

XVIth Session of the IOA¹



Opening speech

*by Mr. Epaminondas Petralias,
IOC member in Greece*

My dear friends,

I am very pleased and delighted to greet you today in my new capacity as member of the International Olympic Committee in Greece and to attend the opening of this 16th Session of the International Olympic Academy.

It has been my privilege to follow the rapid development of the establishment of this International Olympic Academy—initially as Secretary General of the Hellenic Olympic Committee and then to experience the Academy's intense activity as President over the last few years. Consequently, I can tell you today that our efforts for consecrating this institution and our hopes to see it recognised internationally have not been in vain.

The International Olympic Academy wants to be recognised as the cultural centre of world sport under the high patronage of the International Olympic Committee. It is by working on an equal footing with the Committee that we wish to achieve the objectives of this marvellous institution.

The aims of the International Olympic Academy are summed up in a philosophy that is simple, widely comprehensible and easily accessible to everyone. This is the philosophy which leads to the model of “beautiful and good” (kalos kagathos) for the service of man, human ideals, honesty and justice, through the spirit of competition.

We want to achieve these objectives with your generous support, participation and co-operation. The Olympic principles and ideas can be adapted to the family, school and college, in order to penetrate the souls of the youth who will eventually take our place in society and who will therefore hold its fate in their hands. Young people, that is you, inspired with the Olympic ideas, will be able to adapt yourselves to the environment and its needs, place yourselves on a level with all circumstances, face life's difficulties and hurdles with courage and dignity, forge ahead optimistically and respond to the requests of other men and act with nobility of spirit and justice towards their competitors.

On behalf of the International Olympic Committee, I gladly welcome you to ancient Olympia. As you know, this is a sacred place which gave birth to the Olympic Games. It is here that every four years the priestess lights the sacred flame which will bear the Olympic idea to the five continents.

The International Olympic Committee trusts in you and your dedication to spread the Olympic principles. These are not at the service of social systems and powers, but are a secular heritage that we attempt to keep intact and intangible, just as we received it from the Ancients. They are at the service of man, his freedom and his dignity.

I should like to translate this idea of dignity for you by a song from ancient Sparta that has been preserved by the historian Plutarch:

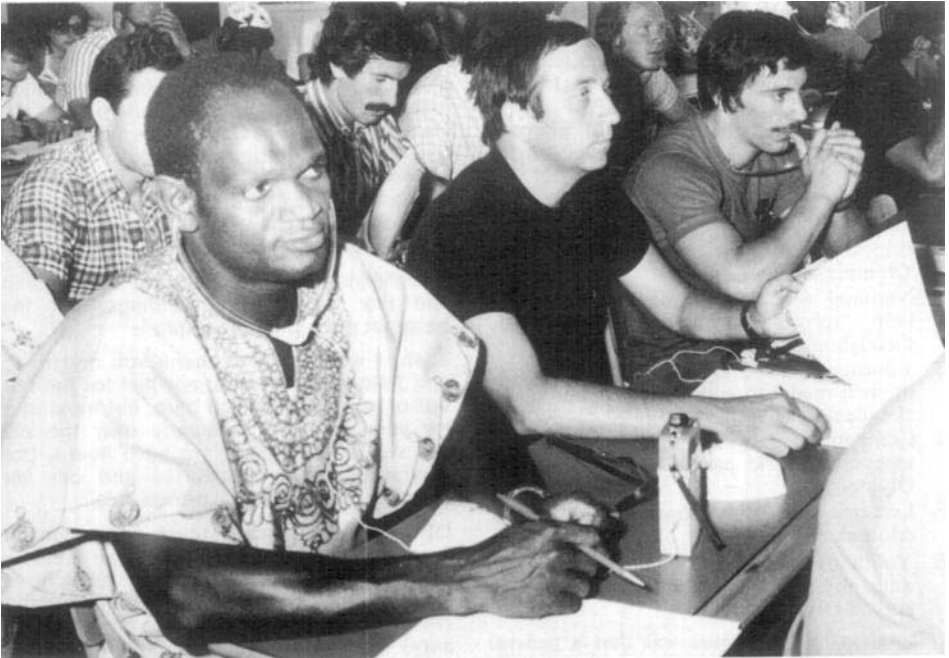
¹ See “Olympic Review” No. 110 page 603.

"Today, it is our generation, before us there were others, immediately after us will follow others that we will not see since we are going to die. However, we should not just be concerned with life and death, but try to achieve them both properly."

I hope that your stay in the Olympic valley may help you to understand the philosophy of Olympism.

Sport has become a social force in the world that teaches everyone impartiality, respect of rules and fair competition which are the aims of Olympism and which are also expressed in the Olympic motto "Citius Altius Fortius".

