

## SIXTY YEARS SURVEY

### Summing up the work accomplished by modern Olympism

*By Dr. Fr. M. MESSERLI, Privat-Dozent of the Faculty of Medicine of the University of Lausanne; Historiographer of the I. O. C.*

1894-1954. Sixty years have gone by...

In history as in the life of an organization like modern Olympism, a certain retrospection is necessary in order to be able to judge events in their true light and give them perspective.

After six decades of neo-Olympism and in view of the coming celebrations of the sixtieth Anniversary of the foundation of the I. O. C., let us establish the balance-sheet of this organization as well as specify the consequential effects it has exercised in our modern times.

#### AT THE END OF LAST CENTURY

In his book *Twenty Years Campaign*, published in 1908, Pierre de Coubertin stressed the fact that « a certain effort is

required to imagine what the general state of mind was like about 1880. »

Today this problem is just as difficult if not more : to grasp the mentality and to understand the state of mind and the ways of living of our fellow-men at the end of the last century ; as well as imagine what the impetus for sport was like when, thanks to the splendid initiative and generous impulse of Pierre de Coubertin, it was decided on the 24th of June 1894, at an International Congress for Sports, held in the Sorbonne in Paris, to celebrate from now on the Olympic Games in a cycle of every four years and in turn in the various countries. The program of these Games had to include all the different kind of sports practised in the civilized world. The Congress immediately appointed

an International Committee which it entrusted with the control and supervision of the development of the modern Olympic Games.

Romanticism was in fashion then. At the beginning, the sport movement was practically non-existent. Nobody had ever thought of promoting a far reaching organization of an international character ; only one institution of that sort existed : the Red Cross, directed by a Swiss Committee. It was founded in 1863 as the outcome of the tireless efforts of a noble spirited man ; Henri Dunant. The Red Cross exercised its humane and philanthropic activity over the whole world.

The Revival of the Olympic Games implicating an adaptation to modern life as well as giving them an universal character and appointing an International Committee composed of a body of members who were to be the Delegates of their own countries which belonged to all the continents, meant innovating. In these days, only the superior minded man could conceive and create an organization of world reaching effect, and think of reviving the Olympic Games Celebrations under a form conformed with modern conditions of existence and within the reach of the youth belonging to every part of the world, without distinction of race, religion or politics.

THE TRIUMPHAL MARCH OF OLYMPISM, ITS INTERNATIONAL CHARACTER AND POPULARIZING SPORTS

In the course of the Congress held in Paris in 1894 which voted in favour of the restoration of the Olympic Games, Pierre de Coubertin contrived to stir such enthusiasm that he persuaded the Delegates who represented 12 Nations, to give their adhesion straight away to the project of revival of modern Olympism. Amongst these were the Delegates representing Great-Britain and the United-States, two countries where sport was much more developed than elsewhere. In the course of the same year, two new nations joined this group, thus at the end of 1894 the International Olympic Committee was recognized by 14 countries. Ten years later, this figure rose to 22, and in 1914, on the eve of the outbreak of the first world war, it had reached 32 ; in 1924 the number of the countries which had constituted a National Olympic Committee recognized by the I. O. C. amounted to 45 while during the period of the second world war 1939-1945 it reached 60 ; in 1949, 70 nations possessed a National Olympic Committee acknowledged by the I. O. C. and up to our present time in 1953, there are 79 National Olympic Committees officially accredited to the I. O. C. The latter is composed of 71 members belonging to 47 different nations but representing the international Olympic jurisdiction in all countries.

The first Olympic Games were celebrated in Athens in 1896, thus in the year I of the

first modern Olympiad which covered the period of 1896 to 1899. They met with an evergrowing popularity arousing considerable interest not only among the people of the cities where the celebrations took place but also over the whole world.

I compiled herewith the number of the competitors and of the countries they represented at the Celebrations of the first Olympic Games :

Olympiad		Athletes	Nat.
Ist.	Athens 1896 . . . . .	285	13
IInd.	Paris 1900 . . . . .	1066	20
IIIrd.	Saint-Louis 1904 . . . .	496	10
IVth.	London 1908 . . . . .	2059	22
Vth.	Stockholm 1912 . . . . .	2541	28
VIth.	Berlin 1916, cancelled.		
VIIth.	Antwerp 1920 . . . . .	2606	29
VIIIth.	Paris 1924 . . . . .	3092	44
IXth.	Amsterdam 1928 . . . .	3015	46
Xth.	Los Angeles 1932 . . . .	4069	49
XIth.	Berlin 1936 . . . . .		
XIIth.	Helsinki 1940, cancelled.		
XIIIth.	London 1944, cancelled.		
XIVth.	London 1948 . . . . .	4468	59
XVth.	Helsinki 1952 . . . . .	5869	69
Winter Olympic Games			
Ist.	Chamonix 1924 . . . . .	203	16
IInd.	Saint-Moritz 1928 . . . .	491	25
IIIrd.	Lake Placid 1932 . . . .	307	17
IVth.	Garmish 1936 . . . . .	756	28
Vth.	Saint-Moritz 1948 . . . .	878	31
VIth.	Oslo 1952 . . . . .	960	30

