



The Letter from the PRESIDENT

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By le Prof. Bruno Grandi, FIG President

13th World Gymnaestrada

THE DORNBIRN'S LESSON!

From 08 to 14 July, the 13th edition of an event born in Rotterdam in 1953, the World Gymnaestrada, took place in Dornbirn, in Austria's Vorarlberg region. More than simply a quadrennial event that attracts gymnasts from all over the globe, this event is the largest gathering of athletes in the world!

57 countries and 22000 gymnasts attended! The beauty of the show was absolutely amazing and in a perfect organisation.

The FIG is the patron of a mega event whose impact is much greater than the mere spectacular participation it receives. If you take a closer look, you'll find yourself pondering the event's cultural content, the impulses that draw participants in such numbers, the message it conveys and the responsibility carried by the Federation.

It is important to understand the FIG's history, to remember that at the time of its beginnings in 1881, founder Nicolas Cupérus pursued his goal to unite all those in gymnastics who drew from the pedagogical, educational, social and cultural virtues he advocated. It is interesting to note that Cupérus, a contemporary of the Baron de Coubertin, was opposed to all manner of competition. Both men strove to bring people together. They were idealists, innovators, but their means led to very different ends. The founder of the FIG was forced to relent in 1903, however, when the premier world championships in Artistic Gymnastics were organised in Anvers, yielding to the pressure wielded by the majority of his colleagues who favoured competition.

Why would 22,000 gymnasts decide of themselves to participate in an event devoid of ranking, podium or medals, at their own expense? This leads me to direct your attention to the message these gymnasts proclaim.

The number one event for our Gymnastics for All Committee, the World Gymnaestrada has all the ingredients for the success of gymnastics worldwide. This sport is the possessor of unique cultural standing, as it promotes the physical and psychological well-being of every individual, rather than thirsting after media attention.

Gymnastics for All, as we see it at the FIG, is the basis for our existence, the foundation of our edifice. Through simple extrapolation, we know that it brings together tens of millions of participants the world over, those who fill the gymnastic halls of clubs and make up our sport's spectacular audience, as witnessed at the Olympic Games.

Success such as this is a terrible challenge for us. Promoting health, well-being, uniting young and old, men and women, is just a small step in the direction of a health policy the FIG hopes to build up and radiate to those around it.

The President of the IOC aptly pointed out the danger awaiting our younger generations, who seem to be turning their backs on sport, seduced as they are by idleness, ease, hours spent watching television and inactivity. The direct consequences of this are startling: social isolation, obesity and cultural impoverishment.



There is even a greater danger, one that threatens the credibility and civic values of the Olympic spirit: violence in sport. Governments and states everywhere will have to face up to an old problem rearing its head as a new threat. Men and women with political responsibility will have to face the reality that there are sports devoid of violence, which are contaminated by the aggressiveness of unprepared and uneducated individuals, and which are in dire need of hearing the message of sport; a message in which mutual respect is the golden rule. In this way, the Gymnaestrada is a perfect example of a kind of gymnastics beneficial to modern man, through which he finds the secret to his physical, ludic and recreational needs.

That's the lesson of Dornbirn. At the delegations meeting, in my closing address, I reminded that *"Gymnastics is a culture, a way of life, a mindset that many people admire. I am proud to be a gymnast! Gymnastics knows no frontier. It is for anyone, anywhere. It is a common denominator among generations and a message of peace and camaraderie for all."*

Thank you Dornbirn!

Rom (ITA) / Moutier (SUI), 01.08.2007. BG/phs

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