

OLYMPIC ACADEMY IN GREECE

Following memorandum will be presented for discussion and eventual adoption to the members of the I. O. C. at the next session in Rome.

MEMORANDUM

for the foundation of an Olympic Academy in Greece.

(Figure également en texte français dans le present bulletin).

An Olympic Academy is to be founded by the Hellenic Olympic Games Committee, if the I. O. C. agrees to take it under its high protection. The purpose of the projected Olympic Academy is to spread the Olympic idea and ideals and to help in the education and training of young men to become worthy heralds of the Olympic ideals. To achieve this purpose, the Olympic Academy would invite yearly to Greece, chief officials of the Olympic institutions, experts and young students from all over the world, for a two months special tuition, to take place during the vacations of high schools and Universities.

The curriculum will include :

- a) History of the Olympic Games, Ancient and Contemporary.
- b) A general theory of sports and physical education.
- c) Philosophy, art and social sciences or, in other words, the mental background of physical culture, combined with practical physical training as also with music, choir singing, etc.

This tuition will be given in the neighbourhood of the city of Athens, pending a special building or buildings being erected at Olympia, and sports grounds being conditioned. Part of the yearly tuition will be devoted to visiting ancient sites and works of art.

Teaching will be honorarily assumed by well-known experts and professors to be appointed by the Hellenic Olympic Games Committee, in agreement with the I. O. C. Appointments and invitations to teach will be forwarded by the Royal Hellenic Ministry of Education to the competent authorities of the country to which may belong any of the appointed teachers. Travelling expenses to and from Athens will be assumed by the abovementioned competent authorities. All expenses in Greece will be met by the Hellenic Olympic Games Committee and the Olympic Academy Organisation.

Students will be chosen by the relevant National Olympic Committee from young men with such physical and mental qualifications as might make of them future Olympic leaders.

Considering that the tuition is to be given

both in English and French, it is necessary that the students possess sufficient knowledge of both languages.

Expenses to be incurred by students are payable in one full instalment to Olympic Academy Organisation. The amount could be paid either by the students themselves, or in the form of scholarships by the National Olympic Committee or the respective Governments.

The expenses covering the whole curriculum will be computed in due course.

Professors, Lecturers and Students will live under simple conditions in appropriate natural surroundings and in a single training camp, thus leading a life in tune with the solemnity of their mission.

Explanatory memorandum

regarding the projected institution of an Olympic Academy in Greece

All who regard sports, and more specifically the Olympic Games, as an essential factor in the physical and moral education of youth ask themselves with ever increasing interest whether the International Olympics really play in modern life the part envisaged by late Baron de Coubertin and his collaborators.

Their purpose have been so clearly and so often formulated that there is no need to quote all that has been written on the subject by Baron de Coubertin, Professor John Chryssafis, Lord Aberdare, Colonel P.-W. Scharroo and others.

To give a most precise idea of the importance given to the cultural element in Olympic Games, I can do not better than quote the very words used by Baron de Coubertin on the matter, as reproduced in *Bulletin* N° 12 of I. O. C. : « There is some confusion » he says, a between the Olympic Games and World Championships and the standard of collaboration in any one Olympiad is judged by the number of records lowered or raised by a few seconds or a few centimetres : Olympic Games are both more and less than World Championships. The constitute a pedagogic display that must gather, as in ancient days, round the cult of youth, the collective thought of the peoples and the success of any such display should be measured by

its repercussion on this collective thought. Olympic Games should be permeated by history, art and philosophy, they should build noble traditions, bring order and beauty in gestures, jealously preserve measure and proportion in all things, be organised in view of a durable and creative career far from passions and transitory fancies. »

He also says : « I hope that ever more the Olympiads in their succession will help to give a regular rhythm to the life of sports, circumscribe if and preserve if from its own excesses. »

Has this hope materialised ? One is led to doubt it.

As far back as 1927, Baron de Coubertin, then in Athens, expressed to me his fears in the matter and on the ground that the mechanisation of excessive training of athletes might be to the detriment of necessary balance between body and mind.

Since then, the evil has grown.

It is to put a brake on this tendency that on the initiative of Baron de Coubertin and Professor Chryssafis, at that time Director of Physical Education in Greece, a law was voted instituting « Classical Games » which, including Athletic Competitions, competitive executions of Music and Tragedies, would be held according to the traditions of classical times. »

The untimely death of Professor Chryssafis, of whom I had the privilege to be the pupil in sports, did not allow to give to this scheme its full meaning as implied in the sentence : « according to the traditions of classical times », which traditions may be summarised in the ancient precept : « MHA EN ATAN » (Nothing to excess). No excess in sports training (physical education) and, on the other level, no excess in schools and in cultural education, damaging the physical development of youth, but that balance between the education of the mind and of the body taught by Plato.

Unfortunately, the enforcement of the law of 1929 regarding « Classical Games » began in the wrong manner by a display badly carried out in the Panathenean Stadium during the 1934 Session of the I. O. C. It was more a stage parade than a show of athletes conscious of competing for victory. As was then said to me by late Count de Baillet-Latour, there was no « soul ». It lacked the intellectual preparation in the « precepts of classical antiquity », preparation which, in ancient times, took place in the « Gymnasium » and the « Palaistra » and reached its climax at Olympia, whither the candidates to the Games proceeded one whole month before the beginning of the competitions.

It is with the purpose more fully to adapt the institution of Olympic Games to its educational mission, that the Greek Olympic Committee has thought of organising an intellectual centre, where the best of the University youth of all countries

would be initiated to the Olympic principles under the guidance of persons of acknowledged competence in the matter.

These young men imbued with the rightness of these principles by the teachings of their masters and also by the influence of a climate in which were born and blossomed the laws of harmony and measure in everything, would become the missionaries of these ideas in their respective countries.

Later they might become the leading officers of sports and the heirs to the healthy conception by Olympism.

We believe that it is much better to prevent and restrain by persuasion tendencies towards sporting exaggerations and deviations than to oppose them by coercive measures and rules so often eluded.

Addressing ourselves to the most competent circles in matters of sports, we need not quote cases and facts confirming our contention.

May we be allowed, however, before ending, to quote an extract from the foreword to E. Norman Gardiner's book : *Greek Athletic Sports and Festivals*, published in 1910 :

« It is my hope that the present book may prove of interest to the general reader as well as to the student of the past. For though its subject may seem at first sight purely archaeological, many of the problems with which it deals are as real to us to-day as they were to the Greeks. The place of physical training and of games in education, the place of athletics in our daily life and in our national life, are questions of present importance to us all, and in considering these questions we cannot fail to learn something from the athletic history of a nation which, for a time at least, succeeded in reconciling 'the rival claims of body and of mind and immortalized this result in its arts. »

J. KETSEAS,

member of the I. O. C. for Greece.

Athens, January 1949.