

# A CLEAR AND BINDING SPORT ETHIC

Because it seems to define perfectly the ethic of contemporary sport and the dangers it must face, we reproduce below an extract of the speech delivered by Mr. Richard von Weizsäcker, President of the Federal Republic of Germany, to the members of the country's NOC, gathered for its General Assembly in Munich on 16th November 1985.

**T**he importance of sports is on the rise. That is not only true in the case of traditionally sport-minded countries and the industrialised world, but worldwide. In this country, this can quite simply be seen from the frequency and extensiveness of sports broadcasts on radio and television. They are growing every year. In socialist states, sport has always been given a prominent place. However, Third World countries too have discovered that sports successes are the most effective and affordable way of gaining positive recognition for themselves in the world.

The Olympic Movement can only be pleased at this. The Olympic Games are not events which need to be defended by a handful of unrealistic idealists against the government. On the contrary, they are a response to a worldwide, massive need of peoples themselves. True, the last two Games of the Olympiad were boycotted by individual states for political reasons, but no government dared to call the Olympic idea itself into question.

When an attempt is made to use sport to back up or confirm political ideology and power, there are two consequences : Sport runs the risk of being placed in the service of a political power. This is damaging to sport. The second consequence is that the State in question invests its power, organisational and financial resources with a view to increasing the effectiveness of sport for its own purposes. The appropriation of sport by ideologies and power, therefore, almost always leads to a further, and often distorted, intensification of the idea of sport among the

mass of the people. The importance of sport today, which has increased worldwide, is undoubtedly to be attributed, not solely but in part, to its use as a political instrument by power and ideologies.

What shapes the development of sport? Sport stood from the outset under the motto "*citius, altius, fortius*", faster, higher, stronger. After the double somersault, the triple somersault. This intrinsic law of sport, this constant comparison, is what gives sport its dynamism and fascination. Sport is an expression of the dynamic form of western life and thought, which, through the driving force of science and technology, determines world civilization today.

All of that would be of no use, however, if the athlete himself were not animated by the will to dedicate most of his time to training. Today, no one can be a top athlete without practising sport as a profession — profession in the sense of a vocation and a full-time occupation. This touches on the famous "amateur question", which is causing so many headaches for the sports federations and, even more, for the IOC. Amateur in its primary sense means simply "lover". Thus, the amateur sportsman was originally one who practised sport for the love of it, in his free time and as a secondary activity. So long as an amateur in sport was understood in that sense, there was an attempt to guarantee a certain equality of opportunity. There was a desire to avoid a situation where someone who expended his entire energy on sport would have a competitive advantage over someone who practised sport only for fun.

Such a concept of the amateur could only be upheld as long as recreational sport and competitive sport remained in very close proximity to one another. Today, there are no longer any such amateurs among top sportsmen. Many hours of training are required every day. Training takes up the athlete's time. He is only able to occupy himself peripherally with a job or with vocational training. The situation has become reversed : for the top athlete, sport can no longer be a secondary activity, it has to be his main occupation.

Active athletes and people throughout the world who take an interest in sport have an interest in finding out, and I personally believe it is also their right, what happens to the money which is mobilised by the Games. It is to be hoped that it is used, in the final analysis, for the benefit of sport itself, for instance sport in developing countries, which in many cases can not yet afford modern and cost-intensive training methods and therefore are at a constant disadvantage in competition with richer countries. All of this requires the full attention of those responsible. I am sure that the National Olympic Committee of the Federal Republic of Germany, with its ideas and its sense of responsibility, is working towards this within the international organisation.

The dangers which arise from commercialisation can be controlled if they are accurately diagnosed and realistically approached. It is sport that has something to offer industry. That means, however, that sport, provided it is fully aware of the risks, can also formulate and impose its own conditions. Admittedly, the clearer, the more firmly anchored and the more convincing the intrinsic laws, the bases and the ethics of sport are, the more effectively it will be able to counter the two dangers I just mentioned. The dangers of doping and other forms of manipulation and the problem of violence in sport can only be solved through a clear and binding sport ethic.

The development of such a binding sport ethic is, in my view, the most urgent imperative for a humane and responsible sports policy. It is here, primarily, that the tasks and challenges facing the individual sports federations, the Olympic Committees and the IOC are to be found.

R. v. W.



*The Presidents of the IOC and of the Federal Republic of Germany attended the Davis Cup finals together last December in Munich.*