

PIERRE DE COUBERTIN AND THE CZECH LANDS

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The topic was selected for three main reasons. The first is Pierre de Coubertin himself: a man of imagination, a dreamer, and a true descendant of his ancestor, Cyrano de Bergerac; at the same time a man who significantly influenced the form of the civilization of the 20th century by his foolish “idea” of the Olympic Games and who has left behind a respected heritage as have few Frenchmen.

The second reason is the fact that the Czechs assisted in the birth of the Olympic Movement by actively participating in its development and its establishment in the life of modern civic society. Up to the year 1914 the Olympic Movement was also the only domain where the international independence of the Czechs was respected without question.

The third reason is a more emotional one. For a long time, Coubertin knew nothing about the Czech lands and the Czech people. Only the realization of his “Olympic dream” acquainted him with Sokol, one of the greatest physical education organizations in Europe, and through the mediation of Sokol with the Czech lands. Coubertin’s cooperation with Jirí Guth deepened his affinity for the Czech lands and the Czech nation, an affinity which became an indispensable component of his personality. It was no coincidence that it was in Prague in 1925 that Coubertin decided to end his active involvement with the Olympic Movement.

Who was Pierre de Coubertin? His proper name was Pierre de Frédy, Baron de Coubertin, and he was the descendant of an old aristocratic Italian family which was seeking to enhance its position with services to the French king in the 15th century. His grandmother was also descended from an old Norman house of marquesses from Mirville.² His father Charles Louis de Frédy de Coubertin [1822-1908] was a successful painter, who had been awarded the Legion of Honour in 1865. Pierre de Coubertin was born on 1 January 1863.³ He spent his childhood with his siblings on the family château Mirville not far from Rouen. He was educated in the spirit of legitimism, aristocratism, and French patriotism. As did his entire generation, he had to endure the catastrophes of 1870-1871, when France met defeat in a war against Prussia and in the Commune of Paris. Coubertin lived through both events as a child; however, the traumatic experiences affected and determined much of his life’s career.

Coubertin did not follow the footprints of his aristocratic kinsmen and he also did not follow either a diplomatic or military career. He also shed the coat of monarchism and became a devout republican. He very soon left the military academy in Saint Cyr and started to study pedagogy and history at Ecole Libre des Sciences Politique in Paris. He absorbed thousands of varying philosophies and gradually began to prefer the ideas of the French sociologist Frédéric Le Play [1806-1882]. He was attracted especially by Le Play’s opinions on social conciliation, mutual solidarity and the cooperation of individuals and classes - which

¹It was Fredy Delamotte who became - in the eighth decade of the 15th century - a chamberlain of the King, Louis XI, reinforcing his privileged position in France. For very good service, Fredy Delamotte was awarded a coat of arms by the King in 1477 - nine golden shells of the order St. Michael in a blue azure field.

²Mirvilles proved their ancient origin in being related to William the Conqueror.

³In a letter to J. S. Guth-Jarkovský dated 17 October 1924, found in the literary archive of the Memorial of National Literature in Prague, Coubertin himself introduced 1862 as the year of his birth; however, that was evidently an unintentional mistake. Guth-Jarkovský has nevertheless copied the error in other works, compare his article on Coubertin in: Guth-Jarkovský, J. St. [1938], *Vývoj českého olympismu*. Pierre de Coubertin. Praha, pp. 18-23.

was so contradictory to his experience connected with the Commune. He admired Le Play's emphasis on the upbringing and education of workers, since with their support, he wished to attain his dream. Coubertin was not a terribly original thinker, but he was courageous and possessed energy in order to be able to carry through his ideas. By 1890 he had already attempted to found a so-called Workers' University, a special institution for the education of workers, to be governed by the workers.⁴

The Workers' University had to offer basic items of knowledge from history, natural sciences, and philosophy to workers, but it was also to help develop their logical thinking, a sense of beauty, and a capacity for critical thinking. Coubertin's project also included a concrete proposal on the organization of the university. With respect to the working hours of workers, this was to be postponed to evenings on workdays and weekend afternoons. The final examinations were not to be compulsory but they constituted a condition for awarding the diploma.⁵

However, Coubertin's attempt was not successful. To the capitalists, his attitudes were refused as too "leftist," while the workers distrusted his aristocratic bearing and personality. During his 20's, Coubertin resurrected his idea of a Worker's University.⁶

Similarly, as in the affair of Workers' Universities, Coubertin also wrote many articles on the reform of youth education and presented many lectures. In the year 1887 he helped found and became secretary general of the Union des Sociétés Françaises des Sports Athlétiques (USFSA). He even tried to realise his ideas at the Parisian École Monge, where the director was fascinated by Coubertin's "pedagogie sportive," accenting improvements in health and physical fitness of the French youth. Two years later, on the occasion of the World Exhibition in Paris he served as one of the main organizers of an international congress on physical educations and its position in the school system.

