



Mr. Anani Matthia giving the opening speech at the 1st General Assembly of ANOCA

INFLUENTIAL FIGURES IN SPORT: ANANI MATTHIA

The founding President of the Association of National Olympic Committees of Africa (ANOCA), re-elected by acclamation at the first general assembly of this organization on 19 December in Addis Ababa (ETH), Mr. Anani Matthia, 58, has been at the forefront of Togolese and African sport for many years. President of the NOC, as well, he was elected member of the IOC in 1983. In addition to being an administrator, Mr. Matthia is a scientist, a pharmacist with a background in biochemistry, still working in the field. We spoke with him in Lisbon last October where, as the Vice-President of the Association of National Olympic Committees (ANOC) for Africa, he was attending the meetings of the ANOC Executive Council and the IOC commissions for Olympic Solidarity and for the Olympic Movement on which he sits in this capacity.

Olympic Review : *What, in your opinion, are the particular problems confronted in the promotion and development of sport in Africa ?*

Anani Matthia : It seems to me that what is most important for the development and promotion of sport on the continent of Africa is that, we Africans, might be able to take charge of ourselves. That is to say that we must not expect everything from abroad. By abroad, I mean the international organisations of which we are members, the countries with whom we have cooperation agreements and other organisations outside of our continent. We must understand the importance of sport in the education and formation of the individual and on these grounds, take charge so that we are the first to make use of our own means for the development of our sport. So far, that is not the case.

We participate in a number of organizations and, I repeat, within the scope of the programmes that they organise, we do attempt to develop sport. We must not neglect these ways, but at this point, I do not think that we ourselves have taken charge. Everyone knows, everyone knows in Africa, and particularly our government officials know that sport is an exceptional factor — I was going to say of propaganda — an exceptional promotional factor for making a country known. Unfortunately, we do not always make use of the means that are needed for a sound and sensible promotion of sport in Africa. That is why, in my opinion, the most important factor is that the African countries — and many do already — take charge themselves and understand that our development is above all our own affair. Afterwards, anything that comes, all that is offered to us will be welcome.

The particular problem of sport in Africa, as we have already said within our association, is first of all the lack of competent and efficient leaders. The leadership is presently in the hands of men who mean well, but often, good intentions simply are not enough.

One of the other problems is the lack of appropriate infrastructure in the majority of our countries. One can, for example, count on the fingers of both hands the number of countries in Africa that have modern track and field facilities. There is also the lack of scientific research with regards to the training of athletes. This training is no longer the concern of an amateur, of a non-specialist. Training has become a truly profes-

sional and highly technical affair. We do not have this advantage.

These are the negative factors which slow down the development of sport. Surely I have forgotten some, but these are the most important.

O. R. : *As President of the NOCs of Africa, what are the cultural and political problems that you have encountered in dealing with the different NOCs ?*

A. M.: For a leader of an organization like ANOCA, it is necessary to note that, just about everywhere, the NOCs are either unknown or known only vaguely. Not only is it the public, that is to say the non-specialists, the inexperienced, who do not know of the NOCs; sometimes it is the authorities themselves, those who have allowed us to exist. For example, I can speak of the sports departments in our countries. They don't perceive the role of the Olympic Committee well on a national level. The first task is thus to finally be able to make ourselves known, to make a place for ourselves among the sports organisations of our different countries. There are many NOCs in Africa that do not even have a permanent employee, that in itself is also a big problem.

The second problem is inherent in the nature of the situation that we have inherited from colonisation, I mean to speak of the gap between the different ethnic groups. It is a delicate problem, but it is there all the same. We hope that beyond this cleavage that history has imposed upon us, each African will see, will be able to detect, where the real general interest, common to all Africans, lies. In fact, there is no problem of a group, whatever the group, if the decision is made to work in the general interest of Africa.

The problem of communication among the different ethnic groups, the difficulty with language, is a definite handicap. Of course, there are interpreters and translations, but, as is often said, by being translated, one can be betrayed. That is why it is better to communicate directly, as general rule, than to pass through a go-between interpreter. It is certainly a handicap for some of us who, like me, do not speak other languages well.

O. R. : *Do you think that there has been progress made over the past few years ? In what areas ?*

A. M. : Some definite progress has been made in the last four years, since the creation of our

association ANOCA ; look at, for example, the development of the programme of Olympic Solidarity. For a long time, I myself have been a member of an NOC and never, never, until just recently, have we felt the need to demand a single course from Olympic Solidarity. Was it because we didn't have any need for them ? No, that was not the case ; it was simply that we were not very familiar with the workings of these institutions. ANOCA, then, has enlightened us, and now, all of the NOCs are able to express their needs and obtain the appropriate courses. This is progress, in comparison with the past.

In addition, there are the tours, the many and frequent visits that the IOC President has made in Africa, which have contributed, as well, to the recognition of the NOCs ; to make known, to put a finger upon the role of the NOCs, at times even by the sports minister himself. In general, the ministers of sport know that the NOCs exist, but they have a poor conception of their role because they are visible to them only once every four years, at the time of the Olympic Games. In the interim period of three or four years, they wonder what purpose they serve. For some time, since the creation of ANOCA, and above all thanks to the visits that the IOC President has made to most of the countries in Africa, one perceives better, one is a little more aware and that is important.

