

Address by Mr. Raymond Gafner *President of the Swiss Olympic Committee*

Mr. President of the Swiss Confederation,

You have honoured us greatly in accepting to be present at the opening of the 76th Session of the International Olympic Committee and to speak in the name of the Federal Council. We would ask you to convey to the Government our respectful gratitude.

Knowing the links which join you to the Olympic movement, we have all the more pleasure in welcoming you here.

For it was you who, when you were a Lausanne Municipal Councillor, took part on September 1st 1952 at Mon-Repos in the handing over of powers from Mr. Sigfrid Edström, the out-going President, to his successor, Mr. Avery Brundage. It was you who in 1955, in Paris, put forward Lausanne as a candidate for the 1960 Olympic Games and lead her up to the finals; thereby respecting a wish dear to Baron Pierre de Coubertin.

We also welcome the members of the diplomatic corps accredited to Bern and of the Honorary Committee, as well as the representatives of the authorities who have given the Swiss Olympic Committee their invaluable support for the organization of this session, amongst whom the Presidents of the National Council and the Council of States, the President of the Conseil d'Etat of Vaud, the President of the Grand Conseil, the Mayor and Municipal Councillors of Lausanne.

*Mr. President of the IOC,
Dear Colleagues,*

You are at home here in Lausanne. Sixty years ago it was this town that Baron Pierre de Coubertin appointed as the seat of the IOC; this town of which the poet Jean Villard-Gilles said: "She is a country-bred beauty who reads her classics."

With the exception of Paris, it is in Lausanne that the IOC has sat most frequently; this present Session being the sixth to be held here. In 1919 and again in 1946, immediately after the two World Wars, it was in Lausanne that the IOC met again to dress its wounds and to set out bravely anew. We are grateful to you that this year, leaving aside the more famous towns which usually entertain you, you should have preferred the town on the shores of the Lake of Geneva, where the body of he who revived the Olympic Games lies at rest, and around whose grave we forgathered this morning. We shall do our utmost to make you feel at home amongst us.

Ladies and gentlemen, dear friends, and especially you, the Swiss bearers of Olympic medals whom we have invited to this ceremony. When the future facing us has to be considered in terms of survival, then whatever arguments we hold concerning our responsibilities have meaning only insofar as they lead to acts.

And so I am going to apply myself to one theme only, a theme of utmost importance for the success of our action: the parts to be played respectively by the IOC and the National Olympic Committees (which I shall here abbreviate to "National Committees").

Of course this theme is not new. It crops up regularly in the story of present-day Olympism.

For a long time the National Committees were treated in a patriarchal way. They have heard often enough that they are the offspring of the IOC! Well, at least we know who our father is; but on the other hand, nobody has told us who on earth our mother is! Between you and me, I have the feeling that she might be rule 26 in its former wording!



From left to right: Lord Killanin, Mr. Pierre Graber, Mr. Raymond Gafner, Mrs. Gafner and Lady Killanin.

The tone has been gradually changing in the last ten years. The dialogue has become tougher, more realistic too. This last decade is stamped by the Roman seal; for it began in Rome in June 1965 and has just ended in the same city with the meeting of the Executive Board of the IOC and the National Committees.

There have been stormy ups and downs between these two dates; but there has also been constant progress towards a better understanding of mutual positions, towards a firmer link between the National Committees and the life of Olympism. The trail leading upwards has been blazed by our meetings in Tehran, Mexico City, Dubrovnic, Munich, Varna and finally Rome. Unfortunately, the deliberations in this latter city are too recent for me to be able to take them into account in this address. I feel sure, however, that they will have been up to expectations.

None of these meetings has taken place without the composition of the IOC being at issue; the way in which its members are elected, and the sharing of powers between the National Committees and the IOC.

Certain National Committees, even if they admit that Baron de Coubertin's solution was perfectly sound at the time, judge it to be out of date in an age when international institutions have adopted the principle of: one country, one vote.

But in my opinion, far from being out of date, the structure of the IOC (a co-optation system with a limited number of members, each one representing the IOC in his own country, and not the other way round) this structure is still undoubtedly one of the conditions for survival of the Olympic movement; for it guarantees the IOC's independence. It may be only a relative and often disputed independence, but it remains, nevertheless, the IOC's most outstanding and valuable characteristic.

Of the three Olympic partners: IOC, International Federations and National Committees, these last two are bound to be egocentric. Any National Committee which did not first think of the athletes of its own country would be failing in its mission. An International Federation which was not first concerned with upholding the interests of the sport for which it is responsible would be denying its very reason for existing. The individual concerns that each group represents are perfectly legitimate, but added up, they do not correspond with the common interest of Olympism in general. The IOC is, by definition, the sole guardian and trustee of those interests.

Therefore, without disowning their origins or their convictions, its members must devote themselves in the first place to Olympism taken as a whole; for they alone are able, or rather are in duty bound to do so.

