
Today, I am saying hello in particular to the lecturers, experts and other guests who will be taking part, from 18th to 20th March 1986 in Lausanne, in a symposium on the theme of the relevance of Pierre de Coubertin today.

This symposium, the programme of which is published on the following pages, gives, as it were, a send-off to the publication by the IOC in Autumn 1986 of the major texts of Coubertin devoted to sport and Olympism, an event to which we shall ourselves be devoting an entire issue of the *"Olympic Message"*.

Is it opportune, is it even appropriate to call to mind at this time the thought and action of the Restorer of the Olympic Games ?

A number of high priests of an Olympic mythology of which they are themselves the creators will perhaps answer in the negative, as, in their view, de Coubertin would doubtless refuse to give his blessing to his successors today and would deny them their status as his heirs.

It is true that no one has the right to claim he knows what attitude de Coubertin would have adopted faced with the world as it is now, almost half a century after his death. But it is nevertheless possible to make an honest attempt to distinguish between the incidental aspect of his work and the permanent — and therefore still relevant — message it contains. A number of facts then become apparent.

The first is that de Coubertin the pedagogue, the historian, the sociologist and the humanistic philosopher, even if he is not altogether free of the mannerisms of his age, is, first and foremost, a mind wide open to the universal, a visionary, at once passionate and lucid. His relevance today is due to the fact that he was ahead of his time. He referred to himself as an "enlightener", one who shows the way ahead. He is a man of the future, not of the past.

The second fact which emerges is that the great ambition of de Coubertin was to modify education through sport. His appeal was addressed to every human being, no matter where. For him, the Olympic Games were merely the spur, the spearhead of his action, a means of attraction and seduction to help him fulfil his objective, which lay beyond and above the Games themselves.

Thirdly, we see that his major problem, which is also ours, was that he never had the



HELLO FROM VIDY

resources to implement his policy. Today, happily, these material resources exist. How can they be used to breathe life back into his idea, which was to make sport, through the example of Olympic antiquity, into an instrument of culture, an element of civilisation ? Can we still hope that the world's best athletes will set an example by their behaviour at the Olympic Games ? Can we, by using the financial resources they help to create, make them party to the solidarity with which sport is being promoted all over the world ? Can we, once we have lifted the taboos, re-establish under the Olympic aegis the symbiosis between sport and the other forms of culture and the arts ? Does de Coubertin's appeal, amplified a thousand times by the tremendous echo of the media, still have a meaning ? Does it not have today an even greater relevance than ever before ?

Those are the major questions, at once redoubtable and uplifting, with which the participants in the Symposium on the relevance of Pierre de Coubertin today will be coming to grips. Our warmest good wishes will accompany them in their work.

Raymond Gafner
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