A real triumph of Coubertin's promotion of physical education became the idea of revival of the ancient Greek Olympic Games as a symbol of *kalokagathia*, the balance between physical and mental abilities, as well as a symbol of peace and the cooperation of mankind.⁷ At the jubilee meeting of the USFSA, on 25 November 1892, Coubertin's words were heard in the great hall of Sorbonne, "Let us export rowers, runners, and fencers; there is the free trade of the future, and on the day when it is introduced within the walls of old Europe the cause of peace will have received a new and mighty stay. This is enough to encourage your servant to dream now about the second part of his program; he hopes that you will help him as you have

⁴On the problems of Coubertin's Workers' Universities, see Kössl J and Horváthová Z. [1987] Pierre de Coubertin a delnická třída. In *Teorie a praxe telesné výchovy*, 35: 690-694.

⁵See: Coubertin, P de. [1923] Mémoire concernant l'instruction supérieure des travailleurs manuels et l'organisation des Universités ouvrières, Paris.

⁶The English system of education through sport, whose most important theorist was Thomas Arnold [1795-1842] (the school director at Rugby from 1828-1842), was above all a result of economical and social changes which were in progress in Britain since the end of the 18th century concomitant with the so-called Industrial Revolution. Changes in educational matters were of course a consequence of not only home affairs, but even to a greater extent these were forced by Britain's colonial interests. The need for independent, decisive and adaptable administrators was growing and shared in wearing down the social differences. The unshakable position of Britain both in world production and in its colonial empire was a convincing proof on the effectiveness of their system of education. There was no wonder that it inspired young Coubertin dreaming of the revival of the "greatness" of France. More in Olivová V. (1979) Lidé a hry. Historická geneze sportu. Praha, esp. pp. 414-429.

⁷Coubertin's idea of the revival of the Olympic Games was mostly influenced by his recent visit to Greece and there especially by the impressive and extensive ruins of Ancient Olympia, recently excavated by a German archeological expedition. For the atmosphere in French society at that time, a note of his was characteristic when he commented, "Germany had excavated all of what remained from the old Olympia. Why could France not restore the old spender?" Coubertin Pd (1908). *Une campagne de vingt-et-un ans - 1887-1908*. Paris, p. 89.

helped him hitherto, and that with you he will be able to continue and complete, on a basis suited to the conditions of modern life, this grandiose and salutary task, the restoration of the Olympic Games.”⁸ The result of his enthusiasm was nevertheless the same as in the case of the Workers’ Universities - no interest was shown. Only in June 1894 did Coubertin succeed in reviving the Olympic Games during the congress in Paris, when he made the affair more international, winning influential representatives of Britain and the United States to his side. His relentless activity attained a first great success. As he himself mentioned in his memoirs: “Although I was growing up in the shadow of Sedan I never felt in my heart to be vanquished.”¹⁰

At the Paris Congress the International Olympic Committee (IOC) was formed, which had to manage all the affairs of Olympism in the future. Among its 12 members there was also the name of the Czech grammar school professor Jirí Guth, who was born in Hermanuv Mestec¹¹ and including two Frenchmen, two Britains and representatives of Greece, Russia, Sweden, Hungary, United States, Argentina and New Zealand. Why? Especially when no Czech came to Paris and Guth himself reacted to Coubertin’s invitation as follows, “It did not even come to my mind to go to Paris, there was no money at my disposal and I could hardly get the possibility to leave for an affair so unknown and nearly exotic. Besides I wanted to go to Greece and Asia Minor during my holiday and therefore it was impossible to think of anything else. I confined myself therefore to only a telegram of congratulations to the Congress.”¹² Guth has explained his nomination to the IOC very simply, “Baron Coubertin wanted to have an International Committee and a representative of the Czechs in this, since he had very sincere sympathy to the Czechs. He did not know anyone but me...”¹³

