

● *The women's world championships in danger*

"The news is official. Five countries which qualify on a regular basis: the USSR, the title-holder, Czechoslovakia, Bulgaria, the People's Republic of China and Yugoslavia have withdrawn from this world competition in a protest against the choice of the site for the championships - Seoul.

To date, athletes have succeeded in confining this sort of action to isolated movements. Montreal was the first manifestation of what has since become the total intrusion of politics into sport.

I do not believe the system to be perfect. By penalising certain governments whose way of thinking is not liked by others, one penalises, in fact, the young people in those countries, who can do little about the decisions taken at the governmental level.

The door is thus left open to replies on the part of others who, strengthened in their position by this example, might in turn decide to meet only with athletes representing countries having the same views. The result could only then be escalation soon leading to a division into two or three blocs, a situation given to an absolute absence of understanding with no hope of return.

We believe that sport must retain its complete independence, not in order to close its eyes to what is happening elsewhere, but, rather, to struggle justly and openly against excesses, wherever their source may be.

Experience has shown that athletes the world over, regardless of those occupying the controlling positions, are all freedom and justice-loving individuals. It is, moreover, by means of these very contacts involved in large international competitions that athletes may exchange ideas and prepare the future.

Instead of this hope, young people in certain countries will live in isolation. How, then, can they learn of what is happening elsewhere? How can their opinions undergo change?

The magnificent brotherhood demonstrated at the close of the Olympic Games in particular is more effective than any form of propaganda or withdrawal.

The women's world championships will take place regardless. It is to be greatly regretted, however, that future records will bear the name of and bring glory to a country which will not, perhaps, have been the best."

*Robert Busnel
Vice-President of the FIBA*