

Ode to the athlete who did not win

By Dimitris Bogris

"Ode to the athlete who did not win" was sent to us by Dimitris Bogris who was inspired by "the undying spirit of the Olympic idea, the majesty of the athletic ideal and the spirit bequeathed to us by the man who revived the Olympic Games in modern times, the late Pierre de Coubertin".

The ode was read at the closing ceremony of the Balkan Games in the Pan-Athenian Stadium, Athens, on 8th September 1968 and again at the European Games in Athens in 1973. On both occasions the reader was Manos Katrakis, one of the leading actors of the Greek National Theatre. Mr. Bogris aimed in his poem to extol the Ideals of the Olympic movement, help bring the peoples of the world closer together through sport and to motivate young people to strive for high and noble achievements.

No, no regrets if you were not there on the victors' rostrum
And no one put a crown on your curly head
Do not seek to hide or slip away unobserved from the arena
A short while ago the scene of noble combat

Stay, and embrace the winner –
You created him, and show your true quality
From the applauding crowds mount higher,
Athlete without a prize

For in an ideal world you are exalted –
In the world of the pure, the noble, the true, the beautiful
There no distinction is made between winner and loser
All honour to the first: honour to the last

Prophets both of the same ideal
Of a faith embracing all mankind both priests
With you life takes on worth for the lofty and the beautiful
And you can once more feel proud

Thus you scatter hate to the winds, abolish war
And with black and white hands of every race
Create a new rainbow, build a shining dome
Filled with the doves of peace

Let your aim, of course be victory
But in the stadium there are no losers
And the highest honour is his
Who has ventured, fought and given what is in him.

The young prove worthy through their presence
Upon the field of such incomparable honour:
How many among those who look on in a secret wish
that they were worthy to be as these.

That splendid song of the athlete-yours and other young mens'-
That song of twenty rounds, which we sing but once, is on your lips.
Nothing remains for us your elders
But to rejoice in you and be thankful.

D. B.