Coubertin learned to know Guth during Guth’s scholarship journey to Paris, where he came to study the French system of physical education at secondary schools in the summer of 1891. That offer to make a holiday journey to France using state money seemed more than attractive to Guth. He knew little of physical education and sport but he regarded that as no handicap. In France Guth devoted a full two weeks of his two-month stay to the study of physical education. With the help of his friend Frantisek Drtina he made an acquaintance with Coubertin and so he could get information directly from him.¹⁴

Coubertin also made use of that opportunity and, in return, he learned from Guth important information about the Czech Sokols who enthused Paris during the World Exhibition in 1889 and who were among the greatest physical education subjects in Europe. Guth gained Coubertin’s sympathy. Therefore, Coubertin also introduced his project of the Olympic Games to Guth and he asked him to disseminate those ideas in the Czech lands.¹⁵ Guth did so, although he himself was skeptical as far as the Congress was concerned.¹⁶

⁸Coubertin Pd (1965). *Der Olympischen Gedanken, Reden und Aufsätze*. Lausanne/Stuttgart, p. 1.

⁹More to the Paris Congress 1894: Coubertin Pd (1931). *Mémoires Olympique*. Lausanne, pp. 7-20; Olivová V. c.w., p. 534; Müller N (1983). *Von Paris bis Baden-Baden. Die Olympischen Kongresse 1894-1981*. Niedernhausen, p. 25-31.

¹⁰Coubertin Pd. *Mémoires Olympique*, p. 17.

¹¹Jirí Guth, from 1920 Jirí Stanislav Guth-Jarkovský [1861-1943] was in 1882 the first doctor of philosophy at the Czech Charles University. He was later a grammar school professor, writer and interpreter, Master of Ceremonies in the Office of the President of the Czechoslovak Republic [1919-1925], Member of the IOC [1894-1943], President of the Czech Olympic Committee [1899-1929], and later of the Czechoslovak Olympic Committee, and Chairman of the Club of Czech [1915-1925]/Czechoslovak [1925-1943] Tourists.

¹²Guth-Jarkovský JS (1929). *Pameti II. Pame olympijské - 1894-1918*. Praha, p. 34.

¹³*Ibid.*

¹⁴Guth J (July 1891). Zpráva o studijní cestě do Francie. LA PNP Praha, fund Guth-Jarkovský; see also Guth-Jarkovský, J. S. Pameti, pp. 28-33.

¹⁵See Coubertin’s letter to Guth from 24 February 1894, LA PNP Praha, fund Guth-Jarkovský.

¹⁶Guth, in the letter from 9 March 1894 (IOC Archives, Lausanne), recommended to Coubertin the representatives of the Czech Sokol Community, Prague Sokol, and then the Athletic Club at Roudnice and the Association for Games of the Czech Youth - however, nobody responded. Only the Czech Sokol Community sent a written reply to negotiate with the Paris Congress. Guth excused himself to Coubertin in a letter of 19 May 1894 introducing his duties at the grammar school at Klatovy (IOC Archives, Lausanne).

Guth began to be involved intensively in the works of the IOC as early as the Ist Olympic Games in Athens in April 1896. He was fascinated by the Olympic competitions as well as by the ceremonies connected with the proclamation of winners. He comprehended what a chance the Olympic victory offered for making "visible" a suppressed nation. After his return, he wrote in the journal *Sokol*, "I do not want to say that a similar athletic victory helps to our suffering, and that we should cease to pay our attention to sciences, art and other efforts, but it may bring some reputation."¹⁷ Therefore he inverted Coubertin's philosophy and he pointed out that "the number of participants is not so important as their performances," that for Czechs it is not so important to participate, but to win.

Guth already had attained a great victory in Athens. During the meeting of the IOC one of the principles discussed was on how to organize the Olympic Movement in the lower bodies, whether on the international or national basis. Guth supported the national principle. In his presentation he acquainted the IOC members with the situation of nations in Austria-Hungary and he proposed a specific solution for them. The constituent nations should have their own specific committees. The existence of the Hungarian Committee and the Czech Committee did not include sufficiently the participation of other nations.¹⁹ What Guth understood by the term "great nations" may be derived from a letter of Guth's friend Josef Rössler-Orovský to Coubertin in 1899, in which the author requested an independent representation of not only Germans from Cisleithan Regions, but also Poles, Slovaks, Slovenians and Croats.²⁰ In Athens, Guth succeeded in convincing the majority of participating members and especially in gaining Coubertin's support and so it was decided for many years - to June 1914 - that in individual territories the Olympic Movement should be organized and propagated by national and state Olympic Committees. The Czech Olympic Committee was - after attempts in the autumn 1896- constituted on 18 June 1899; shortly after it was re-organized in January 1900 and since that date it has been working - with exception of the war intermissions - up to the present times.²¹

