

CORRESPONDENCE

world, took place in the large amphitheatre of the Sorbonne in Paris, when Baron Pierre de Coubertin, supported by the sport leaders of 14 nations, announced his decision of reviving the Olympic Games.

What driving power incited this 'Frenchman of noble descent' as he was called by Paul Perret, to revive from the past the highest tradition of competitive sports?

He explained himself his motives for doing so in the following terms: 'Nothing in ancient history stirred my imagination more than Olympia, this dream city... Long before thinking of extracting from its ruins the idea of a revival, my mind was busy with the notion of rebuilding Olympia, and reconstituting its linear aspect. Germany had brought to light what was left of old Olympia: why should France not succeed in reviving the past splendour of Olympia? It did not take long for this idea to take a concrete form in the project of the revival of the Games, and this was all the more appropriate that the point had been reached when international sport has to assume its part in the world again.'

What did de Coubertin mean when he alluded to 'Olympia splendour'?

It stood for laying down arms and entering in a fair competition, with the desire to win; a fight devoid of hate, a consecration of the value of sport but above all bringing out human qualities, for it is easy to imagine what is expected from an Olympic champion in the way of self-denial, self-control, discipline, perseverance and strength of mind; it was the cult of plastic beauty of the bodies in motion allied to the will to conquer.

For the humanist Pierre de Coubertin, the splendour of the Olympic Games also stood for the confirmation of the fact that from now on sport was part of the upbringing of

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Olympic Day in France

On June 23rd 1894, a momentous event, which caused a sensation throughout the

the modern man and this applied to all, as he wanted to see champions drawn from the mass of sportsmen, not reserved to the few selected athletes or specially 'trained'.

That the Renovator conceived all at once: the renewal of olympic contests, the organization of the Games and defined the spiritual grandeur of sport as well as the dangers it entails as soon as it becomes an aim and ceases to be a means of physical, mental and moral achievement, is sufficiently prodigious to cause the youth of today to admire this pionner who devoted his life to it, when it

practises the sport activities he instituted for it in such splendour. May this 'Olympic Day' organized today throughout the world serve the two fold objects: paying homage to Pierre de Coubertin and serve cause of sport.

'The Olympic Games, he once wrote, are not mere world championships but they are above all meant to be a festival of universal Youth, the Spring of mankind.'

MAURICE HERZOG,

High Commissioner of the Youth and Sports.