

should have a modicum of flexibility—a confident airline covered by such an agreement might be allowed to increase its offering of seats by, say, 25 per cent above the norm agreed, provided that this was done at offpeak times. And where IATA is concerned, steps should be taken by governments acting as custodians for potential passengers, not as protectors of the airlines, to insist that fares on important routes such as the North Atlantic should quickly be reduced to a point which the efficient airlines consider would be economic. At present, fares tend to reflect what the inefficient airlines think they have to charge to keep in business.

Olympics Must Change

ATHLETES and their sponsors are fond of saying that the quadriennial Olympic Games are a means of fostering international friendship, but there can hardly have been an occasion since the games were reinstated in 1896 when the opposite seemed more likely to be true. It remains to be seen where the savage Israeli response to the savage terrorism in Munich last week will lead, but at best the hope of a permanent settlement in the Middle East has been delayed. But even without this flagrant violation of what the athletes fondly call the Olympic spirit, it had become shamefully apparent that the Munich games were an unhealthy outlet for base instincts of nationalism, chauvinism merging into xenophobia. For more than two weeks, newspapers all over the world have been full of exaggerated tales of the doings of national heroes at Munich, followed where appropriate by implausible explanations of their failure to perform as well as promised and sometimes by churlish reproofs. Countries such as the German Democratic Republic have been chidden for making competitive sport an instrument of international relations, but there is no evidence that comparable countries less successful at Munich were glad to have won a smaller share of the medals. Television cameras have been fixed lovingly on the flags of the countries at which their broadcasts were aimed whenever a national champion succeeded. The sordid spirit of nationalism was upheld by the decision of the International Olympic Committee that two black Americans should be banned forever from Olympic competition because they had not been sufficiently respectful when the United States flag was raised in their honour. What with the row about the admission of Rhodesia to the games and the bizarre declaration by the now mercifully retired president of the International Olympic Committee, Mr Avery Brundage, at the memorial ceremony for the dead Israelis last week that the pressure of black African countries which led to the withdrawal of the Rhodesian team was “naked political blackmail” comparable with terrorism in its gravity, it is plainly high time that the pattern of the Olympic Games should change.

What needs to be done is clear enough. When the Greeks held Olympic games, the rules were different and more civilized. For one thing, the competitors were individuals. For another, the competitions included rhetoric and drama as well as simple tests of brawn. Welsh eisteddfodau are a better contemporary model of the old festivals to Zeus than are the affairs which Mr Brundage

has been organizing since the Second World War. But the Olympic organizers must also be impressed, and made a little envious, by the way in which the competition between Fischer and Spassky at Reykjavik, in spite of all the preliminary hullabaloo (with chauvinistic trimmings, it is true), turned out to be an absorbing and an honorable contest of intellectual distinction.

The objective now should be to make the Olympic Games competitions between individuals designed so as to provide an opportunity for athletes to compete against each other as well as against objective yardsticks of performance culled from the record books. The idea that nations enter teams of competitors for the games should be, quite simply, abandoned. Team games should by the same test be outlawed—and if those who play basketball are anxious for there to be an international tournament, they should organize one for themselves. Boxing and wrestling should be dispensed with, not merely because they are unseemly but because knock-out competitions must of necessity involve luck at several levels. The fiction that those who compete in Olympic Games should be amateurs in the sense that they have never competed for money prizes or earned a salary from their sport should also be put aside—most simply by rewarding success at the Olympic Games with money prizes. The organizers of the Wimbledon tennis tournament have discovered, to their surprise, that this can be done without disaster. Whatever athletes may say, the world cannot allow these reforms to be neglected between now and 1976.

100 Years Ago



AT the sitting of the French Academy of Sciences, on Sept. 9, a number of communications on the subject of the ravages of the *Phylloxera vastatrix* in the vineyards of France were read by M. Dumas, and referred to the “*Phylloxera* committee” of the Academy. It appears that the disease is making fearfully rapid advances in Provence, threatening the speedy entire destruction of the crop. In the department of Vaucluse it is also rapidly increasing; while in that of l’Hérault it is rather diminishing. All the correspondents agreed that when once a plant is attacked cure is hopeless, and that it is almost impossible to prevent the parasite spreading to neighbouring plants by any other means than complete submersion under water, though the application to the roots of a soil composed of sand, manure, and some insecticide, will delay it for some years. There is no doubt that the wingless insect migrates above ground from the diseased to the healthy plant, and is carried in great quantities by the wind. M. d’Armand, of Marseilles, demanded that a prize of 500,000 fr., or, if necessary, 1,000,000 fr., be offered by the State to any one who shall discover a means of arresting the disease. The pest has made great advances also in Portugal, especially in the neighbourhood of Porto, Villa Réal, Douro, and Santarem; and a Royal Commission has been appointed to investigate fully the causes of a disease which threatens the destruction of one of the most important branches of national wealth, and the best means of curing it.

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