

**Opening of the International Olympic
Meeting in Vienna 1951**
by H. E. Dr. techn. h. c. Ing. Leopold Figl
*the Federal Chancellor, entrusted with the functions
of the Federal President*

Mister President,
Ladies and Gentlemen!

The flag with the five rings is now flying over the Wiener Konzerthaus building proclaiming that the world parliament of sports is in session. In my capacity as head of the Austrian Government I hasten to welcome our guests who have come from the four quarters of the earth to prepare for the next Olympic Games in accordance with your noble ideals. To begin with, let me thank you for having accepted last year at your conference the invitation extended by the Austrian Federal Government, and for deciding to hold this year's conference in Vienna. It is a great honour for our capital. We fully appreciate it, and you may rest assured that we shall endeavour to make your stay as pleasant as possible.

Ladies and Gentlemen, the Austrian people are taking an extraordinarily great interest in your work. This is not very surprising considering their well known and deeply rooted love for sport of all kind. In Austria there exists, however, above and

beyond the mere interest in sports, a strong attachment to the basic principles of the Olympic Games, and we should like to do everything in our power to foster and to promote these ideals for which you stand. I believe that hardly any other institution is as well suited to bring the peoples together as the Olympic Games, and to teach the many different nations how to respect and to understand one another. Understanding and mutual respect are the preconditions for a proper, and above all for a peaceful, approach towards those who live beyond ones own frontiers.

The Olympic Games invite the sportsmen and women of the world to meet in peaceful competition. Everybody should try to win but not in any destructive or vindictive spirit. These games and these competitions are held according to well-established rules and are subject to decisions by umpires to whose decisions everybody has to bow. Where would mankind stand today had these measures of settling rival claims not remained confined to sports, but been applied to all kinds of human relations. Nevertheless, we must not underestimate the effect of the noble example which the Olympic Games set to the world. In the long run, these games which take place every four years, and in which the peoples of the whole world participate to select their champions by manly and yet peaceful means, cannot but leave their mark on a world longing for peace. Do not forget that the peoples of the world are following these games with the deepest possible interest wishing that the great international questions were handled on similar lines.

There is one more point which seems to me to be of particular importance. The man who revived the ancient Olympic Games in our time spoke these wonderful words: „It is not important to win. It is important to have taken part.“ There is great wisdom in this sentence. Indeed, it is of no importance to win for the sake of feeling superior to others! What is important in such a gathering of people from all continents, in such a competition where men and women of all colours, creeds and races take part, is that in your opponent you see a friend and a human being. By the mere fact of taking part each participant shows his determination to respect and understand all human beings, whoever they may be, and to meet them in peaceful competition. Of course, everybody wants to win. That is the basic motive of all competition. However, victory is not the only objective, and the vanquished need not feel either conquered or crushed. He congratulates the winner.

Ladies and Gentlemen! You will have noticed that the Austrian people have greeted and welcomed you with particular warmth. They have done so in the first place because of their deep attachment to all kind of sport and because at the last Olympic Games Austrian athletes were able to play a part very much greater than could have been expected from so small a people. There is one more reason, however. Everything that contributes to better understanding among the peoples of the world is being genuinely and gladly welcomed by the people of Austria. Last but not least, we approve of the principle of fair play, wishing that it were applied in other spheres of human relations as well. Let me define this principle thus: every sportsman should behave as he wishes and expects his opponent to behave. It is the principle of self-discipline which we are thus proclaiming, and strictly persuing. I need not tell you how much better mankind would fare, if this same principle were to govern all spheres of social intercourse. Indeed, I believe that were this kind of selfdiscipline practised in all spheres of human life, all that is regrettable in relations between the nations would be avoided, and that we could secure lasting peace.

We Austrian are proud that you should have chosen to meet in our capital to prepare for next year's Olympic Games, and that in these turbulent and uncertain days the call should go out from Vienna asking the athletes of the whole world to prepare both physically and mentally for that noble manifestation of peace which the Olympic Games will be. The Austrian Federal Government fully recognised the great moral value of your endeavours. In order to emphasise to the extent to which they appreciate it, they have asked you, the delegates of the International Olympic Congress, the men and women who are working for the perennial ideal of peace, to a reception which is to be held in the historic Congress Hall of the Federal Chancellery. There, where in 1815 the basis was laid for half a century's peace on our Continent, the Austrian Federal Government wishes to thank you once more for having chosen our little country, which has had to endure so much during this last decade and a half.

With the best wishes for the success of your work I declare this year's International Olympic Congress to be opened.