



The Olympic Movement

Problems and Prospects



BY PRINCE GEORGE OF HANOVER

Speech given by Dr. Georg Wilhelm, Prince of HANOVER, at the inauguration of the Olympic Week at the "Instituto Nacional de Educacion Fisica y Deportes" of the University of Madrid, on December 1st, 1970.

G It is easy to understand how the Olympic Movement, being an institution covering the whole world, now finds itself at the centre of a sphere of conflict between the generations and of problems of a political and social nature.

It would be foolish to brush aside the criticism levelled against those in charge without even considering it. From my attitude you can deduce that I believe that even so, without minimizing their importance, these problems are surmountable.

Obviously I cannot cover the problem in its entirety. I shall therefore deal with a few points that seem to me of vital importance since they are directly connected with the problems facing the Olympic Movement and consequently arouse the greatest criticism. In addition, I shall give my own personal opinion on the subject and make a few suggestions. In this connection, I would make it clear that the word "personal" means that my opinion does not necessarily reflect that of the International Olympic Committee, the German National Olympic or the International Olympic Academy.

Outline

1/ The Olympic Games should be an enjoyable festival of sport, where the best athletes in the world (the youth of the whole world) compete in friendly rivalry.

2/ All participants must have equal opportunities, without discrimination as to race, religion or political convictions.

3/ Efforts must be made to promote mutual understanding between the peoples of the world.

4/ The contests should have educational value within the context of the aims of Olympism:

- a/ Providing a stimulus for athletes, encouraging them to perfect their physical abilities in accordance with the principle "Citius-Altius-Fortius".
- b/ The Olympic atmosphere, and this is our great hope, will thus favour the development of the competitors' characters: *"The contests must be marked by a spirit of fair play and chivalry"*.

5/ Influence of the Olympic Games on education. Encouragement to derive benefit from the experiences gained and from the athletic spirit for personal improvement.

I a/ Enjoyable Festival of Sport

Question: Festival for whom?

From one Olympiad to the next, the Games are becoming increasingly large owing to the growing number of National Olympic Committees, competitors and those accompanying them, not to mention the spectators. The danger of gigantism is very real. The costs of organisation are soaring, so that only a few big towns are still able to afford to play host to all these people. The large number of competitors emphasises the unpredictable and impersonal side of the events. This criticism is justified. On the other hand, we have once and for all to take into account the wish of the developing countries to take part in the Games and to admit new categories of sport. At the same time we must not forget that for the town and country involved, the holding of the Games constitutes a tremendous source of profit, which is not to be underestimated either.

The new sports facilities created specially for the Games benefit the rising generations; by stimulating joint action, the preparations lead to a mobilization of energy and forces which cannot fail to be of considerable help for the promotion of sport in the future. West Germany has witnessed the proliferation of joint efforts on behalf of the Games; considerable work has in fact been required to co-ordinate all these efforts which have sprung up like mushrooms, some the result of sincere intentions, others answering rather more opportunist aims.

The ceremonial surrounding the inauguration of the Games has often been a target for criticism, owing to the fact that it represents a loss of precious time and a waste of the athletes' energy. I am of the opinion that it is possible to make a few cuts here and there, and limit certain aspects of the spectacle which no longer have any attraction for the young. Such is the case, for example, of the salvoes of

artillery, the release of balloons and pigeons, which are no longer absolutely necessary, and therefore not indispensable, since television, in particular, has taken over the rôle of the carrier pigeons. It would also be a good idea to see if it were not possible to simplify the prize-giving ceremonies and to hold them only twice a day since, in the case of athletics in particular, the athletes who still have heats to compete in are continually disturbed and having their rest or event interrupted to stand to attention whilst the national anthems are being played. The often exhausting official social obligations to which the athletes are submitted should be replaced by more relaxed and enjoyable parties.

I b/ Friendly Contests

Some say that it is impossible for the Games to be friendly, peaceful contests when demonstrations are repressed and the demonstrators driven out of the Olympic Stadium by the army or police with blows from their rifle butts or truncheons and when the athletes give vent to their political feelings at the medal-awarding ceremonies. It is obviously impossible to ban demonstrations altogether, owing to the fact that most of the western world considers them perfectly legal; however, I feel that it would be showing a greater sense of responsibility if advantage were taken of such meetings to bring everyone together and air all sides of the question with a view to better mutual understanding. I remember Jesse OWENS' words to his friends, who had just organised a Black Power demonstration against the United States flag and national anthem from the privileged position of the podium: *"You have made use of the wrong battlefield for your demonstration!"* The reaction of the crowds in the stadium was clear proof too that the demonstrators had done their cause a disservice.

