

THE EXPLOITS IN GUADALAJARA

I am taking a brief pause in my political analyses to dedicate this space to the exploits of our Cuban athletes at the Sixteenth Pan-American Games.

The Olympic Games and the international sports competitions revolving around them and which arouse such interest for billions of persons, have a beautiful history that should be remembered not for having been abused.

The contribution of the creator of the Olympic Games was particularly unblemished, more so than that of Nobel who, at one stage of his life, seeking to create a more efficient means of production, produced the explosive whose economic fruits he assigned to carry out his wishes for peace, awarding both scientists and brilliant writers as well as the head of an empire who orders the murder of an adversary in the presence of his family, the bombing of a tribe in central Asia or of a small independent country in northern Africa and the extermination of its commanding bodies.

Baron Pierre de Coubertin was the father of the modern Olympic Games; an aristocrat by birth, born in France, a capitalist country where peasants, workers or artisans were not given the possibility by that society to undertake that task.

Ignoring the wishes of his family who wanted him to become an army officer, he broke with the Military Academy and dedicated his life to pedagogy. In some ways, his life is reminiscent of Darwin, the discoverer of the laws of natural evolution. Coubertin becomes the disciple of an Anglican minister, founds the first magazine dedicated to sports and manages to get the French government to include it in the World Exhibition of 1889.

He begins to dream of bringing together sportsmen from every country in a sporting competition under the principle of union and fraternity, without any profits and driven by the desire to attain glory.

At first, his ideas were not understood but he persisted, travelling all over the world speaking of peace and union among peoples and all human beings.

Finally, the International Physical Education Congress being held in Paris in 1894 created the Olympic Games.

The idea met with resistance and lack of understanding in England, the principal colonial power; boycotted by Germany, the powerful rival empire; and even opposed by Athens, the city chosen for the first Olympiad.

Pierre de Coubertin was successful in committing emperors, kings and governments in Europe with his tireless efforts and diplomatic talent.

The principal factor was, in my opinion, the depth and nobility of his ideas that won the support of peoples around the world.

For the first time, on March 24, 1896, the King of Greece declared the First International Olympic Games of Athens to be inaugurated, 115 years ago.

Two destructive and shattering wars have occurred since then, both originating in Europe, costing the world tens of millions of persons dead in combat, adding to that the civilians who died in the bombings

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Published on FIDEL Soldier of Ideas (<http://www.comandante.biz>)

or because of the hunger and disease that followed. Peace is not guaranteed. What we know is that, in a new world war, modern weaponry could destroy humankind several times over.

It is in the light of these realities that I so admire the conduct of our sportsmen and sportswomen.

The most important thing about the Olympic movement is the conception of sport as a instrument for education, health and friendship among peoples; a real antidote for vices such as drugs, smoking, abusing alcoholic beverages and the acts of violence that so affect human society.

In the mind of the Olympic founder, the idea of salaried sports or the buying and selling of athletes never occurred. That was also the noble objective of the Cuban Revolution, involving the duty of promoting sports just as health, education, science, culture and the arts, always the undeniable principles of the Revolution.

Not only that, our country promoted the practice of sports and the training of coaches in Third World countries that were struggling for their development. The International School for Physical Education and Sports has been functioning in our Homeland for many years and it has trained many coaches who efficiently carry out their jobs in countries that at times compete in important sports with our very own athletes.

Thousands of Cuban specialists have provided their services as coaches and sports technicians in many countries of what is known as the Third World.

It is within the framework of those principles being applied during dozens of years that our people feel proud of the medals that their athletes obtain at the international competitions.

The transnationals of professional sports have left the dreams of the creator of the Olympics far behind.

Taking advantage of the prestige created by the sporting competitions, excellent athletes, many of them born in the poor nations of Africa and Latin America, are bought and sold on the international market by those companies and, only on a handful of occasions are they allowed to play on teams of their own countries where they were promoted as prestigious athletes by their personal efforts and because of their own qualities.

Our people, austere and sacrificing, has had to face up to the claws of those money-grubbing merchants of professional sports who offer fabulous amounts of money to our athletes and, at times, deprive the people of their presence with those gross acts of piracy.

As a sports fan, I have chatted many times with the most outstanding of them and that is why, on this occasion, I am really pleased to see the sports successes of our delegation on TV and their victorious return to the Homeland, back from Guadalajara where the United States, despite having approximately 27 times more inhabitants than Cuba, was only able to obtain 1.58 times more standings and the corresponding gold medals than Cuba which obtained 58.

Brazil, with more than 200 million inhabitants, got 48.

México, with more than 100, got 42.

Canada, a wealthy developed country with 34 million inhabitants, got only 29.

The total number of gold, silver and bronze medals won by Cuba was proportional to the number of standings mentioned.

Quite a few of our young athletes had truly amazing successes.

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Published on FIDEL Soldier of Ideas (<http://www.comandante.biz>)

Despite the victories which fill our people with pride, we have the duty to continue excelling.

Fidel Castro Ruz
October 30, 2011
10:11 p.m.

Date:

30/10/2011

Source URL: <http://www.comandante.biz/en/articulos/exploits-guadalajara?page=0%2C6%2C0%2C0%2C0%2C0%2C1%2C3%2C2>