The steadily progressive figures which we indicated in the above statistics along with the evergrowing number of countries which took part in the Games, Olympiad after Olympiad, tend to prove that the Olympic Movement is making its influence felt in every continent and in all the different parts of the earth. Everywhere the youth of all countries shows an ardent desire to compete in the Games and to represent its own country there. The repercussion of the Games, beside causing universal interest at the time of their celebrations, has in addition become internationalized and made sport accessible to everybody thus encouraging the practice of sports among the people of all countries, in every continent. All these achievements are the direct result of the Revival of the Games.

THE I. O. C. CONSTITUTES A WORLD STATE FOR OLYMPISM

Ever since the foundation of the I. O. C. Baron Pierre de Coubertin while assuming the functions of Secretary-General from 1894 to 1896 and President till 1925, endeavoured to instil an entirely new spirit of a special character to this new organization while working for its stability. The I. O. C. has been founded with the concepts of an universal basis, the members of which were to be considered as ambassadors representing

the countries or continental regions to which they belong. In this capacity, they had the right to constitute National Olympic Committees thus ensuring the I. O. C. with stability, continuity of action and freedom which helped it to discharge its duties entirely free of all political interference or government control. These duties consisted chiefly in choosing the cities and ensuring the regular celebrations of the Games and giving them its patronage. All the sports events were submitted to the technical Ruling issued by the Sport International Federations, which are responsible for the technical organization of all sports contests as well as appoint the juries.

THE INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZING OF SPORT  
IS THE WORK OF THE INTERNATIONAL OLYMPIC  
COMMITTEE.

When modern Olympism was launched, the technique of sport was non-existent, it had to be created. No International organization existed at that time except the International Rowing Federation which was founded in 1892 which included only a group of European Associations ; the few National Federations already founded applied technical rules that varied greatly. Thus at the time of the first celebrations of the Games in Athens from March 25th to April 2nd 1896, when the Program was officially established, one had to have recourse to the technical Rules of the French Union of Athletics for all racing events, to the British Athletic Amateur Association for jumping and throwing events, to the Paris Association for the promoting of fencing for the fencing events, to the Sailing Club of Paris and the Yacht Racing Association for yacht-ing contests, to the Rowing Italian Club for the rowing events and lastly to the International Cyclist's Association for « velo-cipede » events and to All England L. T. Association and Marylebone Cricket Club for the tennis competitions. As for gymnastics, wrestling, swimming and equestrian contests, no Rules existed and it was necessary to elaborate a set of technical Rules in order to have the sports competitions. Thus the I. O. C. was compelled during the first Olympiad to act in the place of the non-existent International Sports Federations and to make up for the lack of Rules.

From the beginning of its foundation, the I. O. C. decided to recognize only one Authority responsible for one particular form of sport, and with this end in view, the Committee did its utmost to promote the organization of International Sports Federations. Encouraged by the success realized from the outset by the Olympic Games, we saw at the beginning of the XXth Century, the promoting of numerous International Sports Organizations, each having the authority to control the sport it governs. These Federations were recognized by the I. O. C. as being the only official

technical authorities having full control of the sport they are concerned with.

A set of definite technical rules was established and carefully worked out by each International Federation they were adopted by all countries thus standardizing their application not only at the celebrations of the Olympic Games but also at International competitions in the world, as well as National and local Championships. Thanks to these standardized Rules, athletes of all different races and unable to speak the same language can now meet and compete against each other. Over the whole world, sports are standardized while competed for, as they are judged in the same way and the results obtained are based on a recognized scale of marks acknowledged everywhere which can be compared with each other.

This unity of appreciation has allowed to establish record lists for all the different sports' events, records which are timed by chronometer. It was at the Games of the Ist. Olympiad held in Athens in 1896 that the first official list of the world and Olympic records was issued, it was kept up to date for each sport.

This list was checked by the International Sports Federations when dealing with world records and by the National Federations when dealing with regional records.

From the very outset of the Revival of the Games, Pierre de Coubertin realized that the record as well as the champion were necessary in order to promote the development and progressive evolution of the sports' movement. It is a human trait to wish to compare the results realized by the various champions, man likes to applaud to the breaking of each new record which he considers an improvement of his race and he is often wondering how far this race of record breaking in individual events will go. On several occasions, at the close of the Games of one Olympiad, as was the case at Stockholm in 1912 when several records had been beaten, one was convinced that the peak of human effort had been reached and yet one has registered further record breaking performances in the course of all the succeeding Olympic Games.