Coubertin was always interested in the problems of the times in which he lived. Therefore, at the turn of the century he began to deal with the problems of central Europe, Austro-Hungary and the Czech lands - as did a group of French Slavonic scholars led by Louis Leger and Ernest Denis. Coubertin did not belong to their group and there were no indications that he contacted them. He attacked the problem in his own way - he absorbed a great deal of information, from which he shaped his eclectic concept. He published his results in several articles in the year 1903-1904, comprehensively edited in *Pages d'Histoire Contemporaine* in the year 1909.

How did Coubertin discern Central Europe? First of all, he regarded it as a territory where development was ongoing, where many important and principal changes were occurring, stumbling upon the system of political relations and threatening to grow into a conflict. What was going on according to Coubertin? Thanks to population development the Hapsburg

¹⁷Guth J (1896). O hrách olympijských r. 1896. *Sokol*, 22, p. 145.

¹⁸Guth J (1896). *Hry olympijské za staroveku a za dob nejnovějších*. Praha, p. 189.

¹⁹Compare the protocol from the IOC Meeting in Athens (9 April 1896) (IOC Archives, Lausanne).

²⁰See Rössler's letter to Coubertin from 12 May 1899 (IOC Archives, Lausanne). Josef Rössler-Orovský [1869-1933] was a pioneer of Czech sport, and was an active rower and skater. He introduced skiing, canoeing, football, and tennis to the Czech lands, and at the end of the 19th century, he organized the Czech Ski Club, the Czech Yacht Club, and the Czech Amateur Athletic Union. From 1899-1900 he was co-founder of the Czech Olympic Committee, and from 1908-1929 Secretary-General of the COV (Czech Olympic Committee), later the CSOV.

²¹For the circumstances of the Czech Olympic Committee see: Kolár F (1979). Vznik českého olympismu a založení Českého výboru pro hry olympijské In: *Sborník k dějinám 19. a. 20 století*, Vol. 6, Praha, pp. 303-325; and Kössl J (1977). *Dejiny československého olympijského hnutí*. Praha, pp. 16-20.

monarchy lost its German character and “the Slavonic nations who had been suffering so long under the yoke of the German rule, were revolting when envisioning the continuation of that suffering.” Therefore, the Germans from the monarchy were affiliated more and more to neighboring Germany, and Kaiser Wilhelm, as the emperor uniting all Germans in one state. The Berlin government could not regard their efforts and remain neutral, yet it could not be either for or against them. Whatever it would do, the aspirations of nations in central Europe brought disorder and “it was impossible not to see that they could cause a war.” The interest of Hungary in the Hapsburg monarchy must have necessarily failed. As for the Czechs “under the threat to become only an island lost in the German ocean, would they hesitate to take arms? And would Russia, without fulfilling its traditional mission, leave this foremost guard of Slavs?” What will France do under those circumstances? - asked Coubertin in an article on the problem of central Europe.²² In another one on the threefold Czech battle, he answered, “The Czech lands cannot live either without Germany or especially against it.” The duty of all nations, including France, is to help to find acceptable relations for both sides, “the basis of a future compromise that became a guarantee of a peaceful central Europe,” to offer to the Czechs a safeguard of their independence. Since, according to Coubertin, “the Czech lands are something unique and sacred, it is one of the museum of humanity and must be put under the protection of nations.”²³

Coubertin himself made things at once both possible and impossible for support and protection of the Czechs, for their “specific” position in the Olympic Movement later became questionable. With their growing popularity the Olympic Games began to be regarded as a *politicum sui generis*, “royal families and governments interfered in Olympic affairs . . . in Petersburg and in Vienna a storm was brewing.”²⁴

In the year 1905 the representative of the Cisleithan Regions, Prince Alexander Solms-Braunfels²⁵ became a member of the IOC. His only task was to oust Guth from the IOC and, in that way, also oust the Czechs from the Olympic Movement.²⁶ He incessantly threatened his resignation to Coubertin, always, with the same argument, “I cannot absolutely recognize that the Czechs have a special representative, because they are only a province of Austria.”²⁷ For a long time Coubertin neglected Solms-Braunfels’ threats and elaborated his own theory of “escape” from the so-called geographic Olympic principle, “all games, all nations.” According to this theory, even those countries were recognized as independent

²²Coubertin Pd (1909). *Pages d'Histoire contemporaine, Paris - Le Problème de l'Europe central*. The article was published originally on 8 January 1903 in *L'Indépendance Belge*.

