

## Speech by H. R. H. Prince George of HANOVER

President of the International Olympic Academy

*"I want to start this address with my warmest thanks to the Hellenic Olympic Committee which, with the support of Mr. Aslanides, the Secretary of State for Sports, bears the financial burden of the Academy.*

*There is a reason why the inauguration ceremony for the session of the I.O.A. takes place on this hill with its impressive view on to the Parthenon of the Acropolis. It is meant to be a reminder that here in ancient Hellas we find the roots of the Olympic Movement. We have to realise that many centuries of Greek culture are closely connected with the Olympic Games, as the unifying element among the various peoples of Hellas, with their spirit of sporting achievement to honour their Gods.*

*The Olympic Spirit with its characteristics, courage, willpower, modesty and sense of justice, had a strong influence on many generations of Greeks. But from Greek historians we also know that not everything which was connected with the Olympic Games was always ideal. Human weakness resulted at times in the breaking of rules, in corruption, or even in what we call today commercialism. The ancient Greeks were perfectly aware of this fact but their reaction was not discouragement; did they not worship Gods who sometimes did not resist temptation either, and who often failed like human beings, thereby even adding a certain charm to their authority?*

*COUBERTIN, the creator of the new era of the Olympic Movement, was inspired by the ancient Games. He used*

*then as the great example for the establishment of the modern Games. But he was not an historian and spoke more as a pedagogue, trying to transfer the glorious aspects of the ancient Games into his programme. That is why some of the expressions he used seem to us nowadays a little sentimental. His sayings, full of enthusiasm and power of conviction, are typical of the vocabulary of his times. When we study his ideas we have to keep this in mind and not judge by the written word alone*

*The fact is that he had the courage to swim against the current of his period, and during a life devoted to fighting against indolence and outdated traditions, he managed to start a movement that was destined to become one of the greatest social revolutions of our days. This peaceful revolution was brought about by the challenge to anyone who was interested, to follow the Olympian example by improving his own physical condition and eventually thereby qualifying to compete for Olympic honours. He only lived to see the beginning of this development, for the educational principle of the new period of Olympic Games took a long time to make itself generally felt.*

*Nevertheless, the Olympic Games were reborn and the International Olympic Committee was created to guide them. COUBERTIN realised that political interests inside the IOC would be a great disadvantage to the Olympic Movement, and therefore gave the IOC a status independent of governments, and although it seems impossible to keep politics completely out of such an institution, the attitude of discussion and decision among its members is that of sportsmen whose personal integrity, power of persuasion and attitude of fairness still play a large rôle.*

*The great majority is aware of the vast changes that this social revolution has created, since competitive sport is no more the privilege of a certain class, but has become the right of every man or woman in the world who is prepared to accept the great challenge. Hence the rules must be subjected to constant control and have to be adapted to social changes.*

*The International Olympic Academy (a generous contribution of Hellas to the Olympic Movement) has the responsibility to join in the efforts of the IOC to solve the many problems. This includes the study of the history and development of the Movement, of the ideals of the*

*various periods and the attempt to find an interpretation for our times. The young generation must know of the complexity of the various questions the IOC has to solve, and the IOC is interested in hearing the opinions of the young. The Academy provides the possibility for all concerned to exchange their views in an atmosphere of mutual respect and tolerance, which is the main condition for all academic work. Needless to say, the Academy (like its protector the IOC) does its best to keep politics out of its work.*

*I am grateful to see more and more colleagues of the IOC taking part in our sessions, to give us advice and to listen to lectures and seminars. My friends will agree with me that we need contacts with the young athletes who themselves have, as participants, experienced the atmosphere and organisation of the Games. That is why I am happy to welcome many of you who have fought for Olympic honours. But anybody who comes with the serious intention to co-operate in the session, will be accepted as a friend and we hope that you will find the working atmosphere which you wish for.*

*Our Academy is still a young institution and we do not deny that we have to learn ourselves how to get the best results. We are particularly grateful for constructive advice and criticism, which will help us to make improvements for the future,*

*I will close with the words of the Greek philosopher Xenophanes of Kolophon: "Truly the Gods did not from the start reveal to us mortals everything, but in the course of time, searching we find improvement!"*

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