Moreover, those who would like to hand over the fate of the Olympic movement to an institution based on the UN model seem to forget that the major powers' right of veto is part and parcel of this model. I doubt very much whether the Olympic world would be ready to accept such a wardship.

It goes without saying, however, that only on two conditions is it justifiable to maintain the present structures of the IOC. I know that its members are clearly aware of these conditions.

The first condition is to set up and then develop in an atmosphere of mutual respect the whole range of measures tending to tighten the bonds uniting the IOC, International Federations and National Committees; and to associate them more and more with the shaping of the Olympic purpose, the IOC alone being qualified for its final expression.

The second condition lies in the IOC's ability to strengthen its organisation continually in adapting it to the scope of its tasks. But this condition lies also in the ability of each one of its members to be worthy of the trust and respect of those to whom our movement is dedicated, namely the girls and boys the whole world over.

This question of balance between the IOC and the National Committees is a permanent theme, but a theme which, since the Olympic Congress at Varna in 1973, has taken on a new dimension and so asks for new solutions.

A new dimension indeed; for, during the vast and exciting confrontation at Varna, the Olympic movement broke through the framework restricting it to the recurrent Games and declared its determination to take full charge of its vocation in its most permanent and universal sense: i. e. that sport carried out in the Olympic spirit should be placed daily in the service of mankind. The President, Lord Killanin, and the three Vice-Presidents, amongst others, have given their opinions on this point in perfectly clear terms.

This awareness, which has been slow in awakening, is going to affect rapidly and lastingly the relationships between the IOC and the National Committees as well as their joint actions. The consequences will need to be analysed with lucidity.

This "everyday" Olympism can really only take shape through the National Committees and their National Sports Federations. Only these organisations, steeped as they are in their own national realities which vary so much from one country to another, only they can transform into deeds, on the spot, amongst the athletes, the policy and objectives laid down in general terms by the IOC. The influence of the National Sports Federations will suddenly be vastly increased. Are they prepared for a mission which is new to many of them? If not, then how can we help them to cope with the new situation? This is the question I shall now try to answer.

In spite of the ever more efficient and better co-ordinated efforts of the IOC Administration to produce the maximum with the limited means at its disposal, and despite the documentation already gathered by various institutions, the IOC has, to this day, but a fragmentary knowledge of the structures and the true influence of a great many National Committees. Up to now it has only occasionally been thought necessary to draw up a precise comparison between the actual facts and the ideal image of a National Committee as given by the rules of the IOC.

Do people realize that in spite of repeated requests, the IOC, in 1974, had not yet got the statutes of every recognized National Committee, and that its circular letters often meet with the obstinate silence of at least a quarter of these committees? Need I remind you that an inquiry carried out in 1967, and the result of which is still valid, reveals that the statutes of the National Committees have a large number of precepts contrary to the imperative rulings of the IOC? And so it is obvious that in its dealings with the National Committees—up to 1972 at least—the IOC has been largely living on myths. One of its urgent duties, therefore, is to acquire a complete and up to date knowledge of each National Committee. By this I do



Reception at the Château de Chillon: Mr. Graber, Lord Killanin, Mrs. Graber, Prince Tsuneyoshi Takeda and Mr. Marc Hodler.

not mean knowledge obtained through documents—of sometimes questionable value—but through a concrete study, carried out on the spot and grouping all possible sources of information.

I am pleased to hear that a research along these lines is being planned by various regional organizations. We have to work in the same direction, but on a world-wide basis.

The objective is clear: the IOC must be given, in the shortest possible time, an exact picture of each National Committee, thus enabling it to judge impartially to what extent the said National Committee is entitled to recognition by the IOC.

This seems to be obvious. But the truth is that we are still far from our objective. Our main effort, therefore, must tend in this direction, without letting ourselves be halted either by obstacles or by evasions. As we all know, this is no meagre task; but I insist: it must be given top priority.

Getting to know the National Committees better is pointless, however, if the IOC does not find in this additional knowledge the means to help the National Committees to become what they ought to be.

This is the essential objective of that Olympic solidarity launched about two years ago; yet the impact on the National Committees who stand the most to gain from it is still too weak.

Faced by the urgency of the task ahead, it would be a mistake to give way to impatience, or in wanting to simplify matters to try to impose stereotype solutions. On the contrary, in order to reach the goal of Olympic solidarity, all actions undertaken must constantly be adapted to the conditions specific to each National Committee. For this it has at hand not only forces found locally, but also the assistance that can be called up amongst the privileged National



The driving force of the Organising Committee: Mr. Jean Weymann, Secretary General of the SOC, with his wife.

Committees. Furthermore, great care must be taken to combine and co-ordinate its interventions with those already existing in the form of bi-lateral agreements drawn up between two National Committees or even on Government /eve/. And finally, while keeping the centralised management in the hands of the IOC, the widest possible use must be made of the organizations and volunteers at work locally, who are closer to national problems and so are more aware of the particular needs to be satisfied.

