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A royal gift

BY RAYMOND GAFNER

Editor-in-Chief

Lillehammer has given the IOC a royal gift for its centenary. You only have to open your eyes and prick up your ears to believe it.

Never before have the modern Olympic Games been more popular. in many *senses* of the word. Never have they had such a large audience, or been met with such a consensus of opinion. Our Norwegian friends, with their joyful enthusiasm, their sense of fair play, their hospitality, their good humour, their respect for nature, and their passion for sports, managed to create an extraordinary atmosphere of conviviality. The whole Olympic Family, including the athletes in their model village, felt at home. Olympism was among its own kind. But the dream setting was not improvised. It was the work of an exceptional organizing team directed by top quality leaders, at the head of which was Gerhard Heiberg, to whom President Samaranch awarded the gold Olympic Order at the closing ceremony. And then there were the tens of thousands of volunteers, embodying the essential virtues of the Norwegian people, constantly faced with the harsh side of life and aware of what solidarity, respect for oneself and for one's surroundings mean. Swept along by this invigorating tide of human qualities, many of the people who experienced these Games at first hand, in whatever capacity, realized - or remembered - the topicality of Coubertin's message: sport as an agent of culture, civilization, joy in physical effort. self-improvement and peace in a spirit of mutual respect. Thanks to the support of the media the whole of the Olympic Movement has benefited, emerging from the adventure with greater strength and prestige.

The IOC's centennial year could not have got off to a more favourable start. Now it will be up to the Olympic Movement to use the aura of the Olympic Games and the powerful means it commands to the full, in order to progress by reinforcing its credibility; and unity. This is President Samaranch's principal aim, But it also represents the greatest danger. Overcoming difficulties together can be a powerful aid to unity, Resounding success, on the other hand, can dissolve the motivating forces and prove a dangerous divider: "caveant consules" (consuls beware). How then can we begin our second century in the spirit of Lillehammer's example; how can we avoid disappointing the hopes that have been raised by this Olympic success?

As every human being is what he is, the people with whom he associates can effectively help him to rise above himself - if only at privileged moments.

Lynder certain circumstances a collectivity can therefore be worth more than the sum of the individuals it contains: it is easier to be worth more than one's own self within a group of peers. I have had several opportunities to observe this within the IOC. The oath given by its members is probably not unconnected with this.

Where do these reflections lead us? To the realization that every branch of the Olympic Family must evaluate the responsibility it undertakes through its choice of leaders and their behaviour. From the very beginning, the IOC was intended to awaken in its members the desire, and also the opportunity, to surpass themselves in carrying out their duties, on the understanding that every human community has its weaknesses and shortcomings. Coubertin constantly fought to maintain and to benefit from the historic co-optation system. He stood steadfastly by the arrangement whereby members represented the IOC within their national or sports bodies, and not the converse. But it is clear that, in order to build upon Lillehammer's promising example and to preserve its unity, the IOC must adapt its structures without delay to today's social fabric, and choose a recruitment formula that combines the advantages of co-optation and those of ensuring the representation of the other forces within the Olympic Movement.

When creating the IOC, Coubertin did not hesitate to draw inspiration from familiar examples, including that of the Henley Regatta Committee, and this worked in his favour.

Today we need to think about whether we want our policies to reflect a more open approach, by striking a fertile balance between the concern for permanence and the need for evolution. I expect that intense discussions on this subject will take place over the coming months. These are not only desirable, but a matter of priority, and I look forward to being involved.