

MILESTONES IN THE LIFE OF THE INTERNATIONAL OLYMPIC COMMITTEE

The Commemoration of former Anniversaries of the I. O. C.

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With the passing of the years, it is customary when celebrating the date of an anniversary or remembrance days, to recall the past and the previous commemorations concerning these events. Let us do likewise with regard to the official Jubilees celebrated by the International Olympic Committee.

In the first place let us recall how the International Olympic Committee was born. It happened at the issue of a Congress convened by Pierre de Coubertin and held in Paris from June 16th to June 24th 1894 which aimed at the Revival of the Olympic Games.

Let us quote a few passages from the description of this Congress which were written by the illustrious Renovator of the Games, the Father of neo-olympism in his book *Olympic Memoirs*. In the famous setting of the Sorbonne... a kind of subtle emotion overwhelmed the Assembly as if the classical beauty of antiquity was emanating from ancient times. Thus the spirit of Hellenism pervaded throughout the spacious Auditorium. From the very outset, the Congress realized its aim. I knew instinctively that nobody would ever consciously or otherwise vote against the revival of the Olympic Games. The motion was carried unanimously and adopted without opposition at the last sitting of the Congress on June 23rd... My ideas were accepted almost without discussion. I went on putting to the vote in succession the Fundamental Principles which I had previously conceived and fixed upon in my mind such as the cycle of every four years, the exclusively modern character of the contests, the exclusion of the schoolchildren, lastly the appointment of a permanent International Committee stable in its formation, composed of a body of members who were to become the representatives of the Olympic Movement in their respective countries... As to the choice of Athens as the site for the first Olympiad of modern times and the date of 1896, this motion was carried by acclamation.

The principle of varying the site of the Games did not raise too much opposition and was adopted. It was essential, otherwise the expense of having the Games could not have been met by any country...

The child was born. Two years later, he took his first steps in Athens, under the paternal supervision of Pierre de Coubertin and his sponsors, the Members of the first International Olympic Committee. Their first President from 1894 to 1896 was a Greek, Mr. Bikelas, delegate of the Pan Hellenic Society for Gymnastics, while the Renovator of the Games assumed the function of Secretary-General.

The first Modern Olympic Games held from April 6th to April 15th, 1896, at Athens on the very place of origin of the Ancient Olympic Games, were attended by 285 athletes belonging to 13 nations of which 14 came from America. Although the Games did not realize any outstanding result technically, they met with the greatest of success and aroused considerable interest. From that moment the child could stand on his own feet, move from one capital to another, go to Paris where the celebrations of the Games of the IInd Olympiad were held in 1900, then cross the Atlantic in order to hold in 1904 at Saint-Louis in the United-States, the Games of the IIIrd Olympiad. The triumphal procession was on the move winning one success after another. In the periods between the Games which moved the crowds to great enthusiasm straight away by the pageantry and technical results of their celebrations, the International Olympic Committee held periodically its Sessions, convened Conferences dealing with the moral and educative aspects which greatly helped to promote the development of the intellectual and philosophical character of the Olympic Movement.

In 1904, the international Olympic Committee was 10 years old. How did it celebrate this landmark ? By two manifestations which made a very deep impression.

In holding the Games of the IIIrd Olympiad at Saint-Louis, the International Olympic Committee while winning over America, laid the foundations of the original triple alliance between Greece, France and the United-States, which was ideally suited for bringing out the universal aspect of this institution founded on an uncontroversial basis. The Games at Saint-Louis met with considerable success despite the fact that the majority of the athletes participating were Americans. As the result of the distance and the modest resources at the disposal of the athletes belonging to the Old-World, the latter were represented only by a few British competitors and a team of German gymnasts.

The 10th Anniversary of the Revival of the Games was specially celebrated during the Session of the I. O. C. which was held in London. «The organization was just 10 years old wrote Pierre de Coubertin. Ten years ! What is that for an organization which has celebrated its millenium in the past and aspires to reach this age again ! This Commemoration was however very characteristic and its effect most successful. That year, the International Olympic Committee met in London and the Session was held under the patronage of King Edward in the ancient palace of the Lord Mayor. Six days were spent in fruitful sittings mingled with delightful entertainements and social gatherings. Already the I. O. C. was looked upon as an international power as shown by the telegrams sent by the King of Italy and Prince Colonna, Lord Mayor of Rome, acknowledging the decision of the eventual choice of Rome as the city where the Games of the IVth Olympiad were to be held. »

Their Celebrations was scheduled for 1908 but unfortunately in 1906, as the result of disagreement between the Italian Government and the Italian Olympic Committee, the I. O. C. was obliged to confer the Games on another capital, its choice fell on London instead of the Eternal City. In 1912 the Games of the Vth Olympiad were celebrated in Stockholm and aroused a very deep interest. They were attended by 2541 competitors representing 28 nations.

In 1914, the neo-olympism came of age. « In the freshness of its twentieth year, the prestige and glory which adorn it as part of its great inheritance of the past, is acknowledged by all. The new National Olympic Committees already formed in most countries, were convened at a Conference in Paris. The great Metropolis was a worthy setting for the brilliant fortnight of festivities which marked this Assembly. Municipal Authorities vied with ancient monarchic aristocracy in order to make the visit of the Delegates more memorable and lavished sumptuous hospitality on them.