As a striking illustration of the health of the peoples, the Olympic Games have established a systematic list of records and contributed to the improvement of the physical and moral health of the world's youth.

THE MODERN OLYMPIC GAMES, ORGANIZATION  
PLURISPORTIVE

When the Revival of the Games took place, the general practice of sport was not only, in its early stage, practically non-existent but the adepts performing the various forms of sports actually ignored each other. In centralizing the multiplicity of the sports practised, Baron de Coubertin, when creating the Olympic Games, established a correlation between one sport to the other.

On this point, we wish to correct an erroneous notion frequently heard affirming that. At the beginning, the modern Olympic Games consisted only of athletics events to which various other sports were added on. Right from the start, the Games' Program included in addition to athletics, contests of gymnastics, fencing, shooting, swimming, rowing, yachting, cyclism, equestrian sports and tennis, these were followed later by various sports which helped to complete the Program. At the beginning, the latter was already very complete and varied. The participation to the Olympic Games afforded an opportunity for athletes to meet in the first multisportive world's meeting. There they were given the chance to see other form of sports and to appreciate the technique and effort produced by those who practised them, this helped greatly to do away with the antinomy of sports which existed among sportsmen before the Revival of the Games ; they were convinced that the practice of one sport was detrimental to the other.

IN PROCLAIMING THE PRINCIPLES RULING AMATEURISM, THE I. O. C. HAS PROTECTED THE YOUTH OF THE WORLD FROM A MERCANTILE SPIRIT

One of the chief worry of Baron de Coubertin when he renovated the Olympic Games was to prevent the prevailing materialism to corrupt and affect the modern Olympic sports Movement. To this effect, on his proposition, the I. O. C. decreed that the Games were to be for Amateurs only. This decision which has been confirmed in the course of all the olympic congresses in which Amateurism has been discussed, seems to us very fair : the Olympic Games must remain the championships of the world and be free of any mercenary influence.

On frequent occasions, when discussing with the Renovator the question of amateurism sport and professional sport, I noticed that he was not an adversary of professional sport which, according to him, should be the exception, grouping only the paid sport coaches, the cyclists, the boxers or any other athletes receiving a paid fee or remuneration of any kind. He held in high esteem all the professionals who practised their sport fairly and correctly, and he was of the opinion that the International Federations should control both : amateur sport and professionals, conferring on them a different kind of license. This device would permit to control all the championships and performances of the same sport. As for the Olympic Games, de Coubertin sincerely hoped that they would remain an institution made to set the value of the amateur athlete, outside the sphere of all financial profit or mercantile spirit. At the Olympic Games the athlete fights for the honour of his country and for the glory of sport, in any case when victorious, he is only presented with a silvergilt medal while the athlete clas-

sified second in the Roll of Honour receives a silver medal and the third prize's award consists of a bronze medal.

In conclusion, Olympism in upholding the principles ruling amateurism, has proved itself a good school demanding devotion and a spirit of self-denial on the part of the athletes as well as from the Directors who are asked to bring to the cause of Olympism a spirit of unselfishness.

OLYMPISM, A SCHOOL OF FAIR PLAY AND SPORTSMANSHIP

A criterion of fair play, on account of its oath « We swear that we will take part in the Olympic Games in fair competition, respecting the regulations which govern them and with the desire to participate in the spirit of sportsmanship for the honour of our country and for the glory of sport. »

Since the revival of the Games, the spirit of fair play and chivalry has pervaded the stadias and the sports grounds during the period of the Games and this spirit has spread throughout the world whenever sports manifestations have taken place.

On the suggestion of the Renovator of the modern Games, athletes have contracted the habit of saluting each other at the beginning and at the conclusion of the match while the vanquished party, devoid of all resentment, congratulates and shakes hand with the winner thus showing that the main principle of sport is that the best man wins. Time without number, we witnessed in the stadium the champion having just won an event, carried shoulder-high, sign of homage and triumph, by his vanquished opponents who he has outclassed.

CONCEPTS OF THE OLYMPIC IDEAL

Let us try to define the ideal aimed at by modern Olympism : it is by the practice of sport and the participation in the Olympic Games that Olympism aims at increasing the physical, intellectual and spiritual value of the athlete as well as secure the equilibrium of the individual.

Let us quote a phrase of de Coubertin who defined the spirit of the Olympic idea and ideal : « Olympism offers a school for instilling noble mindedness and purity of motives as well as developing physical energy and staying power as long as one sets the sense of honour and disinterestedness in sport in par with the muscular effort. »

Lastly, in addition to the above, nothing can define the concepts of the Olympic Ideal better than the devise « Citius, Altius, Fortius » given by Didon to his pupils in former times, and adopted by Pierre de Coubertin for the use of modern Olympism.