E. P.



First language group discussion

THE EDUCATIONAL VALUE OF OLYMPISM

Chairman: Simon A. McNeely, USA

Recommendations

In the light of the various discussions the following recommendations seem to reflect the general feelings of the various discussion groups:

1. Formation of National Olympic Academies in each nation.
2. The IOA should be requested to continue sending Session reports to all graduates of the Academy.
3. National Olympic Committees must be made aware of the importance and value of the Sessions of the IOA. It might possibly be advantageous for commissions for the dissemination of Olympic ideals to be set up within NOCs as is done in some countries.
4. Create special sessions for lecturers, officials, administrators, sports journalists, etc.
5. Set up organisations at both national and international level for the Alumni of the Academy.
6. There should be better preparation for IOA participants.

Second language group discussion

THE NEW GENERATION AND OLYMPISM

Chairman: Dr. John Powell, CAN

Closing ceremony of the 16th IOA Session

ADDRESS ON BEHALF OF THE PARTICIPANTS

by Mr. Andrew Etchells, GBR

Olympism was generally agreed to be a realistic and positive force to world peace. Opinion was expressed that the ideals of Olympism were not practised by a significant number of nations. Most felt that although Olympism could only be practised at the international level the method of effective dissemination must be at the level of the mass media.

Some of the recommendations for dissemination follow:

1. Education of governments regarding Olympic ideals.
2. National Olympic Academies set up to help spread Olympism more fully throughout various countries.
3. Education of the mass media and the use of such media to educate the public about the ideal of Olympism.
4. Competitions, e.g. painting, song writing, essays, scientific papers on the theme of Olympism.
5. Lectures and slide shows by Academy Alumni.
6. Youth camps, especially Olympic camps, and physical education classes used to spread Olympic ideals.

General group consensus was that a general understanding of Olympism could save the Games from the various troubles it is now experiencing, e.g. exploitation of athletes, commercialism, financing and size of Games, materialism, drug abuse, and politics.

Some of the specific recommendations, other than those mentioned above, are as follows:

1. An Olympic Day set aside each year to educate the public about Olympic ideas.
2. Decentralisation of the Games to allow greater exposure to more people (although some opinion favoured permanent site).
3. IOC to abide by its own decisions, e.g. universal adherence to an amateur definition.
4. Suppressing the raising of flags and playing of national anthems to de-emphasise nationalism.

It is my pleasant duty today to thank, on behalf of all participants of the 16th Session, all those responsible for inviting us and looking after us so well, so that we now know just what the famous Greek hospitality means. Primarily, of course, we thank the Hellenic Olympic Committee, the Ephoria and their eminent lecturers. But I would like to record a special mention to the « unsung » of the secretariat, the kitchens and the maintenance men. They have done as much as anyone to create the excellent spirit.

I don't know who to thank for the sunshine and the beautiful surroundings, but they have not gone unappreciated!

Then, I would like to thank you my friends and fellow participants; not just for the honour of representing you here, but most of all for your excellent company over the past two weeks. Olympism, we have heard, transcends national boundaries and our very own "Olympic village" proves this.

Of course in a family there are occasional breaches and we have seen small incidents of political rivalry and sporting tension. But these are tiny compared to the internationalism and friendship we have enjoyed and serve to reinforce our pragmatic approach to the problems of internationalism today.

An appeal to youth

To awaken the interest of young people in the study and scientific investigation of the Olympic idea, the IOC invites them to participate in an international competition, aimed at highlighting the best study or essay on an Olympic theme.

The conditions of this competition will be made known early in 1977, and will appear in one of our next issues.

FOR 1977

On the IOA programme appear:

21-29 May: Symposium of the International Committee of Military Sport.
8-24 July: 17th Session of the IOA.

23-31 July: First Session for members and staff of the European National Olympic Committees.

31 July-6 August: 7th Session of Greek Educationists.

8-16 August: 2nd International Session for Educationists.

We shall present a more detailed programme in a future issue.

Of our work, we do not expect to stagger the world—though we do expect the careful attention of the IOC—with our proposals and thoughts. The value of the discussions came in finding out about others' systems and problems, and appreciating their viewpoints. We have heard much about National Olympic Academies and reinforcing this is a suggestion that historical background material, as covered in early lectures, might be better digested in advance if made available in some durable form. This would provide a common ground from which to address ourselves more effectively to the problems and opportunities of the present and the future, rather than the past.

Talking of the future, we now go home to think and act on what we have learned. Even if we never refer back to the lectures, it would be nice if, a year from now, the most used and dog-eared document we possess were the list of participants.

Today, we were privileged to see the flame being lit. Few can have failed to be moved by the thought of what that flame symbolises, and has symbolised for so long. Our hopes go with it on its long journey, that it will cast its light over the 21st Olympiad and that the Games will nourish the flame even more.

I think that after two privileged weeks in Olympia, the flame will remain within us and light not just our sporting careers and future lives, but also those of all we meet and may influence. The flame of Olympia and what we have learned here about each other will never die.