II Equal Opportunities for all

What does the word *"equal"* mean here? Let us think for a moment of the different opportunities for training and competition offered to the youth of the developing countries and the industrialised countries. Let us think of the different opportunities available to students and the working population, members of the armed forces and civilians, rich and poor, subsidised and unsubsidised. Let us think too of the countries whose political status has still to be proved. The athletes of countries that have no N.O.C. have absolutely no chance of taking part in the Games, for only athletes selected by their N.O.C. are eligible. In spite of all these unsolved problems, it must be agreed that the Olympic Movement, more than any other in the world, has succeeded in banishing all social prejudice and appealing to almost all classes of society. It is hardly possible today to imagine that in 1896, the large majority of those taking part in the

Games paid for their journey, and also for their training, out of their own pockets, because they enjoyed a privileged situation and their income allowed them to do so.

Today, neither the father's bank balance nor his social position count; the only things that matter are talent and ability. However, the promotion of natural gifts often depends also upon chance, so that soon we shall no longer be able to speak of "*fair and equal opportunities*".

In my country alone, there are nearly 800,000 people still condemned to live in slums. Of all the young born there, very few unfortunately are likely to be going off to Munich, although some of them could certainly become good athletes if they were given a proper start at school and had access to adequate training facilities. This is where, in the future, the greatest possibilities for social work lie for the Olympic Movement, that is to say that the important thing will no longer be trying to win more medals but giving sport a share in the responsibilities of society. For it is possible to give even to the disinherited a greater sense of joy in life, and to the young a sense of purpose.

III A Move to promote Mutual Understanding between the Peoples of the World

Some say "*to believe in a reconciliation of the nations through the Olympic Games is an illusion*". The feelings of prestige aroused among so many people and clearly reflected in the importance attached to the number of medals won only increases the strain. The words of a leading sports official seem to justify this statement: "*Sport is not a personal affair but rather a conflict between socialism and capitalism!*"

To which COUBERTIN rightly replies: "*It is naïve perhaps to believe in the possibility of love between the peoples of the world, but there is nothing utopic about hoping that the athletes of different countries and different origins will come to respect each other; the only thing is that to bring this about, they have to learn to get to know each other.*" We give them this opportunity of getting to know one another better.

We could also quote the words of Kurt HAHN: "*As a preliminary to loving our enemies, we should first learn not to hate our friends!*"

A REPLY TO CRITICISM

We shall be criticized for trying to present, through the Olympic Games, the picture of a healthy, flourishing world, without wars or contradictions. Would it not be possible however, with just a little more goodwill, to admit the beauty of an action which makes it possible to bring together the youth of countries whose governments no longer maintain any

diplomatic relations with each other or who are in a state of war even? May this not arouse in the hearts of young athletes an intense aspiration to live together in peace? Have we the right - and I raise the question here - to exclude from the Olympic family a number of hopeful and keen young athletes just because we do not like their political regime? Such an attitude is comparable to that of a teacher who would refuse to allow in his class students, the parents of whom he disapproved.

The International Olympic Academy, over which I have had the honour of presiding for the last four years, has made a very big effort to solve these problems. Our work was in fact made easier compared with that of the International Olympic Committee, for example, in that we did not have to make a decision.

In this connection, I would mention an event which could have led to a political crisis. The representatives of an Arab country left the meeting just as a teacher from Israel was about to start his talk. The group was booed by the whole meeting. As President of the Academy, I pointed out that the Arab members' behaviour was in direct contradiction of all Olympic principles. I added that the talk had been of a purely scientific and sporting nature, completely free of all political bias and that the boycott was a sign of intolerance unworthy of Olympism. Once the session was over, the Arab members, all intelligent friendly young people, explained the reasons for their departure, which had been caused, they said, by my open criticism of their behaviour, which had wounded them. I answered that as President of the International Olympic Academy, it was up to me to uphold the Olympic rules, and that according to the latter they were guilty of having committed a serious infraction. Since they were acquainted with these rules, they should have accepted my criticism, just as someone who infringes the rules of a game accepts the penalty against him. Once the referee has blown his whistle to start up again, the game continues and there is no question of flouncing off home in a temper, but rather of trying to respect the rules of the game in the future. The young Arabs then said that they were satisfied with the outcome of the problem, and I must admit that the members of the other Arab countries, after courageously confessing their fault, contributed with the best will in the world to their re-introduction into the group.

