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SINCE the middle of this century the popularity of sport has grown phenomenally, in many respects following a similar course to the mass media, in particular television.

Sport has become integrated into the structure of our society, growing beyond its natural bounds of being purely a game, and touching all facets of life – cultural, social, economic and political.

Football, being the world's most popular and important sport, has not remained untouched by this phenomenon.

What is more, it has been one of the driving forces behind this development. Thus FIFA cannot help but be aware of the importance of the role it has to perform, as well as of the responsibility attaching to this role.

FIFA is the umbrella organisation for 150 football associations (plus 16 more waiting to join). It is thus the broadest, if not the most important, sporting body in the world.

At FIFA's head office in Zurich, a new administration centre – FIFA-House on Hitzigweg – was inaugurated in May 1979 to mark the association's 75th anniversary; this prestigious building is situated in the most elegant – and also the sunniest – part of Zurich, the Sonnenberg quarter.

Chairman of FIFA since 1974 is João Havelange – a Brazilian, and the first non-European to head the organisation – while for the last 30 years the Federation's General Secretary has been Swiss – Kurt Gassmann, then Helmut Käser, and now (since 1981) myself.

Founded in Paris in 1904 by the football associations of France, Belgium, Denmark, the Netherlands, Spain (actually the Madrid Football Club, later to become the famous Real Madrid), Sweden and Switzerland, FIFA is best known throughout the world for its organisation of the World Cup football tournaments, which take place every four years.

The next World Cup finals will be held in Mexico, and for the second time 24 teams will be competing. But apart from this competition, which surpasses even the Olympic Games in terms of importance, FIFA's activities do not appear to be very well known in Europe in general, and in

Switzerland in particular.

FIFA tends, however, to be overshadowed by its own offshoot, UEFA, which is continually in the public eye owing to the numerous competitions it organises and to its information service.

Indeed it is primarily outside Europe that FIFA operates. It

gives priority to those continents which are still in the development stage where football is concerned, namely: Asia, Africa, Central and North America, and Oceania.

The legislative power within FIFA rests with the Congress, which meets every two years. The last such meeting was in Madrid in July 1982, and the next will be in Zurich in May 1984, to be held in conjunction with the 80th anniversary celebrations.

At the Congress each of the national associations has one vote. This undiluted form of democracy is not without its drawbacks. The associations of the Asian, Caribbean and African countries hold a clear majority, even though their playing potential and intrinsic importance are far outweighed by those of Europe and South America.

The executive powers are wielded by a 21-strong executive committee comprising a president, eight vice-presidents and 12 members. The general secretariat sees to the administration of the federation and implements the decisions of the committee.

THIS month the Fédération Internationale de Football Association (FIFA) – the Zurich-based umbrella organisation of the national football associations – is celebrating the 80th anniversary of its foundation.

One of the more spectacular events being staged to mark this anniversary will be an international match between the finalists of the 1982 World Cup tournament, Italy and West Germany, to be held in Zurich on May 22, a day after the actual anniversary celebrations.

FIFA – promoter of world football

In order to develop and promote football throughout the world, the president of FIFA has launched a number of projects, not least among them the ongoing 'programme for the development of world football', which has the following objectives:

- To disseminate technical, administrative and scientific

medical care.

In 1977, also in the interest of promoting friendly relations in the field of international football, FIFA launched a Youth World Tournament, bringing together 16 of the world's best youth teams.

The first such competition was held in Tunisia, and the second in 1979 in Japan (where Argentina, with many of today's stars – Diego Maradona, Diaz and Barbas, as well as the Uruguayan Rubén Paz and the Paraguayan Romero – were the winners), while the third and fourth were held in Australia (1981) and Mexico (1983).

While one of FIFA's main tasks is to promote and develop sport, it must above all strive to preserve the traditional values and the very essence of sport:

- To bring out the personality of the individual through unceasing efforts in the field of youth training;

- To improve the health of sportsmen and sportswomen in general, and of competitors in particular, through carefully dosed training and match experience as well as through constant medical supervision (any abuses are pursued with the utmost stringency);

- To safeguard the cultural significance of sport through a continual exchange between sportsmen and sportswomen of different countries, races and religions.

It is nevertheless essential that sport should remain a game and continue to be at the service of society, rather than society being at its service. Only in this way is it possible to realise the ideal: 'A sound mind in a sound body'.

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By JOSEPH BLATTER
General Secretary of FIFA, Zurich

knowledge among FIFA members;

- To derive benefit, in a true sporting spirit, from the know-how already existing among the more privileged associations (primarily European), and to turn this knowledge to the advantage of the less well-endowed associations; in other words, to promote the oft-quoted 'North-South dialogue';

- To thereby raise the general level of the game so that the associations benefiting from this programme will be able to play an increasingly prominent role in international football;

- To simultaneously run an extensive campaign promoting and providing information about football on a worldwide scale, so as to familiarise people both with the sport and with the Federation.

This project, the first phase of which was implemented in 1976-79, was propagated among 75 countries by groups of four instructors, the basic principle being that football is not merely a question of playing tactics, but also of administration and organisation, refereeing and the provision of