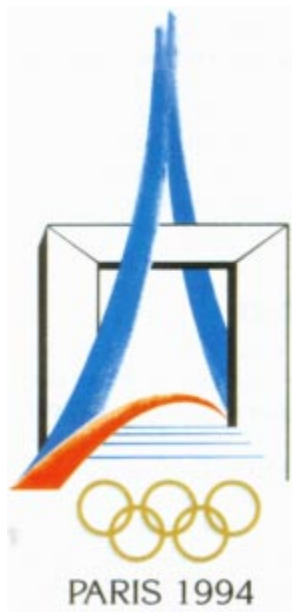


Nelson Paillou, after serving top-level French handball for several decades, and presiding over the French National Olympic and Sports Committee for twelve years, has become executive president of the organizing committee of the Centennial Congress, which will take place in Paris from 27th August to 3rd September 1994.

Nelson Paillou answered our questions as a campaigner for Olympism and defender of a humanist sport which, in his view, is the key to the future.



Nelson Paillou: Took ahead, speak honestly, act firmly!"



- In your opinion, what is the goal of the Centennial Congress?

Nelson Paillou. Over the last decade we have witnessed a phenomenal acceleration in sport, pushing Olympism into the third millennium: we are therefore at a decisive high-level turning-point. Six years from the 2000 Games, thanks to the Congress, we will know the answer to the fundamental question of humanist sport and its role in the 21st century. When I look at all the different kinds

of investments necessary for this great gathering - 31 million francs from the IOC. 20 from the city of Paris, 20 from the state and 10 from marketing, not forgetting the human investment - I tell myself that it would be a shame for us to set our sights too low. In fact the goal is clear: people never tire of pointing out that sport is slipping gradually out of the hands of the sports world, out of the hands of associations, and into those of commerce and business. American basketball is a good example of this tendency, but it also affects other disciplines. People are already telling us: *'Leave elite sport to us, you deal with the rest.'* This would be the opposite of what Coubertin wanted: sport is a tool in the service of man; sport is only one objective; it must not take second place to profit.

At the lowest level. recreational sport remains an element of culture: it learning to read, which is essential for becoming a writer, and a writer is to literature what a champion is to top-level sport.

Some people may consider this attitude old-fashioned, but we have no wish to hang on to amateurism as Coubertin knew it. This would be unthinkable. The technological evolution of competition leads inevi-

tably to the professionalization of all top-level sport: there is no way around it. But this professionalism should be such that federations can continue to govern it, and we can remain in control, without disregarding the necessary links with economics.

COUBERTIN'S MOTTO

- Do you think that things can be steered in the direction you hope to go?

N.P. My position is such that I can only give my personal opinion as an old campaigner, an old arts teacher, an old Coubertinian. Reform is not my responsibility; furthermore, as president of the committee in charge of logistics and organization, I have to maintain a reserve. However that does not prevent me from making my own motto of Coubertin's, which is seldom quoted and which could be that of the Congress: "look ahead, speak honestly, act firmly". As I see it, looking ahead is having a concept or a vision of the future over the next ten or fifteen years; speaking honestly is saying what you believe must be done. But can one say everything before the assembled media representatives? Can one express oneself honestly in front of people in charge of finance? Acting firmly is taking decisions or preparing them..

- Do you believe in radical changes?

N.P. I certainly don't want to give pessimist forecasts. I am taking up the last challenge of my life. I would like people to be positive and courageous. One hundred years after the creation of the IOC. I would like a second declaration to be made, one that would be of

lasting importance. In 1894 Coubertin founded the International Olympic Committee, but it wasn't until 1908 that he created the French National Committee. I think this delay is particularly symbolic: the Olympic Movement was to be a world movement. This is what it became, and that's a great thing. In 1994, I would like a new and similarly ambitious objective to be formed.

REINFORCING THE POWER OF THE FEDERATIONS

- But times have changed. Today the Games are open to professionals...

N.P. The decision made in Baden Baden in 1981 was far-sighted, but without a safety net. A breach has been made in the Olympic plan of action: it must be sealed if we are to strengthen the power of the federations. I see a much

more real danger in economic pressures than in all the weight of politics. Money is pouring in from all sides. The first agreements signed for the 1998 Winter Games in Nagano have already surpassed the amount obtained for all the contracts in Albertville.

The television rights collected by the IAAF over the last Olympiad came to 90 million francs, compared with ten over the previous Olympiad. I see in this the very personal touch of Primo Nebiolo; I have confidence in his management and hope that he will continue to fight against the increasing influence of managers and other intermediaries. But in areas, there is a danger that commerce will be infinitely more competent and skilful than associations. This is where deviations may occur: I have

already mentioned basketball, but what of tennis, boxing, even football? We come back to the goal of the Congress; should we be content with mere wishes, or should we vow to do our utmost: on a practical level, to ensure that we move forward while keeping to the Olympic line? In view of the increasing power of the international federations, we must prevent the Olympic Games from becoming a series of juxtaposed world championships, or having certain sports dropping out. I repeat: we are at a turning point, before a unique occasion, in the country of Coubertin. We are facing a new challenge, not the problem of universality, which has been a reality for a long time, but a challenge that arises from a stimulating concept: what solutions can be found to the problems that will arise in the 21st century? How can the humanism of sport be preserved?