I am sure that in spite of insurmountable political differences, we furthered the mutual respect of the nations concerned. Similar examples could be quoted in the case of Africans and South Africans who have remained on peaceful sporting terms. The important thing is to create the conditions propitious to the establishment of friendly human relations. There are many examples of friendships that have grown up

between athletes of different countries at the Olympic Games. I shall come back to this point later on.

Generally speaking, it can be said that the Games offer too few opportunities and leave too little time for athletes to get to know each other better outside the stadium. In spite of all the problems it would necessarily involve for the host country, it would be a good idea if the athletes taking part in the Games could have one or two days extra once the Games were over, in which to visit cultural exhibitions and meet each other. I would even go so far as to consider, in the organisation of the Games, the possibility of increasing the number of opportunities of bringing the nations closer together, even if this would not be entirely to the taste of nationalists and isolationists.

Thus, for example, the torch bearer, as he enters the stadium and lights the Olympic flame, could be accompanied by representatives of all the continents. During the prize-giving ceremonies, at which medals are awarded to the winners, we could consider hoisting only the Olympic flag and playing only the Olympic anthem, instead of the different national flags and anthems. There would be no question of doing away with the parade of the national delegations, each carrying its own flag. It would simply be a matter of celebrating the prize-giving ceremony for the best three athletes of the Olympic Games who, after competing against each other for the honour of Olympism, would be awarded their 'victor's laurels' under the Olympic flag.

On the last day, the athletes could parade, no longer by nations, but according to the categories in which they competed. On the last day too, world relay races could be held or competitions arranged between continental teams.

IV a/ The Educational Influence, a Stimulus for the Athletes

A scientist, an expert on sport, once said: "*Competitive sport starts where sport ceases to be healthy*". His intention was perhaps to provoke a reaction, but there is however a certain element of truth in what he said. One has only to remember the pictures shown on television during the Mexico Games in 1968, for those of us who were not actually there. But, even without oxygen apparatuses, there are many examples of competitive sport stretching the physical strength of the athlete, even the strongest, to the utmost limits, as for example in the modern pentathlon, the decathlon, the marathon, pole vault, swimming, boxing, etc. ...

I know of top athletes training until they actually faint and who work systematically to push the fainting point further and further back. I do not think that we can speak here of any improvement in physical efficiency. It is more a

question of extreme values towards which particularly gifted athletes may strive through excessively intensive training.

One of my compatriots, Mr. B. RIGAUER, an expert on sport, has defined what I have been saying as follows: *"The principle of performance has been converted into a maxim of self-mastery and discipline without thinking that this principle might be copied and transformed in a dangerous manner. In competitive sport, the strains experienced in training, based on methods carried to the ultimate extreme, can no longer be justified from any educational, psychological or medical points of view."*

Here, the criticism is raised against society in general, which is accused of being a society clamouring for performances.

In the case of athletes prepared to put up with such tortures, the criticisms no longer apply, owing to the special circumstances of men who wish to achieve something extraordinary and who, in order to do so, are ready to accept all sacrifices. If such men did not exist, the North Pole would never have been discovered, the Nanga Parbat would not have been climbed, and the surface of the moon would not yet have felt the imprint of man, etc. ... As long as there are men on this earth, there are bound to be exceptional individuals who will push back the frontiers of the impossible. Top athletes belong to this category. Consequently, they are entitled to our respect and our help.

Obviously, the masses are hardly likely to be influenced by these extremes, but I am convinced that the supreme effort, in which everything is placed in the balance, will not fail to have an effect on ambitious young athletes. However, we must see to it that these performances are not achieved by means of products injurious to health. Team doctors and trainers must not set performance before health, no matter how tempted they might be on occasion: I know that team doctors are often faced with a serious dilemma. The public and the athletes expect them to help the athlete to achieve optimum performance. Consequently successes and failures are often wrongly attributed to their abilities, a thought that weighs heavily on these doctors' consciences.

