

HELLO FROM VIDY



PROMOTION

By Raymond Gafner
Editor-in-Chief

Rome, Giulio Onesti Centre, 4th April 1992 : I am attending the fifth session of the Italian National Olympic Academy chaired by my dear friend Giorgio de Stefani, IOC member. The theme of the session is a topical one: "The commercialization of sport and the Olympic Movement".

Facing the speakers are over one hundred participants, boys and girls, physical education students from all over Italy. After various tests, four will be chosen from among them to be the CONI representatives at the International Olympic Academy for 1992.

For me this is a real pilgrimage. Indeed, it was in May 1965 that I first went to Rome as the freshly elected president of the Swiss Olympic Committee. I was then taking part in the inaugural meeting of the as yet "unofficial" group of NOCs, gathered together at the initiative of the CONI President Giulio Onesti. It was a decisive event, as it was to be the launching pad for a long and eventful campaign from which the NOCs, hitherto treated as under-age children, emerged as members of the Olympic family in their own right. Our young listeners in April 1992 seemed to be almost unaware of these years of struggle where what was at stake was the opening out of Olympism to the world. It seems that for them, and for the majority of our contemporaries for that matter, the Olympic adventure is limited to that of the Games, those Games which, for some, have lost their soul to recent commercialization by opening the doors of the temple to market traders.

Is it worth dwelling on such over-reaction? Yes, because it is this which threatens to tarnish the image which the public has of Olympism and damage the credibility which its undisputed successes in many areas have enabled it to build. Does not proverbial wisdom assert that there is never smoke without fire ?

The reply, at least the one which I tried to give in Rome, is based on three themes which I shall merely outline here.

First of all, what did Pierre de Coubertin want in 1894? To help to create a new

humanism through the generalized practice of sport based on the model of the Gymnasium in Ancient Greece, the setting for a quadrennial encounter of art, culture and physical exercise, but based also on that of the great British public schools of the time. To achieve this, to create from the outset a climate favourable to his undertaking, Coubertin absolutely had to revive the Games of former years, contested with such splendour in Olympia, but adapted to the needs of our world.

These Games of the modern era were the means he chose to propel to centre-stage an example of the model athlete, a disciple of an Olympic religion based on excelling oneself while respecting the rules and one's opponent. Yet, through a kind of historical about-turn, explained at least partly by the mythical nature of the Games, these rapidly became the centre of attraction, the *raison d'être* of modern Olympism. Thus the rites have supplanted and eclipsed the dogma. Coubertin, despite devoting his whole life to it, never succeeded in achieving the Olympic promotion of which he dreamed. At no time did he have the means with which to implement his brilliant policy.

Where does that leave us, with Coubertin's Olympism about to complete its first century of existence? This is my second theme.

To be sure, today like yesterday, to a public strongly influenced by the media, the Olympic Games appear to be the totality of the Olympic phenomenon. As a result, it is tempting to proclaim that the considerable sums generated by these Games and by the commercial use of the Olympic symbol, whose aura is immense, go straight into the bank accounts of the sports superstars and the members of their entourage who claim to control them, in whatever shape or form. To promote Olympism, we need first of all to demonstrate the fallaciousness of such accusations. We must do so by speaking the truth, by clearly and calmly presenting the list of Olympic achievements of recent years, beginning with the key work of Olympic Solidarity which, after a difficult start, has become the spearhead of the

CALENDAR

Olympic Movement. But how many other initiatives we would have to include as well in so many other areas on which our Olympic publications have reported ! Mass sport, education, art and culture are all inextricably linked with them, as Pierre de Coubertin would have wanted, in a momentum which is growing all the time.

But how- and this is my third theme - has all this become possible?

The answer is simple! We now have the means to implement our policy and in so doing, at least at the level of the IOC, while maintaining our total independence from the authorities with whom we otherwise enjoy frequent and close cooperation.

As for our partnership with television and internationally renowned commercial firms, it is developed in a way which has to be advantageous for both parties, but which must leave each the captain of his own vessel. That, of course, requires constant vigilance from the Olympic leaders. The essential thing is that the funds thus obtained be used in the interest of sport in all its forms. For its own needs, the IOC keeps around eight per cent of the total amount obtained.

There is certainly no reason for us to be ashamed of this action which we intend to continue and expand. But on one condition, which our young interlocutors in Rome made us understand with a frankness which was a sign of confidence. They expect, they hope, they demand that our actions live up to our words. No promotion of Olympism is conceivable unless it is stamped with the seal of truth, unless the inevitable shortcomings are acknowledged and corrected without hesitation or prevarication. If these conditions are respected, we can count on the young generation which I am convinced is worthy of our confidence. This willingness to work together must make us mindful that "to promote" also means "to raise to a higher grade or office". And the only real driving force of promotion is the strength of example.

Thus we are sent back to look in our mirror, that confidant which is also our judge.

1992	JULY-AUGUST	
BARCELONA	17-18-19	Executive Board(III)
	21-22-23	99th IOC Session
	25/7-9/8	Games of the XXV Olympiad
	NOVEMBER	
ACAPULCO	4-5-6	Executive Board (IV)
	7	Executive Board with the NOCs
1993	MARCH	
ATLANTA	15-17	Executive Board (I)
	18	Executive Board with ASOIF
	JUNE	
LAUSANNE	20-21-22	Executive Board (II)
	23-24	100th IOC Session
	SEPTEMBER	
MONTE-CARLO	18-19-20	Executive Board (III)
	21-22-23	101st IOC Session
	DECEMBER	
LAUSANNE	6-7-8	Executive Board (IV)
1994	FEBRUARY	
LILLEHAMMER	5-6-7	Executive Board (I)
	9-10	102nd IOC Session
	12-27	17th Olympic Winter Games
This calendar is provisional.		