

Address

by Lord Killanin,
President of the International Olympic Committee

Mr. President, Friends,

Thank you very much for inviting me to your assembly of European National Olympic Committees. I was myself a President of a National Olympic Committee for some twenty-two years and therefore I am versed with the many problems that face Olympic Committees, especially in a small country.

If I may, I will not make a long policy statement on the future of the International Olympic Committee, for that will remain to be heard at the Congress in Varna which I hope you will all attend. I will, on this occasion, devote myself largely to European matters.

This ad hoc assembly came into existence originally with the idea suggested by certain countries that there might be European Games. This, as most of you are aware, is not very popular with many of the International Federations, whose approval would have to be given, and does not have the support of all the NOCs.

It is perhaps natural that because of Pan American Games, Asian Games, African Games, Mediterranean Games, that there should be European Games in Europe, where the Olympic Movement started. The objections to this are that already there are so many European Championships, facilities and opportunities for competition in all Olympic sports, that European Games might either detract from the European Championships, or create difficulties for some National Olympic Committees. However, this is your business and that of the International Federations

and now that I am President, it is not for me to give advice on this.

However, what does concern the International Olympic Committee and the National Olympic Committees of Europe is the policy of regional meetings, where views may be exchanged.

One of the things I have learnt in the short time that I have been President of the International Olympic Committee is that while the principles are the same everywhere, details are frequently different. Where it is easy to run an Olympic Committee in one country, it is equally difficult to run it in another. We are at a moment when Governments are taking a greater and greater interest in sport. Where this interest is purely for National prestige, I am afraid personally I have little sympathy, but where this interest is based on the use of leisure and the creation of the complete man I am 100% in agreement and sympathy with every form of Government assistance and help, for this is a part of the ideal for which we strive. It is natural, if Governments give subsidies or grants, at least they wish to see that the money is well spent. Governments in their turn have to account to their own authorities, to the Auditors General and the Taxpayer. Where Government influence goes wrong is when, because it contributes towards sporting funds, whether through a National Olympic Committee or a Sports Federation, or both, it starts dictating who should preside over those bodies, who should control and nominate the competitors, who should be the officials on the teams. This is a complete denial of the whole object of the freedom of the Olympic Movement, which must be free from any form of political, religious or racial interference.

We are approaching the end of the 20th century, as I have already mentioned several times, and moving towards a four and a half day week, which means more leisure. At the same time people realise more and more that from school time upwards children must be taught to use their leisure correctly. Leisure can be of a cultural nature, such as the theatre and Arts, which the Olympic Movement has perhaps lagged behind in promoting, although it was included in the original programmes and ideals; but sport, whether it is competitive or recreation, has a very important role to play.

Every four years we have the Olympic Games. Every four years the World and Olympic Records are broken. Every four years the Games appear to increase in size. At the same time they are witnessed through the mass communication media by more and more people.

It is for the simple reason that whilst the modern Olympic Games were inaugurated in Paris and were originated in their present form from Europe, it is natural that certain European views and ideas predominate. But it must not be forgotten that on the other continents different types of sport and recreational facilities of a national or international nature have also developed. Many countries have now either their own national game or sports. I am not certain what your final objectives are at this meeting, but if it is to have regional assemblies of European National Olympic Committees it would seem to me that this would be of great benefit to the Olympic Movement as a whole if you pooled resources and ideas which can be disseminated and given to other people,

for these must of necessity be of great value.

At the same time you will be able to find how indeed the older European National Olympic Committees can help the newer ones. This you will doubtless discuss during the next few days. As you will discuss important subjects as the protection of the Emblems, for once again both legal and judicial customs of different countries have made this very difficult. This is something which really must be followed up although it is already very late in the day. Luckily, the Olympic symbols are in point of fact well recognised in most countries and there are few who exploit them other than those who have no idea or concept of the Olympic Movement and Ideals.

As you know, the International Olympic Committee has set up a Solidarity campaign on a world basis, which will evolve depending on its resources and the availability of methods of assistance. In this regard, it must be remembered that the International Federations, as far as technical assistance, must be the leaders, and with them we must have the closest co-operation and collaboration. There are many more aspects other than a particular type of training or assistance in a particular sport. The whole organisation and administration of National Olympic Committees needs guidance and advice. Today the problem in one country may be that of another NOC in the future. The good ideas from one country must be shared with the NOC of another. My own personal view is that the Olympic Movement will only suc-

ceed if under the guidance and trusteeship of the IOC we can pool our ideas.

This commences naturally with the International Federations and the National Olympic Committees, so many of whom are here today. I do not think it is limited to these bodies, but to other National and International Institutions which have similar ideals or may have specialised knowledge, all of which should be used in the development of the Olympic Movement.

At the Congress in Varna, we will have an opportunity of exchanging the views of the IOC, IFs and NOCs. This exchange of ideas may well formulate the direction in which we will proceed in regard to the Programme, Eligibility, political interference and other aspects of the great body to which we all belong and to which we all contribute.

Personally, I have no fear of criticism and my only demand is that any forms of suggestions should be positive and not negative. Our duty is to the sportsmen of the World whether they be high performance competitors at the Olympics (which form a small minority of all sportsmen and women in the World) or young children who may be kicking a football on the hills and plains of any of the continents of the Earth.

You are meeting in the Principality of Monaco, which has been associated with the Olympic Movement since 1908, when Count Albert Gautier-Vignal was elected a Member of the International Olympic

Committee, whilst its National Olympic Committee was officially formed in 1911.

Prince Ranier was a Member in 1949/50 but resigned on his accession, when his father, the late Prince Pierre, was elected. Although naturally the number of competitors, due to the size of the country, is limited, 59 competed in ten sports since 1920. It has contributed largely to the Olympic Ideals frequently expressed by the President Mr. de Millo, whilst in cultural matters such as the contest for the new version for the Olympic Hymn was sponsored by Prince Pierre. In 1924 Julien Medecin obtained a bronze medal in Architecture when art Competitions formed part of the Programme.

I think we must realise that our Olympic family is made up of the smallest and largest countries and our only regret is that for political reasons, eight hundred million Chinese are no longer in the Olympic Movement but I hope that by putting the common denominator of sport above political conflict that we may see them back in our ranks again.

I wish this assembly a great success and I would like to publicly thank your President, Count de Beaumont, who is my senior Vice President on the International Olympic Committee. We were friendly rivals in competition for election for Presidency and I must say that I have no more loyal or greater supporter than him.

I declare the Assembly Open.

L.K.