



A LESSON IN COURAGE

Turgut Atakol, Member of the IOC in Turkey since 1984, passed away on 10th April. His courage and self-sacrifice during the last few months of his life will remain uppermost in everyone's memory for a long time to come. Barely a year ago, despite the illness severely sapping his strength, he took on with extraordinary energy the role of Master of Ceremonies on the occasion of that exceptional rendez-vous on the shores of the Bosphorus, the 92nd IOC Session. Two months ago, he was in Calgary for the following Session, but, alas, his illness gained the upper hand and prevented him from realizing his dearest wish, namely to be present at the opening of the XVth Winter Games. He had to be flown home directly in a plane very kindly placed at the IOC's disposal by the Canadian Prime Minister.

Born in Istanbul in 1919, Turgut Atakol was deeply influenced by an education steeped in Coubertinian thinking, which he received at the renowned German school set up in Istanbul by the professor and famous Olympian, Carl Diem.

Very keen on sport, for a long time he practised basketball and rowing, which was also one of Pierre de Coubertin's favourite disciplines. This sporting involvement and the excellent precepts acquired during his studies gave him a unique perception of the problems that existed in a country where modern practice of sport was still in its infancy. It was consequently at an early age that he turned towards sports administration. His first major action was in creating the Turkish Basketball Federation which he headed for many years. In the years that followed, he became an international referee, one of the first in his country. A naturally gifted teacher, and benefiting from excellent first-hand knowledge, Turgut Atakol rapidly joined the technical commission of FIBA for which he produced works on refereeing techniques and practical manuals for sportsmen wishing to take up a career as a referee. An efficient administrator, he took over the Vice-Presidency of the Turkish NOC before going on to be elected Secretary General. His influence on the training and preparation of top-level athletes was decisive. In the 1970's, basketball, his favourite sport, became the second most popular sport in Turkey after football, leading to the return to their native country of several Turkish players who had settled in the United States. On an international level, this sport, along with volleyball, made major advances in which the influence of Turgut Atakol was very evident. Faithful to his objective of strengthening the sporting image of his country on the international scene, he was one of those responsible for the success in 1971 of the Mediterranean Games in Izmir, and in the organization of which he played a active part. Having entered the IOC and become President of his NOC in 1984, following the sudden death of Suat Erler, he arranged that his country and city should organize the 92nd Session, something he knew would greatly and in spectacular fashion contribute towards strengthening the Turkish Olympic Movement.

This final success, after a life of a constant effort in the service of promoting sport, earned him the admiration, esteem and affection of all the Olympic family.