

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.