

THE IOC TAKES A NEW LOOK AT ITS ANCESTOR

Background to
the publication
of the selected texts
of Pierre de Coubertin

by Prof. FRANTZ LOTZ

According to Professor Frantz Lotz of the University of Würzburg, member of the editorial Committee for the recently published volumes, the publication in an organised form of the Olympic writings of Pierre de Coubertin fifty years after his death, indicates a desire on the part of the IOC to make a renewed profession of faith in respect of its founder and, at the same time, to offer all those who are interested excellent bases for research on the origins of modern Olympic thought.

The meetings and consultations of the IOC and its commissions, which took place in Lausanne from 9th to 18th October, concerned themselves, as we can see from the agenda of the 91st Session, with a multiplicity of problems of the Olympic Movement and had to make or prepare the way for a number of far-reaching decisions. The image of this major event which reached the public via the media was, however, largely marked by the contest among would-be host cities for 1992 and the assignment of the Games to Albertville and Barcelona.

Fiftieth Anniversary



Two regular lectures at the IOA : Prof. Lotz on the left and Prof. Conrado Durantez.

This preponderance of topical issues could, among other things, have easily led one to overlook the fact that the Olympic Movement has been closely linked with Lausanne since its earliest years and that Pierre de Coubertin himself actually lived there, became a freeman of the city and found his final resting place fifty years ago on 2nd September 1937, in a tomb in the city's cemetery. The IOC, conscious of this close association, preceded the inauguration of its new administrative headquarters on Sunday 12th October 1986 with a moving ceremony at the tomb of its founder.

In addition, the agenda of the Session recalled Pierre de Coubertin to our attention several times. Under point 24 was written succinctly : "Publications : Presentation of the works of Pierre de Coubertin (13th October, 11.00 hours)." The reality behind this brief reference requires closer examination. In 1983, the IOC President Juan Antonio Samaranch entrusted the Carl-Diem Institute with the task of putting together an edition of selected writings of Pierre de Coubertin relating to sport and expressed himself willing to bear the costs of the necessary research. The responsibility for this ambitious assignment, which attracted much interest worldwide, was assumed by an editorial committee made up of as follows: Mr. Raymond Gafner, IOC member in Switzerland, Professor Alexandru Siperco, IOC member in Rumania, Professor Georges Rioux, France, Mr. Geoffroy de Navacelle, France (representative of the Coubertin family), Professor Liselott Diem, Professor Dr. Frantz Lotz and Professor Dr. Norbert Müller, all

three from the Carl-Diem Institute, Cologne, FRG. The coordinating editor was Professor Müller.

The painstaking research carried out from 1983 to 1985, involving meticulous searching of libraries, archives and legacies, brought to light, in addition to the known publications, a whole series of previously unknown essays and contributions by the great Olympian, which were also considered in the selection. The results of the research, in a three volume French edition supplemented by a slim volume of illustrations and provided with short introductions by Professor Müller, Professor Diem and Mr. de Navacelle, were presented to the IOC at the Session on 13th October. The three volumes are entitled "Revelation", "Olympism" and "Sports Practice".

The fact that the IOC, which normally sits strictly behind closed doors, invited the editorial committee of the works of Coubertin to attend its Session as guests and admitted its members to report at the Executive Board's table may be construed as a sign of particular recognition and respect for their achievement, but also as a renewed profession of faith in the Coubertin and his work. The presentation in the IOC Session was followed by an open press conference.

This IOC publication, probably to be followed soon by two further volumes (correspondence and memoirs), forms the basis for a more intense look back to the founder of the IOC and initiator of the modern Games, which President Samaranch is seeking to inspire. It opens up worldwide the possibility of gaining directly and at the source information on the ideas, desires, goals and initiatives of Pierre de Coubertin and thereby finding inspiration and guidance for one's own actions. The translation of the texts into English, Spanish and German, already being considered by certain interested parties, would further broaden and facilitate to large extent access to the great Frenchman's work.

F. L.

