport - passtime and profession are not compatible. The duty of the International Olympic Committee is clear : to serve as spokesman and guide for the majority."*

The Winter Games, which originated during International week at Chamonix in 1924 and which gave rise to so much controversy before their official recognition, are now on the

verge of completely distorting the true vocation of Olympic sport. A radical reform is obviously necessary in the Winter Games, but also in other athletic sports too, whose statutes risk being thrown into confusion.

This is why the year 1969, during which we will be celebrating the 75th anniversary of the revival of the ancient Games, will be year of the Olympic turning point.

Monique Berlioux

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