

# Speech delivered by Count Thaon di Revel

of the Occasion of the Unveiling of the Memorial Tablet dedicated to  
Alberto Bonacossa in Cortina

Before the Opening Ceremony of the VIIth Winter Olympic Games at Cortina, the Italian National Olympic Committee recalled to the mind of the present and future generation of sportsmen, the memory of a great champion of sport and Olympism : Alberto Bonacossa, who was a member of the International Olympic Committee for Italy. The Olympic Ice Stadium of Cortina has been dedicated to him as a token of remembrance and a special ceremony took place there to commemorate the unveiling of the memorial tablet. Count Paolo Thaon di Revel who was his colleague within the International Olympic Committee and the Italian National Olympic Committee recalled his memory in the following terms :

*Mr. President, Members of the International Olympic Committee,*

*Ladies and Gentlemen,*

We are all assembled in this hall, in the presence of Countess Marisa Bonacossa and her son Cesare, to pay tribute to the memory of one of our colleagues who lived among us for a long time, and who passed away three years ago, leaving behind him an unforgettable souvenir.

Born at Vigevano on August 24th 1883, son of Count Cesare and Countess Angela Cuzzoni, Alberto Bonacossa was a personality second to none in the International world of sport. He proved himself a unique personality of his kind, inasmuch that he revealed himself a champion in the great variety of sports which he practised ; he shouldered most complex responsibilities in the execution of his duties as a leader of sport ; also displaying great enthusiasm in his sporting career, both in his capacity of Maecenas and Editor-Proprietor of the "Gazzetta degli Sports".

Very early, in life, at a time when Italian sport was in its infancy and growing amidst general indifference and hostility, the young Alberto proved himself an enthusiastic pioneer, full of confidence in the future of sport.

He started by taking up athletics, and later on practised other forms of sports in which he excelled.

He distinguished himself more especially in tennis. During four consecutive years, he was classed as one of the ten best Italian Players in several tennis championships.

For a long time, Alberto Bonacossa was a fervent champion of skating. While still a young student, he won his first skating contests in Switzerland, at Engelberg and Andermatt. In 1913, he began to attract notice in Italy, and in 1914, he won his first title of National Champion in the individual artistic skating events, title which he kept in 1915 and actually retained from 1920 to 1928. In 1920, 1921 and 1922, partnered by his wife Countess Marisa who is present here today, he became Champion for Italy in the artistic skating events for couples.

Alberto Bonacossa has also earned fame in the field of alpinism. He has climbed most of the famous summits of the Alps, for this he was awarded the rather rare distinction of Academic Member of the Italian Alpine Club.

While he was obtaining outstanding results in all these sports, he found time to continue his athletic career, to win races, and he competed in gymnastics, athletics and weight-lifting contests with the "Cristoforo Colombo Club" of Genoa.

While still a student at Zurich, he attracted attention when he practised greco-roman and Japanese wrestling.

At Geneva in 1905, he participated in the Swiss Rowing Championships when he was classed in the "Fours" as well as in the "Eights".

Alberto Bonacossa practised riding for a long time and was an excellent horseman. From their very start, sports pertaining to motors such as motoring and motorcycling found in him an enthusiastic pioneer and partisan.

In addition to all these sporting activities, he proved himself a good swimmer and belonged to the football team "The Grasshoppers of Zurich".

Officer during the first world war, he won distinction in the field and was awarded the military silver medal of the Order of Merit.

Once Peace was signed, Alberto Bonacossa while still carrying on his practice of sports, saw himself faced with the obligation to assume the charges of a leader and organizer of sport, which gave him the opportunity to do justice to his vast experience derived from his multivarious activities in sports. Inasmuch that he went in successfully for a large number of sports, he became entrusted with numerous sports charges and responsibilities.

In 1925, he was elected member of the International Olympic Committee and had the good fortune to be for a great number of years, one of the most appreciated collaborators of de Coubertin. In later years, he also served under the collaboration of other Presidents of the International Olympic Committee who had also the opportunity to appreciate his services: they were de Baillet-Latour, Edström and Brundage.

He was elected member of the Executive Board of the International Olympic Committee for which he was serving for many years, in 1935. At various times, he held the following posts : President of the International Motorcycling Federation (1943-1946); Vice-President of the International Automobile Clubs Federation (1935-1946) ; President of the Italian Automobile Club (1936-1943); Deputy Special of the Italian National Olympic Committee in 1943. All this enumeration is to show only a few of the most important duties which were under his control.

In his capacity of Italian member of the International Olympic Committee, he interpreted the views and voiced the necessities required by Italian sport on an international basis. Thus, when Italy was still in a most delicate situation, he obtained the concession of the VIIth Winter Olympic Games for Cortina in 1956. In his mind, this was the first step towards preparing the candidature and its being assigned the future Olympiad of 1960. This wish which was the ambition of his whole life was realized in Paris last June. Unfortunately, Alberto Bonacossa was not to live to see his triumph. We must however admit that we have reaped what he has sown through him preparing the ground for so many years beforehand also thanks to the authority of his name passed down to posterity, he contributed to a very large extent to Rome having the honour to be chosen for the organization of the XVIIIth Olympiad in 1960.

In dedicating today to the late Alberto Bonacossa the Olympic Ice Stadium, at Cortina, on the eve of the official Opening of the VIIth Winter Olympic Games, the Italian National Olympic Committee wishes to pay tribute to his memory by expressing

the deep and immense gratitude felt by all sportsmen in Italy for his outstanding devotion to sport.

May his name engraved here on the marble, while keeping his memory alive forever, inspire

future generations of sportsmen with the magnificent example bequeathed to us by Alberto Bonacossa in his capacity of athlete, line all-round champion and outstanding sports' leader.

A  
ALBERTO BONACOSSA

ASSERTORE E PROMOTORE  
DEI VII GIOCHI OLIMPICI D'INVERNO  
IL COMITATO OLIMPICO NAZIONALE ITALIANO  
RICONOSCENTE DEDICA  
AFFINCHÉ ATLETI E DIRIGENTI RICORDINO  
IL SUO NOME E LA SUA OPERA

CORTINA D'AMPEZZO. 23 GENNAIO 1956

