

SPEECH GIVEN BY HENRI POURET

The Greek Olympic Committee has asked me to speak on behalf of the lecturers at this opening ceremony; I am deeply moved and grateful to those who conferred this honour on me.

In this place so rich in historical associations and so impressive in its beauty, a disciple of COUBERTIN, more than anyone, feels the responsibility incumbent on him when he is asked, in this sport, to let his heart and his mind speak, especially when he remembers the lines of the immortal Aeschylus: "When one has a heart, a soul and a mind, one finds it extremely difficult to speak of Athens without exaggerating."

I intend nevertheless to tell you my feelings about the Olympic Academy and the contribution of Greek Civilization to all men.

In 1949, Jean KETSEAS, whose memory I recall with affection, started travelling all over the world with his idea for the creation of an Academy in Olympia itself.

Patiently, day after day, he devoted all his energy to this institution, a haven of thought and reflexion in the tutelary shade of the International Olympic Committee.

Like every birth, that of our Academy had its travail but was at the same time fortunate in benefiting from the powerful assistance of Dr. Karl DIEM, a figurehead of modern Olympism.

In 1965, President Avery BRUNDAGE, speaking on the Pnyx, stated: "The Olympic Academy could very easily become one day a radiant centre in the world overshadowed by materialism, a philosophical school, a school of life based on the principles of Olympism."

On the death of Jean KETSEAS, the torch of the Presidency was handed by the Greek Olympic Committee to H.R.H. Prince George of HANOVER, who stated on this same platform in 1967 that in every undertaking "there must be a

brain that plans and a conscience that criticizes and adapts the organization and regulations to the conditions of each period and keeps the mind on the right road. The International Olympic Committee is the brain, and we, the Academy, must take part in its work and become its conscience."

The conscience required is forged during the annual sessions which are held in Olympia, and to which the government of the host country devotes all its care since, thanks to the unflagging interest of Admiral LAPPAS, the splendid new buildings which tomorrow will receive those taking part and the lecturers, have now been completed next to the famous ancient stadium and along the river Alpheus. There, not far from the sacred Altis, you will see two steles, one containing the heart of Pierre de COUBERTIN, the other erected to the joint memory of Jean KETSEAS and Karl DIEM.

Standing before these monuments during the course of our last session, the man who has done so much for Olympism and who now presides over the destinies of the Greek Olympic Committee, General PAPATHANASSIADIS, said: "Olympia once again becomes the spiritual centre of the world."

For my part I am convinced that this will be confirmed and become even more marked thanks, in particular, to the excellent work programme, the very wise choice of lecturers who represent so many muscular or intellectual talents and to the attention and thought of those taking part who, after their stay in Greece, will become the best advocates of the new Olympism.

We are in an exceptional country.
We can speak of a Greek miracle.

Greece, the land of men who dared to proclaim as they emerged from the night of legend, that Man is the measure of all things and that he assumes the real volume of his human condition both through words, the expression of his intelligence, and through steps, the expression of movement.

The ancestors of those who invited us here raised their great voices in this very spot.

They were the first to conceive the laws needed to govern a nation.

They were the first to institute games for the body and at the same time a discipline for the mind; while many countries were still in the age of the caveman, they were already discussing ideas.

They were the first to found the great centres towards which mankind will always gravitate, they wrote in capital letters, words typically their own, Greek words, those of Beauty, Freedom, Law, Justice and these words are now carved on the majority of public buildings throughout the world. Even more important perhaps, the various Greek cities found the cement of their national unity in the celebration of the Olympic Games.

They were also the first to measure the stadium with Hercules' step, they celebrated the winning athlete, the one who conquered the stadium with his step.

This step that was the most rapid, this step, the sign of the conquest of the earth and which, in the year 1969, has become the sign of the conquest of another heavenly body.

In spite of the amazing discoveries of the human mind, in spite of the triumphs of contemporary technology, a return to the source of Olympism is the most logical way of restoring balance to man's condition, for here there is no divorce between body and mind; since, alone of all the languages in the world, the Greek tongue possesses a word which attributes to man both intellectual ability and strength of body, "Kalakagatos".

As long as there are men in the world and as long as they wish to cultivate wisdom, they will want to return here and say again with Sophocles:

"Many are the wonders of the world, but the most wonderful of all is, and will always be MAN."