

The members of the I.O.C. in the Lebanon

Many of the members of the International Olympic Committee accepted the invitation of Sheik Gabriel Gemayel, member of the I.O.C. Executive Board and President of the Lebanese Olympic Committee, one of their most respected colleagues, and spent three days of relaxation in the Lebanon after the meetings in Tehran last May. Each person present will have taken away a wonderful memory of three days, and three nights since the nights in the Lebanon are particularly brilliant, filled by a programme which was perfectly arranged by an experienced host and which was enjoyed in a land evocative of holidays.

Having arrived at the beginning of the afternoon in Beirut where Mr. Gemayel welcomed them with his usual warmth, the members of the I.O.C. were received a few hours later by the Head of State, Mr. Charles Helou, in an atmosphere of cordiality which was to persist throughout their visit to the Lebanon.

A small country but one whose hospitality is as great as that of a whole continent ; the truth of this saying was proved in addition to Mr. Gemayel and the directors of the Lebanese Olympic Committee, by the Minister for tourism and his Director General as well as by the Director General for youth and sport. A country of which the beauty of the sites, the traditions which are still so very much alive and, parallel to this, a modernism which has been used to its best advantage, are the main characteristics and the most alluring charms.

The members of the I.O.C. were first taken to Baalbeck ; Baalbeck with its overpowering splendour, which was built by men, who thought of themselves as demi-gods, to the glory of gods who, between Athens and Rome, had lost a little of their gracious humanity.

If we begin to speak about the climate of the Lebanon, or about its terraces, we could be guilty of platitudes. And yet the terraces exist. Alone the weather contradicted one of the Lebanon's solid reputations. Indeed, the members of the I.O.C. did not see Baalbeck under the sun.



As we write this we remember the disappointment of the organizers of this excursion. However, they had the opportunity of seeing that the olympic visitors valued the welcome extended to them more than a capricious weather unknown, we were told, for the last seventy years.

Byblos, the oldest of all cities was revealed to the visitors under a cloudless sky such as only the Lebanon can provide and it was in brilliant sunshine that the members of the I.O.C. discovered the moving and glorious vestiges of all the civilisations which had a profound influence on western history and above all that which today makes it possible for us to describe all that we saw : the signs of the first alphabet. The Sunday morning we spent at Byblos was full of that charm and peace which make memories all the more lasting.

It would be a most pleasant duty for us to recall all the kindness shown to us and the magnificent sites which we were allowed to visit, for the precious memory of shared pleasures is joined to gratitude and it is in gratitude that we look back on these three Lebanese days filled with continuous pleasure. However a single word often better expresses one's feelings than long discourses.

May, therefore, our hosts, our friends and, amongst them, Sheik Gabriel Gemayel, find in these few lines the expression of our appreciation perpetuated by the happy memories we have recalled.



A wonderful and friendly hospitality is expressed in Sheik Gemayel's handshake with President of I.O.C. at the arrival in Beirut.



The members of the I.O.C. at the audience of the Chief of State, Mr. Charles Helou (second from right).
(Photo Dalati & Nohra, Beirut.)