



OPENING CEREMONY
OF THE FIRST
EXTRAORDINARY SESSION
OF THE
INTERNATIONAL OLYMPIC
COMMITTEE

Laussane, 1st December 1984



TOWARDS A COMMON LANGUAGE

SPEECH OF
MR. RAYMOND GAFNER

As President of the Swiss Olympic Committee I have the privilege for the second time - which seldom happens - to welcome members of the IOC meeting in session here in Lausanne, as well as the guests and representatives of the mass media. I extend a particular welcome to :

Your Worships ! Your presence among us illustrates the quality of the ties which link you to

the Olympic Movement whose headquarters has been situated in our country, and in our city, for nearly 70 years. These ties were further strengthened when the Federal Council kindly granted the IOC a special status and when the City of Lausanne became associated with the IOC in order to bring about the extension of the Olympic headquarters at Vidy as well as to set up an Olympic Museum and Study Centre in the Ouchy district. Thus, in the course of this Olympiad, Olympism in all its forms will find itself firmly established on the Swiss soil.

Ladies and Gentlemen ! The Swiss Olympic Committee was greatly touched by the fact that four months ago in Los Angeles, when you had to name

the site where your third session of the year was to be held - a unique event in the annals of the IOC, you spontaneously and unhesitatingly chose Lausanne as if it were a natural reflex of the IOC to find "at home" that atmosphere of calm and quiet that would be necessary for its debates.

When I welcomed you here in this very place during the opening ceremony of the 76th Session of the IOC in May 1975, I deliberately concentrated on a single subject which, at the time, was particularly acute, namely, examination of the relations between the IOC and the NOCs.

To what extent has the situation described in 1975 since evolved ? This is the subject I am briefly going to discuss before you.

INCREASED CONTACTS

The comparison that can be drawn between 1975 and 1984 illustrates the efforts that have been accomplished and the progress made during this period. How many problems raised in 1975 have been solved or are about to be solved ! The Association of National Olympic Committees and the Continental Associations of National Olympic Committees have been officially recognized by the IOC. President Samaranch, like his predecessor Lord Killanin, has multiplied contacts with the NOCs to whom they have paid a visit. For them this was an occasion to meet the government authorities of each country at the highest level and to show them the true face of Olympism, an educational movement forging bodies and characters through the practice of sport conceived in the spirit defined by Pierre de Coubertin. On the same occasion, the efficiency and independence of each NOC was strengthened to the highest degree and its needs analysed. Olympic Solidarity, born of private initiatives, was still in its infancy in 1975. It is now one of the pillars of the Olympic Movement.

Thanks to the funds made available by the television rights charged for the Olympic Games, the IOC has at least been able to have the means to support its policy. It had sadly lacked these means in the past, absurdly and for too long curtailing its efforts to make Olympism become a daily and salutary reality, beyond the dazzling but fleeting celebration of the Olympic Games.

The decisive turning point came at the Olympic Congress of Baden-Baden in 1981. It was then that the collaboration between the IOC and the NOCs



actually became one of the driving forces of the Olympic Movement.

To be true, at Baden-Baden the International Federations and the National Olympic Committees rightfully claimed the right to be considered and treated as adult and responsible members of the Olympic family. But, at the same time, the overwhelming majority of them recognized the IOC as fulfilling the role of head of family. Collaboration, however cordial and permanent it may be, must not make us lose sight of the fundamental principles on which the structure of the Olympic Movement is still based.

Back in 1975, I said to you in this connection, and this will be my only quotation :

"Far from being anachronistic, the IOC structure - co-optation system, limited number of members each representing the IOC in their country and not the reverse - is still undoubtedly one of the conditions for the survival of the Olympic Movement, since it assures it an independence which, even if it is relative and disputed, is nevertheless its most original and valuable characteristic.

In the Olympic trilogy - International Olympic Committee, International Federations and National Olympic Committees - the last two partners are by nature of egocentric character. A National Olympic Committee which did not primarily consider the needs of its country's athletes would betray its



mission. An International Federation which did not primarily concern itself with defending the interests of the sport it controls would not be faithful to its raison d'être. The particular interests which both represent are perfectly legitimate. But, added together, they do not correspond to the general interest of the Olympic Movement of which the IOC alone is, by nature, the guardian and depository.

This is why its members, without repudiating anything of their origins and convictions, must first devote themselves to Olympism envisaged as a whole, as they are the only ones who can, or better, must do it."

There is the secret of our success. This is why I can repeat my statement of 1975 in full at the moment when the 89th Session of the IOC opens.

A SERIOUS COMMITMENT

This Session - the Swiss Olympic Committee is pleased about it - has been prepared by the IOC in close touch with the International Federations and the National Olympic Committees. I am thinking in particular of the session that was held a few weeks ago in Mexico City by the Commission for the Olympic Movement whose creation was undoubtedly one of the highlights of the Baden-Baden Congress.

But the outstanding trait - the principal original feature of our session - is the seriousness and intensity with which the members of the IOC directly committed themselves in its preparatory phase.

I have taken the greatest interest, Ladies and Gentlemen, in studying the suggestions you have forwarded to our President in answer to his appeal. I have tried to compare your opinions with my own, knowing that we are all here to try to go beyond our personal points of view and to succeed in finding a common language.

I know the differences between us are profound, not so much on the question of principles as on the means to be employed to safeguard and confirm the future of the Movement and of the Olympic Games. What could be more natural and even more encouraging ! We thus demonstrate the diversity of our origins, the liveliness of our reactions and the frankness of the opinions we express.

Perhaps it will be difficult to harmonize our occasionally discordant divisions in two single days. But that is not the essential thing. What is essential is our willingness to arrive quickly at an effective consensus and to keep on holding the reins of the Olympic Movement firmly in our hands.

In the fifteen years in which I have belonged to the IOC, this is the first time I note in such a clear and convincing manner our anxiety to engage in a genuine dialogue, based on the reflections we have exchanged, beforehand.

This concern for mutual respect, maintained in spite of all the circumstances, seems of vital importance to me, as mutual respect is the keystone of the art of living taught by Pierre de Coubertin. As long as the IOC appears in full view of the world in its respected and undisputed role as head of the Olympic family, the future of Olympism will be assured, in spite of the rough seas in which we shall still have to sail. This respect will not come by itself. We shall have to earn it every day. Isn't this a splendid programme for us, on the threshold of the XXIVth Olympiad !

On behalf of the Swiss Olympic Committee, allow me today to express my heartfelt wishes for success both to the Olympic Movement, builder of a better world, and to each of you, Ladies and Gentlemen, in your constant endeavours in the service of the cause so dear to us all. "