RIGAUER has said in this connection: *"The top athlete is exploited economically (advertising media, sports performances as marketable goods) and politically (social propaganda) but is interesting as an individual only so long as he is usable."*

Now it is up to us to see that the top athletes are guided in good time towards a profession, in order to prevent them, as is unfortunately only too often the case, from

expending themselves physically to such an extent that they become incapable of returning to normal professional life. Dr. WINKLER of Tübingen, calls them *"human waste"*.

To my mind, this point of view should also be taken into account in the rules of amateurism, into which I do not intend to go in detail here. Obviously to discuss this properly would take far too long. I shall limit myself therefore to saying as follows: it is unthinkable today that athletes, during periods of competition, should not benefit from any material aid or a certain indulgence on the part of professional circles. The sacrifices that each has to make are already sufficient in themselves. What is important is that an athlete should not be able to feel that it is more worthwhile to concentrate entirely on competitive sport without giving a thought to his professional career. Consequently, the help given to athletes should be limited in time, in order to ensure their return to normal professional life.

I very much doubt whether it will be possible, in view of the size of the subsidies given, to create the same conditions for all. The thirst for prestige on the part of certain countries always finds a way of evading these principles. The same is true of certain firms greedy for profits, which seek to exploit famous athletes for their advertising campaigns.

IV b/ Influence on the Character of Olympic Athletes

The influence of the Olympic Games on the character of athletes is certainly considerable. First of all, the Games call for will-power, courage, endurance and other similar qualities that are the prerequisites of success. To this should be added the benefit of certain psychological moments such as the victory over fear before the start of a race, the wish not to disappoint the hopes of compatriots, the unknown possibilities of one's opponent, etc. ... Here, team managers, who wish to achieve victory at all costs, have a negative influence. The same is true of publicity in the mass-media, which plays on the pride of athletes and thus increases their nervousness. The influence these factors will have depends upon the individual. Someone who is naturally strong in character will emerge greater from the trial, whilst the unstable can be broken just as easily by success as by failure, if he is not aided and backed by his team-mates and team-manager. However, in a number of athletes the Olympic Games obviously reveal often unsuspected reserves of strength that upset all forecasts. Just as the last physical reserves are called up by the electric atmosphere, the athlete is inspired and led on to new heights by the hopes that the public places in him to compete with all his might in a sporting and chivalrous spirit. I am sure that the suffering they all endure, before the start, helps to bring athletes much closer together on the human

level, in spite of everything that tends to separate them elsewhere.

The silent admiration of the other who, thrusting aside all difficulties, strives towards victory with the same fierce determination, is the basis of mutual respect. And how can one be jealous of the success of a rival one respects? Furthermore, if he should fail, one will sympathize with him. The winner's words of consolation have often helped the loser overcome his disappointment. In this way, lifetime friendships have been established. In *"The Art of Awareness"*, Wifferd H. PETERSER has said: *"The art of awareness is identifying yourself with the hopes, dreams, fears and longings of others. It is learning to interpret their thoughts, feelings and moods."*

In a speech given at the International Olympic Academy in 1969, Jesse OWENS tells how Lutz LONG, his greatest rival in the long jump, gave him an excellent tip to avoid overstepping the line the third time. In this way, he succeeded in winning the gold medal thanks to LONG, who had to be content with second place. This noble attitude on the part of his rival made a great impression on him, he said, and was the start of a great friendship between the two.

Who can ever forget the two friends in the decathlon, the American JONES and the Japanese CHANG? JONES, who had the greater experience, helped his young friend train and ended up having all the trouble in the world to beat him at the Olympic Games. Anyone who watched these Games will remember the impression of a bitter struggle right up till the last few strides of the 1,500 metres, and the sight of the winner consoling his friend.

In the military equestrian events, a German competitor had a fall and his horse ran away. For the German team, victory was at stake, since they had won all the dressage events. The next rider, a Swiss, seeing the German try to catch his horse, rode off in pursuit of it, and brought it back for him to continue his ride. In so doing, the Swiss had thrown away his own chances of victory in order to help the German go on with the event. This chivalrous act, which enabled the German team to win, is one of the noblest actions by an Olympic athlete ever recorded.

It was during the Olympic Games in Tokyo that the Japanese introduced the Tokyo Fair-Play Trophy. I personally attach very great importance to the value of this award - so much so in fact that I feel that it should be presented in the stadium in the same way as any other medal, thus showing that fair play is quite as important as athletic prowess.

