

# HELLO FROM VIDY



**By Raymond Gafner**

Editor in Chief

I had a dear friend from my scouting and student days, François, who alas died young. Towards those placed in his charge, he radiated enthusiasm and conviction. Alone, he was besieged and tormented by doubt and depression. In his unceasing struggle to spur himself into action, he used to cover the walls of his room with encouraging phrases. His favourite was taken from the old French meaning “in despite of all things”(in spite of everything). In spite of everything go onward, if need be treading on your shadow.

I thought of him on 28th December 1991 as I stood, leaning against the wall of the Chateau de Mirville in Normandy, with a thousand guests who had come to see the Olympic flame halt on its journey to Albertville. Many important personalities were there, having come to honour the memory of Pierre de Coubertin, who spent part of his childhood, adolescence and even adult life in this noble family residence. In this gentle Normandy countryside, Coubertin, too, doubtless had to train hard to transform the amazingly clear-sighted loner that he was into the man with the unquenchable thirst to act in the service of the Olympic cause that he became. “In despite of all things”.

So it was here at Mirville, on that day, that two young athletes clad in white entered the porchway under which Coubertin played as a child. These two proceeded to fix the lighted torch on to the wall of the house, where it remained for several minutes, next to the plaque commemorating the one hundredth anniversary of the Baron’s birth. Might he have

imagined such a scene in his wildest dreams? At Vidy, we are currently examining hitherto unexplored archives devoted to the restorer of the Games. What a confirmation, often bitter, of the fierce combat he had to wage against those around him to ensure that the flame, lighted in the heart of youth, did not go out, and to halt the constant array of open or treacherous attacks upon him, so much so that one is amazed that he had the strength and perseverance to overcome them.

Now, to the great joy of the organizers, often amazed at their success, this flame of the Games in Albertville has received a triumphal welcome wherever it has passed. In all weathers, in large towns and small villages, a crowd has formed to welcome, applaud and gather around it.

Gather around it. That is perhaps the key phrase. What makes people do this? Of course, the flame which lights, warms and comforts has from time immemorial been one of mankind’s strongest symbols. But it is as if the flame, when associated with that other symbol which personifies Olympic hope, the five interlinked rings, shines further, higher, more strongly.

The thousands of people who simply wanted to “be there” for the few minutes that the flame stopped where they live, did so not just because they were encouraged to, but more because they were caught up in a kind of fervour, be it just for one fleeting moment. Like a hope half-felt, like an immense, spontaneous vote for

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a society where people are friendlier, warmer, more supportive, freer to be themselves.

Mankind is today walking along a knife edge. Why will we not understand that, with other strengths, naturally, each of which has its dark areas and times of weakness, Olympism can offer the world a recourse, an alternative, a chance which goes far beyond its sporting celebrations?

We all know that our society could rapidly and brutally subside into nothingness. And do we who have inherited, in the form of Olympism, an effective means of counter-attack, a tried and tested weapon ready for combat, have the right to let it rust away in some obscure catacomb? Has not the moment come to combine our forces in the battle for the future, when this is what so many of our contemporaries expect of us? Each of us must decide for himself.

As I wrote recently in the Zürich newspaper "Sport", in the carillon of history, the time may have come for the bell of Olympism to ring out!"In despite of all things!"

|                               |             |                               |
|-------------------------------|-------------|-------------------------------|
| 1992                          | FEBRUARY    |                               |
| ALBERTVILLE                   | 1-2-3       | Executive Board (I)           |
|                               | 5-6         | 98th IOC Session              |
|                               | 8-23        | XVI Winter Olympic Games      |
|                               | MAY         |                               |
| MONTE-CARLO                   | 6           | Executive Board with ASOIF    |
| SEVILLE                       | 7-8-9       | Executive Board (II)          |
|                               | JULY-AUGUST |                               |
| BARCELONA                     | 17-18-19    | Executive Board(III)          |
|                               | 21-22-23    | 99th IOC Session              |
|                               | 25/7-9/8    | Games of the XXV Olympiad     |
|                               | NOVEMBER    |                               |
| ACAPULCO                      | 4-5-6       | Executive Board (IV)          |
|                               | 7           | Executive Board with the NOCs |
| 1993                          | MARCH       |                               |
| ATLANTA                       | 15-16-17    | Executive Board (I)           |
|                               | 18          | Executive Board with ASOIF    |
|                               | JUNE        |                               |
| LAUSANNE                      | 20-21-22    | Executive Board (II)          |
|                               | 23-24       | 100th IOC Session             |
|                               | SEPTEMBER   |                               |
| MONTE-CARLO                   | 18-19-20    | Executive Board (111)         |
|                               | 21-22-23    | 101st IOC Session             |
| This calendar is provisional. |             |                               |