²³*Ibid.* The article was published originally 15 November 1904 also in *L'Indépendance Belge*.

²⁴Coubertin Pd. *Mémoires Olympique*, p. 119.

²⁵The first time that Coubertin obtained a request from the emperor’s circles “that some Austrian should become a member of the IOC” was on 14 April 1900. However the attitude of Vienna to the Olympic Movement was “After the rather indifferent ‘fairing’ experience with Olympiads in Paris 1900 and Saint Louis 1904.” The political sense of Olympism was not taken into consideration. A change was brought only at the Olympic Congress in June 1905 in Brussels, meeting in an atmosphere of culminating antagonism between the British and Germans. For more about the Congress, see: Coubertin Pd. *Mémoires Olympiques*, pp. 69-74.

²⁶Guth’s membership in the IOC was of principal importance for an independent position of the Czechs within the Olympic Movement. During the meeting of the IOC in The Hague in June 1907, a definition of a country as an administrative unit was recognized, enabling independent participation in the Olympic Games, with the following wording, “. . . as a country such a territory is recognized which has a special representation in the IOC. In the event that such representation is not present, a territory under a sole and sovereign government.” (Cook TA [1908]. *The Olympic Games*, London, p. 171.) Hence the Czechs derived their right to compete at the IVth Olympic Games in London, not marching with Austria, but according to the alphabetical order, behind Belgium as Bohemia. With euphoria, Josef Gruss, later president of CSOV and member of the IOC, noted, “The first time after tens of years the Czechs appear on an international and exquisite forum under their own colors - we gained a lot. (*Sport a hry*, VII, 24 July 1908, p. 285.)

²⁷Solms-Braunfels’ letter to Coubertin from 24 June 1907 and 21 December 1908 (IOC Archives, Lausanne).

which, though admittedly parts of some greater states, developed physical education of such grade that they earned respect and recognition on an international scale. That was the case especially with the Czech lands and Finland.²⁸ In accordance with that theory Coubertin answered Solms-Braunfels in 1909 that he could not accept his demands to exclude Jirí Guth from the IOC and he accepted Solms-Braunfels' resignation.²⁹

In the spring of 1909, Prince Alexander Solms-Braunfels resigned his membership in the IOC. Guth remained the only representative of that part of the Hapsburg Monarchy which was in the Cisleithan Regions until 1911, when Prince Otto Windischgrätz was elected a member of the IOC. He was married to the granddaughter of the Kaiser Franz Josef I, thus the leader of the Austro-Hungarian Empire now entered the game.³⁰ Windischgrätz gained authority and a strong influence in the Olympic Movement very quickly; he was even regarded as a possible successor to Coubertin as the President of the IOC. He quickly aimed his attack against Czech Olympic independence, not against Guth's membership in the IOC as Solms-Braunfels did, but against the sovereignty of the Czech Olympic Committee.³¹ He attacked with elegance and grace, but at the same time was systematic and mercilessly.

Jirí Guth was aware that Windischgrätz was a very strong opponent. His only support in the battle against him was his friendship with Coubertin. When he asked Coubertin for help before the IOC meeting in Budapest in May 1911, he was immediately assured, "I will not allow the question of representation of the Czechs on the agenda, and I will withdraw the floor from anyone wishing to discuss it."³² Coubertin fulfilled his promise, although his position was very difficult, similar arguments were used by Russia in the protest against independent representation of the Finns. In his Memoirs he remembered the inconsistencies of his position, "It was very difficult, since on one side it was quite a definite political reality, whereas on the other side a justified affair of nations was at stake and the necessity to pay gratuity to the countries which supported us so faithfully. Personal feelings had to be controlled to the extent prescribed by my position. If I could I would have introduced independently not only the Czech lands and Finland, but also Poland and Ireland.."³³

In the Vth Olympic Games in Stockholm in the year 1912 it was possible to defend more or less the international subjectivity of the Czechs, however only at the expense of great concessions. Guth's name on the list of IOC members was placed under Austria, but with a supplement to his name of COV, i.e. the Czech Olympic Committee; also the Czech representatives were introduced under the designation Austria to which the nationality Czechs

²⁸See Coubertin's response to the editor-in-chief of the *Vienna Allgemeine Sport-Zeitung*, Victor Siberer, on 20 April 1911 (IOC Archives, Lausanne).

