

## In Paris...

### Pierre-de-Coubertin Square

*Pierre de Coubertin Square was inaugurated in Paris, on March 28th last. Situated in the 16th "arrondissement", near the Porte de Saint Cloud, at the intersection of the Dode de la Brunerie, Marcel Doret and General Claverie avenues, it faces the Stadium of the same name.*

*This dedication is the result of the proposal made to the Paris Municipal Council by its doyen, Mr. Armand Massard, President of the French Olympic Committee and first Vice-President of the I.O.C. ; the proposal was first reported in our "Bulletin" No. 89, at the time it was adopted.*

*At the inauguration ceremony, Mr. Albert Chavanac, President of the Paris Municipal Council, and Mr. Armand Massard each made a short speech, from which we are happy to be able to reproduce here the main passages for the benefit of our readers.*

#### **Mr. Chavanac's speech**

We will never sufficiently honour the memory of Pierre de Coubertin.



*Mr. Armand Massard, first vice-president of the I.O.C. (Photo by Actualités Mondial Photo, Paris.)*

It may be wondered in fact — and it would be interesting in this connection to carry out one of those gallup polls our age is so fond of — how many of those who owe their physical and moral well-being to the practice of sport, the popularity of which has been favoured by the renown of a fair international competition, are familiar with this name which is nevertheless so famous.

It should never be forgotten that Pierre de Coubertin considered sport as a means of education, that is to say of physical and intellectual development, the development of the "whole man".

"Thought and good judgement, wrote Pierre de Coubertin, are necessary to win in sport. At every moment the sportsman is called on to evaluate and compare, with great speed, the outstanding sporting feat almost always being due to the promptness of a decision."

In a century when the development of technology, undoubtedly necessary for material progress, can

represent a risk or a threat to the preservation of the values of the mind, to give priority during the increased hours of leisure and relaxation we now enjoy to a bastardized form of sport reduced to the level of muscle worship would be an additional danger for culture proper, which remains the treasure of a civilization.

I am not afraid of repeating the following words of Pierre de Coubertin, because nothing is more effective than returning to first truths and essential precepts : "Sport can bring into play the noblest as well as the basest passions ; it can develop a spirit of impartiality and a feeling of honour as well as a love of gain ; it can be chivalrous or corrupt, virile or bestial ; finally it may be used to strengthen the ties of peace just as to pave the way for war. Now nobility of feeling, impartiality and honour, chivalry, virile energy and peace are the prerequisites of all modern democracies, whether republican or monarchic."

That is why the teaching of Pierre de Coubertin, desirous of training not only athletes but complete men — in body, mind and soul — applies more today than ever before.

*Mens sana in corpore sano*, the Roman maxim so often quoted remains true today, just as alive in fact as the spirit which fired the athletes of Olympia or Delphi, immortalized by the great Greek poet Pindar : "The virtuous who run no risk are not esteemed, but fine exploits remain alive in the memories of many."

It is therefore fortunate and only right that the square dedicated to Pierre de Coubertin by unanimous vote of the Municipal Council of our capital should be located next to the stadium which already bears his name.

May the young who come here to train or compete with each other on peaceful, friendly terms remember him with gratitude, look to his teaching and, helped by the public authorities — more enlightened, thank goodness, than in the last century — put his precepts into practice for their own benefit and for the benefit of the city and a world which, like a team, should have a strong feeling of solidarity in order to meet their common destiny !

#### Mr. Massard's speech

On behalf of the family of Baron Pierre de Coubertin, represented by the Misses de Coubertin, his nieces, and in the name of the French Olympic Committee, I wish to express our gratitude to the Municipal Council of Paris and its President, Albert Chavanac, who has just inaugurated this Pierre de Coubertin Square, which I had for so long advocated.

At the end of a long career I am happy to have been able to honour, thanks to the unanimous cooperation of my Parisian colleagues, the brilliant reviver of the Olympic Games : first, during the 1937 Exhibition, with the help of that incomparable sportsman Jean Borotra, by building the Stadium that bears the name of Coubertin ; then of having a plaque placed in the Sorbonne commemorating the august place where he succeeded with such cleverness in carrying through his idea of the revival of the Olympic Games.

To give France a system of education capable of wiping out the memory of the disasters of 1870 (after

Coubertin had given up his military career), to shape the character of young men through the practice of sport ; to establish, across frontiers, confident and friendly ties between young people all over the world and, for this purpose, to gather them together in a huge athletic meeting inspired by the breath of Hellenism, modeled on the Olympic Games of Ancient Greece — were the tasks to which he devoted his great gifts of a visionary, backed by a tremendous culture and a never wavering perseverance.

We have to confess that his crusade was to meet with more success beyond our frontiers than in France herself, where *more* than anywhere else the old adage was once again proved true : no one is a prophet in his own country.

In France in spite of Coubertin's dogged perseverance, his ideas on the importance of Sport in the training and education of young people, like his powerfully original views on history and humanist culture never went beyond a few enlightened educational and political circles.

The great British and American universities on the other hand gave them an infinitely greater welcome. But it is well known that the University of France, justly proud of its universally recognized centuries' old prestige does not look favourably on innovators.

The Olympic Games, the most spectacular part of his edifice, finally crowned with success in spite of a thousand and one difficulties, were to make his name famous throughout the five continents of the world and fill his compatriots with pride.

The ceremony we are attending today comes at an opportune moment when throughout the world the spirit of nationalism, which one might have thought would have become less acute, has increased fearfully in violence, when Sport is tending, in far too many countries, to become a State sport, and a means of propaganda on behalf of ideologies locked in a merciless rivalry, the terrible consequences of which no one can measure or even imagine.

And yet the work of Coubertin continues to bear fruit. There is hope and reason to rejoice when we see on the track and playing-fields, and in the Olympic Village, in spite of the rivalry between nations, that ties are formed between athletes from all continents, an atmosphere of confidence is established, friendships are made whose depth, strength and durability astonish those who witness them. Thus Coubertin's efforts will not have been in vain. The youth of all countries — sometimes despite their mentors — have justified the confidence he placed in them.

After this observation it remains for me, in the name of the French Olympic Committee, to express once again our gratitude and that of the de Coubertin family to the Paris Municipal Council, worthily represented here by its President, for this homage paid to the memory of that great Frenchman who succeeded in being a great citizen of the world, a memory to which we remain eternally loyal.

To close, I would like to add the thanks of the International Olympic Committee which, for seventy years, among so many tragic upheavals that have shaken our universe, has succeeded in assuring the perenniality of the Olympic idea and the work of Pierre de Coubertin.