O. R. : *In what areas would you like to see changes ?*

A. M. : I would like to see changes and reforms in the administration of the NOCs. We are men of good will. Most of the time, we concern ourselves with the NOCs in addition to our professional obligations. These do not always leave us the time at the end of the day to do what we need to do well. It would be nice and extremely useful if each NOC could have an independent and permanent administration at its disposal, employing at least a secretary or a typist and a full-time person to distribute the mail. In my opinion, if we can manage to organise that, we would be taking a great step forward.

O. R. : *How do you envisage the development of sport in Africa in the next five years ? What are the obstacles to reaching this point ?*

A. M. : In speaking of the development of sport in Africa in the next few years, one must take into account the specificity of our race. More than one race exists in Africa; there are two : the

black and the white. But when we speak of Africa, we speak primarily of the black race. That is not to say that we ignore the other; for example, the white race is in North Africa. The black race, however, has certain characteristics that we must keep in mind.

Currently, a number of training methods are being suggested to us. They are numerous and without a doubt, quite good.; but in the long run, we do not know what effect they may have on the body of a black person. We just don't know. On the other hand, we are a race that, one may say, has not always benefited, during our respective childhoods, from the best conditions of hygiene and growth. The underdevelopment exists in many areas, particularly that of general health and medical care. Thus, we have among us young athletes who are certainly very talented, but who emerge from childhood with a number of problems of a medical nature, which we have not solved and do not know how to solve. If we suddenly present them with training methods which are undeniably very good, but the conditions under which they are used on other continents are very different, without a doubt, there would be, within two years or five years, some results. It seems to me, though, that in the meantime, we run certain risks as long as we do not thoroughly examine every aspect. That is why I believe that not only must the specific characteristics of each athlete be taken into account, as they should everywhere, but also of our living conditions, our conditions of existence.

O. R. : *Where would you like to see more assistance and cooperation from Olympic Solidarity and the IOC?*

A. M. : In the area of leadership training. I think that it has become necessary to think of the succession of a new generation of leaders. As I said before, those who presently do the job are mostly men of goodwill — volunteers. Their actions are definitely necessary and very useful but we must find a way to get leaders who, in order to serve Africa, are willing to lose something.

Let me explain myself : We cannot think that concerning oneself with a sports organization can bring about material satisfaction. That is definitely out of the question, at least in Africa. I have the impression that Africa now needs administrators who dedicate themselves more than those who practise sport, which is not often enough the case, these days. It is not easy to say,

to put into words. This means for me that a new generation of leaders must arrive who, in addition to having the technical knowledge, and even the administrative expertise, can contribute more in the moral and philosophical domains. Right now, that is not the case. It is for me very important for the development of sport in Africa for the next few years.

O. R. : *What to you is the most important element or issue in the Olympic Movement today ?*

A. M. : In my opinion, the Olympic Movement must put an accent on Man himself. Because everything that we do, whatever we give, is in order to serve man. The Olympic Movement must become more militant than it appears now. That does not mean that we have to go down the streets with signs, no, but the Movement must also help people to solve their everyday problems. We know that economic interests guide the world these days, and the Olympic Movement is of course obligated to take this into account, but they are not the only factors that must be considered. There are many problems — material, philosophical and moral — which man confronts today and the Olympic Movement must serve, must help man to solve these problems. We must get out of the theoretical domain of pure philosophy, of the immaterial philosophy in which we are too confined so that we can get a little closer to Man.

Interview conducted by Robin Stratton



1st ANOCA GENERAL ASSEMBLY

In his aim of giving sustained attention to the African continent, the IOC President, H.E. Mr. Juan Antonio Samaranch attended the inaugural session of the first General Assembly of the members of the Association of National Olympic Committees of Africa which was held in Addis Ababa on 17th and 18th December last.

On this occasion, the President presented Mr. Tsegaw Ayele, President of the Ethiopian NOC and his country's leading sports official, with the Olympic Order. He was received in audience by Mr. Mengistu Haile Mariam, the Ethiopian Head of State, in the company of Messrs. Mario Vazquez Raña and Marian Renke, President and Secretary General of ANOC, and Messrs. Anani Matthia and Amadou Lamine Ba, President and Secretary General and ANOCA.

The General Assembly elected a new executive board. it is made up as follows : *PT*: Anani Matthia (TOG), *1st VPT*: Tsegaw Ayele (ETH), *2nd VPT*: Abdelkarim Darwich (EGY), *3rd VPT*: Mustapha S. Kamara (MTN), *SG*: Amadou Lamine Ba (SEN), *TG* : Samuel Mbogo Wa Kamau (KEN).

Representatives by zone :

- Zone 1 : Rachdi Alami Hamid (MAR)
- Zone 2 : Diallo Alpha Ibrahima (GUI)
- Zone 3 : Nacro Mahama (BUR)
- Zone 4 : Raymond Ibata (CGO)
- Zone 5 : Francis Nyangweso (UGA)
- Zone 6 : Meraphe Mompoti (BOT)
- Zone 7 : Ram Ruhee (MRI).

We shall be returning to this meeting in our next issue.