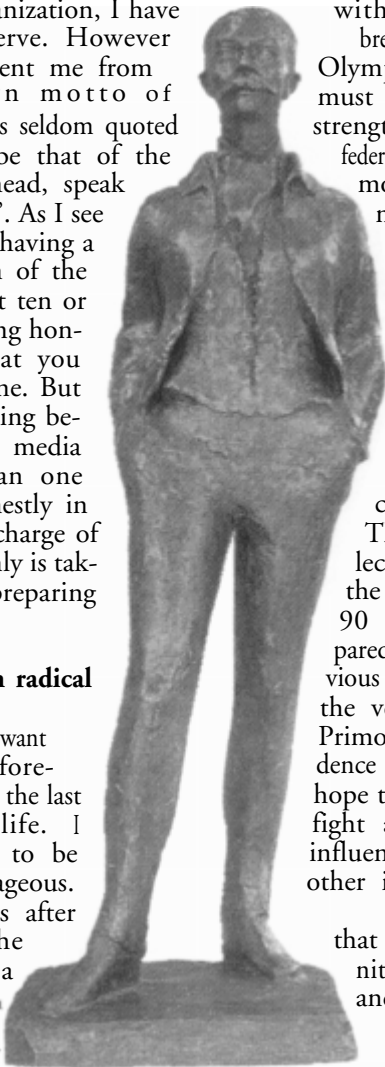
- So what decisions do you expect to be made?

N.P. The decisions will in a way be the icing on the cake of the Congress. I would just like to see evidence of a will to reform; I hope to see a leap forward as part of a philosophical conception of man and of life. And if, at the same time, the fight against doping and violence could be intensified, and the programme of the Games modified, so much the better. I am not against this, as long as the principal of universality is maintained, and not only at the athletes' parade during the opening ceremony.

LOGISTICS

- And what about the organization of the Congress? What do you, as the man in charge, expect?

N.P. First of all, I hope that the delegates will be able to devote all their time and their attention to thought. Everything that will happen at the CNIT will have this in mind. So, for example, all the speeches will be collated, translated and distributed to participants twice a day. Generally you would expect to receive this kind of document eight or ten months





the Republic will open the Congress in the main auditorium of the Sorbonne, and he will also be present at the Orangerie in Versailles on 2nd September, when there will be a great festival with fountains, music and a firework display.

Interview by, Robert Parienté

Paris awaits the Centennial celebrations. A torch relay will go from the Eiffel Tower to the Sorbonne.

later, but the proceedings of this Congress will be ready on the afternoon of the final day. The proceedings will not be a book to be put on a shelf and forgotten about. It is a working tool that the press, the IFS and the NOCs should be able to use immediately.

I also want the Congress to bathe in a sea of culture and sport, so that it is not merely a Congress of speeches. So, as far as sport is concerned we will have: the Paris triathlon just before the departure of the Flame; a rowing match on the Seine, which could be an Oxford-Cambridge match; a table tennis match between Waldner and Gatién (the top two players in the Olympic Games); and a recreational event, Planet Sport, with thirty-two different activities for school children on the esplanade of the CNIT. I believe in symbols, and this is one: while the future of sport is being discussed inside, young people will be performing all the sports disciplines. The flame relay from the Eiffel Tower to the Sorbonne will involve four Olympic medallists, twenty French champions, twenty champions from the other continents, and 350 young people. Finally, on 3rd September, the Athletics Grand Prix final will be the inaugural event of the Charley stadium. The President of

A STRUCTURED PROGRAMME

The programme of the congress has been finalized, and the list of speakers will soon be complete. The Congress debates will focus on four general themes, which are divided into four sub-themes. The first subject will deal with the Olympic Movement and modern society, through its ethics and its structures. This theme will also encompass the capacity of sport to protect the environment and its role in an international context. Finally, the future of the Games and the Olympic Programme will be put in the spotlight. Each day will be devoted to a particular theme, with a plenary session in the morning, and a thirty minute paper from an internationally respected personality, not necessarily belonging to the Olympic Movement. Then there will be the general presentation of the views of the member of the Olympic Family- IOC, IF or NOC- responsible for the day's debate. Two other groups may then give a specific fifteen minute presentation, before the Congress chairman rounds off the meeting with a final speech.

The second major theme is the contemporary athlete, his training, integration and social role. The organizations of high level sport, training and sport science will be discussed, as will the threats facing our modern day heroes. Sport in its social context, through politics and economics, will be dealt with on the third day, as will the topics of sport for all and the development of sport in the third world.

The last theme is by no means the least, since it poses the central question of the turn of the century, that of the role of the media. The participation of the media in the development of the Movement, the impact of sport on the media, the relations between sport, television and other media will be all discussed in the context of a theme which will also attempt to ascertain the challenges of the 21st Century, with an important place for members of the profession.

The afternoons will be devoted to the general sub-themes, with debates headed by a panel consisting of a representative of the IOC, the IF's, the NOC, athletes, media and as expert, chaired by a moderator and a Secretary. Several speakers will be invited to express their ideas for three minutes, before the floor is opened to question answered sessions. The day will finish with a conclusion of the debates by the chairman of the congress, after a personal summary has been given by a well-known personality. The four moderators will also report on the sub-theme debates.