OLYMPISM IN THE LAST TWO WORLD WARS

Since the Revival of the Olympic Games there occurred two outbreaks of hostilities

1 Pierre de Coubertin's : « Message to the sportive youth of all nations », 1927.

which have decimated the world's youth. I refer to the wars 1914-1918 and the war 1939-1945. Both prevented the celebrations of the Games of the VIth Olympiad which was to be held in Berlin in 1916 and was cancelled also the Games of the XIIth Olympiad (Helsinki 1940) and of the XIIIth Olympiad in 1944 which was to be held in London. Despite the hostilities the I. O. C. continued its work and contact was maintained amongst the majority of the members of the committee.

As soon as the 1914-1918 war ended, the I. O. C. met in its headquarters in Lausanne in 1919 for commemorating the 25th Anniversary of its foundation. It decided to hold the Games of the VIIth Olympiad in Antwerp in 1920.

In the very middle of the period of the world war 1944, the 50th Anniversary of the foundation of the I. O. C. was celebrated in Lausanne. In spite of the war, the Representatives of more than 30 different countries belonging to both groups of the belligerents met without trouble or any difficulty under the protection of the Protocol which was strictly enforced. A meeting of delegates belonging to belligerent nations mingling together at social gatherings is probably unique!

In Lausanne in 1944, organized by the Olympic Institute founded in 1915 by baron de Coubertin, numerous training sports courses took place for the benefit of the military prisoners who had escaped from Germany and Italy and were refugees in Switzerland. The grouped athletes coming from 11 different countries belonging to the belligerent nations of both sides took part in these courses which gave rise to no incident, a discipline voluntarily accepted by all the men prevailed, and the Olympic spirit of fair play reigned supreme. This occurrence as well as the commemoration of the 50th Anniversary of the I. O. C. were worth recording as they reflect great credit and honour on Modern Olympism.

Following closely the end of the second world war namely in 1946, the Executive Commission of the I. O. C. met again in London and decided to entrust this city with the Games' Celebrations of the XIVth Olympiad in 1948.

Thus Olympism has lived through the last two world wars unhindered, carrying out its work by holding its 50th Anniversary in the very midst of the war period. It came out of the turmoil, unscathed. The I. O. C. lost no time in collecting the athletes of all over the world as soon as the wars ended in order to get them to participate in the Games of the VIIth Olympiad in Antwerp in 1920 and in the XIVth Olympiad celebrated in London in 1948.

#### OLYMPISM AS PEACE ORGANIZATION.

It is under the aegis of Olympism that after the two world wars the rapprochement of former belligerents took place.

Already in 1919, the Directive Powers of the Olympic Committee belonging to the « central European Nations » resumed contact with the I. O. C. However the athletes belonging to these countries refrained from competing in the Games till 1928. This happened again shortly after the last world war when the German athletes refused to compete in the 1948 Games which were held in London.

A fact of importance is that at the Games of Helsinki, in 1952, the U. S. S. R. as well as the other countries attached to the East of Europe have resumed sport relations with the countries of the West of Europe. This first contact which took place between the organizers and the athletes belonging to different ideology was conducted in perfect order and great courtesy. This augurs well for the resuming of contact and relation of a more general order among these countries; this we ardently desire in order to maintain the world's peace.

By bringing nations together and giving people the opportunity to meet, to know and esteem each other and by forging ties of friendship Olympism realizes a vital work of Peace.

May Olympism succeed in its work of bringing happiness to humanity.

---

In Belgium there exists a medical preventive service which is available, and indeed compulsory, for all students who practise sport in the two independent universities, and which is optional in State universities.

The youth of Ancient Greece was equally rich in intellectual and virile qualities, and while it was tireless in running, skilled in the throwing of the discus and the javelin, and full of courage in pugilistic contests, it also had a thirst for intellectual pursuits covering the fields of philosophy, music, and sculpture. The soul of youth was not indifferent to the beauty of a fine poem; care of the body was also of importance.

The world has suffered from the upheavals of warfare and strife, bringing insufficiency, privation, and malnutrition in their train. It needs now more than ever before « efficient individuals » after the excellent formula of Dr. Pauchet.

The national spirit is gaining a hold on sport and is converting it into a tool of propaganda imbued with faint mysticism, thus diverting it from its original and beneficial aims.

Sport constitutes a powerful factor conducive to good understanding and fraternization, but it is powerless when statesmen make themselves heard and use it as a means of political propaganda to sweep the masses off their feet.

*Victor Boin.*