»Unprecedented splendour was offered them by such combined forces as was never experienced under the republican regime... The

flag recently created with its five interlaced multicoloured rings on a white background stirred gracefully with the wind... »

It was in fact at the official Opening Ceremony of the Session of the I. O. C. in 1914, coinciding with the Jubilee Celebrations of the 20th Anniversary, that one saw for the first time, the panoply of flags with multi-coloured rings, displayed on both sides of the tribune of the Auditorium of the Sorbonne, the very hall where twenty years previously, the Revival of the Olympic Games had been decided upon.

The delegates to the Paris Conferences of 1914 had just parted and returned to their respective countries when war broke out. Four years of hostilities passed by, leaving Olympism intact and without blemish, during which time the headquarters of the I. O. C. were fixed permanently in Lausanne by the shore of the Lake Lemman, thus making this town the world's capital of Olympism.

Shortly after the armistice was signed, Baron de Coubertin called a meeting of the I. O. C. which held its first post-war Session in Lausanne in 1919 while commemorating the 25th Anniversary of the Revival of the Games. The most important political figure in Switzerland at the time was Mr. Gustave Ador, then President of the Swiss Confederation, who graciously agreed to preside over the commemorative Ceremony which was held with solemn dignity. The administrative meetings of the I. O. C. as well as the Technical Congress held on that occasion, were accompanied by numerous sport demonstrations and brilliant as well as varied artistic performances among which it is worth mentioning the arrival in Lausanne of a squadron of 14 French aircraft sent by Mr. Clemenceau, President of the French Republic, who by this gesture demonstrated the high esteem in which he held the I. O. C. and its President.

After reforging the chain by the Commemoration of the VIth Olympiad at Antwerp in 1920 and by holding a new Olympic Session at Lausanne in 1921, Neo-Olympism reached its 30th Anniversary in 1924, combining its celebrations with the holding of the Games of the VIIIth Olympiad in Paris. The official commemorative Ceremony took place on June 23rd in the same auditorium of the Sorbonne where similar functions had previously taken place, Mr. Gaston Doumergue, President of the French Republic, attended the Ceremony. Sumptuous receptions and brilliant festivities occupied the following fortnight while the I. O. C. held its Session and the Sport Federations met in Conference ; on July 5th with its usual splendour, the Opening Ceremony of the Olympic Games took place in the Stadium of Colombes and thereafter for the olympic period of a fortnight, sport reigned supreme.

The fourth Olympic decade was marked by holding the Games celebrating the IXth Olympiad in Amsterdam in 1928 and the Xth Olympiad in Los Angeles in 1932.

These celebrations remained famous for their unsurpassed beauty which led on to yet another milestone : the fortieth Anniversary of the Olympic Renaissance.

In the Spring of the year 1934 wonderful hellenic Fêtes were held in Athens and Olympia while on June 23rd of the same year a commemorative Service was held in the auditorium of the University of Lausanne attended by the famous Renovator of the Games. Baron de Coubertin in his 71st year expressed his feelings on this occasion by exclaiming. « At this very hour, forty years ago, the Revival of the Games was solemnly proclaimed at the Sorbonne. I reflect without vanity that their realization has been a perfect consecration of my ideals and fulfilment of my life's work ! »

The ten years which followed were marked by a brilliant celebration of the Games of the XIth Olympiad in Berlin which were pervaded by too strong a spirit of militarism and nazism which ended the Olympic Games on a sad note. On December 2nd 1937 we record the death of Baron de Coubertin followed by a terrible World war which, during the years 1939-1945 raged again in the world slaughtering the flower of its youth. In the very middle of the period of hostilities, according to the express wish of Baron de Coubertin, the 50th Anniversary of the Revival of the Games took place in Lausanne. The official day of commemoration included on its programme various artistic and sport performances and two Conferences dealing with the psychology and Educative value of sport. After a pilgrimage to the grave of Baron de Coubertin who is buried in the Cemetery of Bois-de-Vaux in Lausanne, an open meeting organized by

the International Bureau for sport's pedagogy, took place in the morning, in the auditorium of the University of Lausanne, the Rector of the University acting as Chairman and the Conference being on the following subject : « The teachings of Pierre de Coubertin ». In the afternoon, an official commemorative Ceremony organized by the Swiss Olympic Committee took place in the Auditorium of the University.

The members of the I. O. C. and the representatives of more than 30 Nations belonging to both sides of the belligerents participated in these demonstrations which took place without trouble under the protection of the Protocol and Olympic fair play.

A new decade opens and the fifth comes to an end. The war ended in 1945 and Olympism emerged unscathed from the conflict. The Games were celebrated successively in 1948 in London and in 1952 in Helsinki, just as if the cycle had never been interrupted.

The year 1954 shall mark another milestone, the sixtieth Anniversary of the I. O. C., which will be commemorated on hellenic soil, cradle of the Olympism of ancient times while numerous other manifestations organized by the National Olympic Committees will be held everywhere in the world. During the month of June, on the dates corresponding to those of the 1894 Congress, numerous ceremonies are scheduled to be held in Lausanne, seat of the I. O. C., and the last resting place of Pierre de Coubertin.

Sixty years ! Six decades. We express the earnest wish that no further storm will break on the future decades of Olympism and that in time to come, the Olympic Games shall always be held in time of Peace.