IV c/ The Olympic Ideal

Just as in ancient times, the great Olympic champions of today serve as models for the young whether they want to or not. Awareness of this fact might encourage athletes to give a little heed to what is expected of them. In his book, *"Contribution to Teaching and Research"*, Dr. Hans LENK tells us: *"The adolescent does not try to achieve concepts by abstract means, it is people who serve as models for him. Imagination idealizes supreme examples and makes them guarantees of ethics."*

V Influence of the Olympic Games on Education

As a teacher who, by conviction, considers sport just as important, as a positive factor in the education of the personality, as training the mind, I am naturally very curious to know whether the Olympic Games are capable of having an effect on the general education of a country. I am alluding to the stagnation encountered by this principle in legislation and practice, such as for example in *"the daily hour of sport"*. Unfortunately, till now, my research, which has been far too superficial, offers only one disastrous example. In his introduction to the modern Olympic Games, COUBERTIN placed great importance on the influence of education. But he was right to complain that teachers had not followed his advice when he wanted to attach greater importance to physical training.

My country where, as you know, the next Olympic Games are to be held, has witnessed the following anomaly: whilst the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the state of Bavaria and the town of Munich are represented on the Organising Committee of the Games, the Minister for Cultural Affairs proposed to the Government that sport should no longer be made compulsory in the higher classes, which means that young people would be completely free to give up sport if they wanted to. The strong protests raised by certain sportsmasters and teachers put a stop to this monstrous proposition. This fact however shows the little influence, in the final analysis, that the Olympic Games have on the legislation of a country, if there is nobody sufficiently convinced of the cause of sport to take up the struggle against the bigoted spirit of certain educational authorities. And for that it is even necessary to be a certain power in the country with regard to the Olympic Games. I should also like to add that a great many efforts are nevertheless being made in the field of education in Germany, some of them quite independently of the organisation of the Games.

Finally, it is up to the Olympic Movement to persuade the educational authorities of the equal importance of the education of the body and the mind for the development of the

personality. "Sport" therefore must no longer be considered, as was so often the case before, as one of the many branches of education but must be used to complete and put life into the "daily" intellectual round. Education has failed if it does not succeed in making school-leavers vitally aware of the importance of sport and games for their own well-being and physical efficiency, thanks to which competitive sport can provide an invaluable stimulus and an excellent touchstone in future life.

Summary

I am now reaching my conclusion. In spite of all the problems that have arisen and all the errors that have occurred in the course of their evolution, the Olympic Games remain an irreplaceable source of goodwill and understanding. It is sufficient simply to take care to consolidate the positive elements and eliminate the unnecessary burdens. From this point of view, our efforts must be directed towards:

Simplifying the ceremonial of the Olympic Games and in this way increasing the opportunities for tightening links.

Succeeding, in time, in ensuring that properly qualified athletes from all countries in the world are free to take part in the Games, irrespective of the political regime in their country.

Providing more opportunities in the Olympic programme for establishing closer human relations between the athletes.


Increasing the chances of taking part in the Olympic Games for athletes of the developing countries, thanks to the help of the richer countries where sport is flourishing.

Giving the Olympic Games a real value for education in general, thanks to competitive sport based on a system of school sport and sport for the masses.

Making sure that the educational system in force in our countries recognises the value of sport in schooling and gives it the place it deserves. Once again, sport must not only be directed towards competitive sport but must also tend to fulfil an important rôle in human society, that is to say by permeating all social layers, in order to satisfy the fundamental principle of the Olympic Movement, which wants everyone to enjoy equal opportunities.

That You have given me an opportunity of making my opinions known proves that your institute is willing to lend

itself to this type of discussion. In this way, you place yourself in the service of our Olympic Movement and help to solve the problems we still have to face. I congratulate you on your courage and wish you every success.

My opinions are the result of the work I have done within the framework of the International Olympic Academy and the International Olympic Committee, and those of you who were present at Olympia will remember our discussions. Such a basis for discussion is essential and we need it in order to give young sports theorists and instructors an opportunity of discussing these problems with the representatives of the International Olympic Committee, the National Olympic Committees and the federations. This applies above all to the International Olympic Committee, for it is the younger generation who will be the spokesmen for the ideas of the Olympic Movement of TOMORROW. Nowadays too, desires are jettisoned. However, the efforts to strengthen and renew social conflicts will never cease but let that not make us stray from our goal, which is to maintain sports contests in the Olympic spirit of universal youth. 

G. W. H.