

A Restatement

In order that we may be in possession of the true historical facts, we have submitted the above article, kindly written by Mr. Banciulesco, to Mr. Jean Ketseas, member of the International Olympic Committee for Greece, and a great Hellenist. Mr. Jean Ketseas has been good enough to give us his opinion, which we reproduce here. With these two opinions, the historical side of this problem is clear. We are grateful to both these authors for their assistance.

With reference to the article by Mr. Banciulesco, I beg to make certain modifications, which, in fact, do not make any basic changes in this interesting monograph.

First of all, Evangelheli Zappas was a Greek, who came originally from Epirus in the North West of Greece. Dr. F. Mezö was correct in his book when he gave rank of *Major* to Evangelheli Zappas, who did indeed fight in the Greek War of Independence of 1821-1829, and it was on the battlefield that he was awarded the rank of Major in the Greek Army. It was only after the end of the War of Independence that he went to live in Moldavia, now part of Rumania, where, having bought a considerable amount of land, he devoted himself to its development and to trading in grain. Evangelheli as well as his brother Constantine although resident in the Danube Provinces always remained Greek nationals.

In 1858, Evangelheli Zappas sent a letter to the King of Greece, Otto I, in which he offered the sum of about 600,000 francs for the 'restoration of the Olympic Games, to be celebrated every four years, following the precepts of the Ancient Greeks, our ancestors'. This proposition was accepted with certain additions which introduced besides the Games themselves musical, artistic and literary competitions, and also exhibitions of the products of the country. On August 19th 1859, by Royal Decree, an institution was founded under the title of *Olympic Committee* of which the aim was the realization of the project of restoring the Olympic Games as well as other different manifestations. This Committee was re-formed in 1865, after the death of Evangelheli Zappas, under the title of *Committee for Bequests and Olympics*. Mr. Banciulesco is in error when he describes the aim of Evangelheli Zappas as having been to restore the Olympic Games

according to modern conceptions (TON ARCHAION IMON PROGONON). It is also a mistake when Mr. Banciulesco calls the Games of 1859 'Panhellenic'. The Games of 1859, as well as those of 1870, 1875 and 1888 were always called 'Olympic'.

Our Rumanian collaborator slightly misrepresents the history of the pre-Olympic Games which took place in Athens for the first time in 1859, as well as those of 1870, 1875 and 1888, and he generalizes and exaggerates when he gives an account of the charges of the mounted police against the participants and the spectators. It is true that, instead of on the site of the old Stadium, the Games were held in the Place Louis, then outside the town, which was also used for racing and horse shows. The newspapers condemned the brutal behaviour of the police on foot and on horseback in their efforts to stem the rush, due to over enthusiasm, of the crowd trying to storm the enclosure which was reserved for officials. But one wonders where it is possible to read about 'charges in the streets', etc., etc.

The end of the story about the Games of 1870 differs completely from contemporary accounts. In effect, in the book written by Professor Chrissafis, which is a complete documentation in my view on the 'Modern International Olympic Games' we can read all the details on the organization and the programme of by of each of these Games, which, considering their epoch, were not to be despised. We can also read several newspaper cuttings of that period, where the celebration of these Games were reported on and somewhat severely criticised.

To tell the truth, the First Games of 1859 were a 'flop' — to use a theatrical expression — but the Second Games of 1870, according to the accounts of them at the time, were a great success. The delay in the celebration of these Second Games was due to political events such as the abdication of King Otto and the coming of the present reigning dynasty of Greece. The programme comprised, in addition to the athletic competitions which took place at the Stadium before 20,000 spectators — swimming events, regattas in the Bay of Phaleron and also horse racing. However, some of the events did not take place because of the unfavourable weather conditions.

At his death, Evangelheli Zappas bequeathed almost all his fortune to charities in Greece. The Committee appointed to look after this fortune was known as 'Zappeios Epitropi' and among other activities it was to subsidise the Committee for Bequests and Olympics. This committee was constituted under the chairmanship) of the Minister of the Interior working with and including people 'distinguished in the Arts and in Politics'. There precisely is the weak point in this organization, the activity of which depends every time on the political situation, as well as on the competence of its members in sporting matters.

On the other hand, the prohibitive laws of the Rumanian Government on the free

transfer of capital and income to foreign countries, laws which were passed during the last ten years of the 19th century, and above all the expropriation by this same government of land belonging to Evangelheli Zappas in Rumania, have reduced to nothing the financial possibilities of the Committee handling the Zappas funds. Here is the true reason for which the Committee for Bequests and Olympics refused to take on the organization of the First Olympic Games, which proposal was made to them by the Baron de Coubertin. (See the *Memoirs* of de Coubertin on this subject, page 108 beginning : *A campaign...*) Here then was the real cause of the refusal and this was told me afterwards by my father who was the Honorary Treasurer of the Committee.