Only thus will a body of outstanding leaders gradually emerge, without whom no National Committee is worthy of its name.

But what is, in actual fact, a National Committee worthy of its name? The rules of the IOC provide an answer: a committee carrying out its mission in complete independence of its government.

Now there are very few National Committees which are really independent in this way; and this is quite understandable. The reason for this is, in the first place, the system by which many of these National Committees are financed; but above all the way most governments are determined not to leave outside their sphere of influence that powerful leverage that highly competitive sport can become in their hands; nor will they relinquish the vast range of possibilities offered by the expansion of popular sport.

To be honest, we must admit that co-operation between Olympism and government authorities is still at an initial stage. The National Committees are called upon to promote the idea of "everyday" Olympism; yet to give meaning to what is at present a mere formula in most countries, the National Committees cannot further the idea without the agreement and support of the authorities responsible for education and sport; or, to be more precise, without offering their collaboration to the said authorities.

There is a deeply-rooted, yet completely unfounded belief in the Olympic movement, standing aloof on her own dignity, and condescendingly refusing any compromise with the political power. On the contrary, claiming to act on behalf of mankind living in organized communities, Olympism is steeped in political action in its highest sense. What matters is that it should not be drowned by one-sided politics. It is all a question of degree and balance. Our President, Lord Killanin, has stated this clearly already several times.

It is obvious to anyone that, if it wants to, a government has many means of bringing pressure to bear on a National Committee, and of using Olympism for its own prestige. The more discreet the pressure, the more imperative it will be. We must admit that in a large number of countries this tendency cannot be stamped out. In order to restrict it within acceptable limits our only weapon is persuasion.

Having but its own moral strength to rely on, the Olympic movement, to be effective, is largely dependent on the good-will it encounters, on the support it gains and on the enthusiasm it gives rise to. Only through the services it renders is its existence justified.

Precisely one of its most prominent services is to offer on a world level a meeting place, a common factor for conflicting trends and opposed interests. The work to be carried out jointly by the IOC and the National Committees is to convince each government individually that their own interest lies in granting a privileged position to Olympism in its role of international understanding, and in leaving it to act with the maximum of independence allowed by the country's institutions. Any government, whatever its form, can find an advantage in developing in public opinion the feeling for international community of interests as symbolized by the five rings on our flag.

Far more than a mere surface show of independence, which is always risky, each National Committee must concentrate on winning over to the Olympic cause all those who, in any capacity whatsoever, are responsible for the physical, moral and character-building values of the population.

I quite admit that such an assumption is not just plain sailing. As one of us put it so neatly at Varna, the first danger would be for the Olympic movement to cast its nets too wide in unknown waters, to expose the IOC even more than is already the case to the squalls that



Some of the Swiss Olympic medallists who attended the opening ceremony.

rock the world of today. This is a real danger that must be faced with the caution and gift for navigation already often displayed by the helmsmen of the Olympic vessel. For we cannot turn a deaf ear to the appeal the world is sending out to us. If we do, then others will answer the call; at first without us, and then very soon against us. This is not mere speculation.

Does not the second danger lie in the IOC being accused of interfering in the internal affairs of a country if it judges it advisable to intervene, together with a National Committee, in order to induce that country to respect the Olympic rules?

It is easy to reply to this that the IOC will intervene only when called upon and if accepted as a valid partner in discussion.

Each government and each National Committee remains entirely free to accept or to refuse the service offered by the IOC. But it goes without saying that the IOC is also free, if all its efforts to obtain positive results in a given country prove vain, to withhold recognition of the National Committee of that country, be it only temporarily. The effect would mean exclusion from any Olympic activity.

Such an extreme and unfortunate solution might, however, as a last resort, be the only means of reaching one's objective.

At the last meeting of the IOC in Vienna Lord Killanin asserted strongly and to the point that the Olympic authorities were ready to apply this drastic remedy (and it has been applied since then) to certain particularly recalcitrant National Committees; recalcitrant, maybe simply because their very existence is a sham.

And to conclude: it is obvious that our policy of persuasion must be aimed—the whole world over and beyond all governments—at Youth in its wonderful variety.

It is for the young that we want to create a common factor, to them that we want to offer a meeting-place, for them that we want to brighten the harsh facts of daily life through the exalting examples of the Olympic athletes.

Of course we have to accept our limitations. We know that we cannot change human nature. But we also know that the disappearance of Olympism would create an immense void. It would mean the end of a great hope and a step backwards on the difficult path we are treading in the search for a life worth living.

Mr. President and Members of the IOC,

In welcoming you here, the Swiss Olympic Committee expresses the heartfelt wish that the proceedings of your session in Lausanne, as well as your whole work should be devoted to safeguarding, illustrating and promoting that dignity of mankind which is the main concern of those who want to remain the true heirs to the ideals of Baron Pierre de Coubertin.