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Your Majesty, Your Royal Highness, Mr. President, Members of the International Olympic Committee, Mr. Chairman, Members of the Organizing Committees of the Games of the XXth Olympiad, Representatives of the International Sports Federations, Ladies and Gentlemen.

You are gathered here at the invitation of the National Olympic Committee to decide where the next Olympic Games will be held. With your permission, I should like to comment on this fact.

The one and only time that the Olympic Games were held in Amsterdam was in 1928. The choice of the capital of the Netherlands was regarded by my countrymen as a great honour. We still feel the same today.

Every country that is asked to play host to the Olympic Games cannot but take such an invitation as a proof of great international confidence. After all, the organization of the Games is a complex business. Considerable organizational talent and great sacrifices are demanded of the country concerned.

These sacrifices have assumed such proportions in recent years that doubts about the future of the Games are beginning to arise. These doubts are expressed in the question that was asked repeatedly and in many quarters after the Games in Squaw Valley and Rome in 1960, in Innsbruck and

Tokyo in 1964 and in Grenoble and Mexico in 1968. The question is: Can the Olympic Games continue in their present form? And it is followed by another question having a more direct bearing on the near future, namely: Will the Games in Sapporo and Munich be the last?

After the Winter Games in Grenoble you yourself Mr. President, urged that what is undoubtedly the greatest sporting event in the world should be organized on a more austere and economical basis.

I and many others fear that when the accounts of the Games at Sapporo and Munich are made up, the cost will prove to have been very much higher than it was four years ago. Can the organizing countries go on managing to foot the bill indefinitely?

It is of course true that the money spent on all sorts of facilities is not thrown away and that much of the infrastructure is still of use after the Games, but I wonder whether, considering the enormous costs involved, the number of cities that can be considered capable of organizing the Games on this scale is not being reduced too far. I am alluding now to the rights of the Third World.

Quite apart from the financial consequences for the organizing countries, yet another question calls urgently for attention. It is whether participation in the Games could not be rather less nationalistic? The athletes would, I am sure, happily compete in an atmosphere that was not so completely impregnated with national self-assertion.

With the situation as it is at the moment, one gets the impression that sport does not represent any voluntary and personal activity but rather a form of conscription for the sporting front line.

This national self-assertiveness can already be felt in the preparations of those who are the *crème de la crème* of the sporting world in their own countries or are considered as such. The result is that ambitious youngsters often waste years of their lives by putting sport first and foremost, urged on by equally ambitious coaches and trainers, etc.

This has repercussions on their careers in society, on which of course they are only able to concentrate later, if at all, once their careers in sports, which make such heavy demands on them, have come to an end.

Is this really a desirable state of affairs? Please do not think that I am about to advocate the abolition of top-level sport, which today occupies so important and sometimes so dominating a position in daily life. I can assure you that that is certainly not my intention. I fully appreciate the value of top-level sport in itself, as a stimulus to sport in general, as an incentive to mass participation in sport, and as a major form of passive recreation. The fact remains, however, that many people are worried about certain trends in top-level sport.

With this concentration on sport at the highest level, is there not a tendency to forget the very much more important participation in sports by the masses? And by the masses I mean not only young people, but also those of maturer years and even the elderly. This would certainly seem to be the case, if one is to judge by the training that seems to start at an ever earlier age and to become more and more intensive.

Take swimming, for example. Apart from the odd exception like the Australian Dawn FRASER, the world-record holders and European and Olympic Champions are getting younger and younger. Today, fourteen and fifteen-year-olds compete at the top for the highest honours. One cannot but wonder at what age they started training, however playful the approach may have been. I think we are all familiar with the view held in the sporting world that, if you want to achieve anything at international level, you cannot start too early on the path that leads to the podium of honour. If we do not subject this attitude to constant critical appraisal, it is bound to lead to an absurd situation, a situation where children are prepared from the cradle onwards to achieve glorious victories for their countries in the international sports arena. I believe we must guard against a situation arising where the Olympic Games might just as well be called the Medical Games.

Mr. President, I have said that I appreciate the importance of top-level sport, although I believe that there are dangers attendant on the way it is currently developing.

I should, however, like to add that it would be quite acceptable to me if the consequences of participation in top-level sport were drawn all the way, particularly in the matter of jettisoning the provisions on amateurism as they stand at present.

With the present trend in top-level sport, we may continue to consider that those who are paid for practising sports cannot be regarded as amateurs if the emoluments they receive are their only or their main source of livelihood. However, it is becoming more difficult, if not impossible, to maintain this attitude towards those who wish to devote themselves to their chosen sport for any length of time and are afforded the opportunity of doing so through educational or other facilities. I have been wondering whether this situation, which has in fact existed for some time, could not be considered acceptable for participation in the Olympic Games, for would it not enhance the authenticity of the trials of strength at this great sporting event.

I have already mentioned the alarming rise in the cost of organizing the Olympic Games, which demands great sacrifices of the organizing countries, sacrifices which the smaller countries, and my own country is one of them, simply cannot make. It is with great regret, Mr. President, that I have to draw this conclusion.

The Olympic Games held in Amsterdam in 1928, at which, if my information is correct, the ideals of Pierre de COUBERTIN found such excellent expression, gave a tremendous fillip to sport in the Netherlands. It is indeed well known that such an event always has considerable influence on society in general, on culture and on sport.

I should be delighted if a way could be found to make the organization of the Olympic Games financially possible for the smaller countries. This could be done by limiting the number of events, for instance. After all, there are a number of sports in which competition in the true amateur sense is difficult to realize at the highest levels. I am thinking now of such sports as have become highly commercialized and in which the amateurs, in their efforts to reach the top, are strongly influenced by the idea of switching over to the ranks of the professionals. It could also be done by organizing the Games on a far more modest scale all round. This is the solution which I find the most attractive one.

I should now like to conclude with what I really should have begun. That I did not begin as I should have is due to the fact that the problems of sport, both top-level sport and sport for the masses, have occupied my thoughts in such measure that I could not resist the temptation to confront you with the urgent questions that have arisen in my mind.

Mr. President, the Netherlands Government, on whose behalf I am addressing you, is conscious of the great honour you have done us by holding the annual meeting of the International Olympic Committee in the Netherlands. I sincerely hope that you will take away a favourable impression of our country.

I wish your meeting every success, I am sure that your decisions will be wise ones and in the interest of the future and of the ideals on which the Olympic Movement was founded.