²⁹In the letter from 29 December 1908 (IOC Archives, Lausanne), Coubertin responded to Solms-Braunfels, 'You still forget that Dr. Guth has been an IOC Member since its foundation, i.e., 14½ years, and you knew that well when you accepted our offer. In consequence of that you cannot require that we exclude a very tactful man and one recognized by all of us.... Your comparison is not correct because, if there existed in your country another province which educated such a quantity of gymnasts, we would gladly offer it to send a representative. We feel it our duty to take into consideration the athletic autonomy of a country, we did not accept it as a state, but as a centre of sport... After all that it would not be dignified either for you or for us, after the letters you have written to me, to insist that you remain among us [the IOC]."

³⁰As Guth wrote in his *Memoires II* (p. 127), the assignment of Windischgrätz was to ensure that "in the Olympic Games the much too evident dualism of Austria and Hungary disappeared."

³¹Windischgrätz in his letter to Coubertin from 9 August 1911 (IOC Archives, Lausanne). He proposed to exclude the country without excluding the person, i.e., to include Guth in the list of IOC Members under the heading Austria. He also proposed that the Czech team in Stockholm march with Austria, not behind Belgium, "on the place on which it has the right."

³²Coubertin's letter to Guth from 10 April 1911, LA PNP Praha, fund Guth-Jarkovský.

³³Coubertin Pd. *Mémoires Olympiques*, pp. 120-121.

was added; in case of a Czech victory the Czech white and red flag would only accompany the Austro-Hungarian imperial flag.³⁴ Nevertheless the decision came very soon after.

In June 1914, an Olympic Congress was held in Paris to define the structure of the future Olympic Games.³⁵ For Windischgrätz it was also the chance to solve the “Czech question” in the Olympic Movement. As he wrote to Coubertin at the end of 1913, it would be necessary “once and forever to cut this Gordian knot, and that especially for the benefit of the Czechs themselves.”³⁶

However, in Paris, Coubertin again, as several times before, gave the Czechs a helping hand. With all diplomatic skill, which included also pretending to be ill, he overruled Windischgrätz’s protest and his demand to exclude the Czechs from participation in the Congress and Guth from the IOC. Unfortunately he could not prevent acceptance of the rules promulgated by the Organizing Committee of the VIth Olympic Games which were to take place in Berlin in 1916. With those rules a list was presented naming 35 nations that were allowed to participate in the Olympics and the Czechs were missing from the list.³⁷ Coubertin regarded that as a minor problem and he believed that after a time this affair would be settled.³⁸

Within two months, however, the world was shaking in a world war and all the peaceful competitions were shifted to later times. But the world conflagration did not destroy the work of Pierre de Coubertin. The future has confirmed the validity of his words spoken on the eve of the war, “The Olympic Movement did not appear in modern civilization in order to play only a local or transient role. Its mission is general and hundreds of years lasting. It is inspiring. It needs space and time. It will be recognized that the first steps have marked it for such a vital career. If it is so, war will be able only to aggravate, but not to stop its progress.”³⁹

So as war did not stop the Olympic Movement on a world scale, it did serve to point out its more constructive and peaceful character, and it also did not stop Olympism in the Czech lands. Under police pressure the Czech Olympic Committee “dissolved itself

³⁴ *Art der Bezeichnung der Teilnehmer böhmischer Nationalität an den olympischen Spielen in Stockholm 1912.* Agreement made in a meeting held on 9 June 1912 with the Prime Minister of Vienna, LA PNP Praha, fund Guth-Jarkovský. For more about that topic, see: Kolár F (1977). *Boj za samostatnou českou účast na V. olympijských hrách 1912 ve Stockholmu.* In: *Teorie a praxe telesné výchovy*, 25, pp. 717-722.

³⁵ Up to this time each Olympic Games was prepared *ad hoc*, see for example, Cook TA (1908). *The Olympic Games: A Short History of the Olympic Movement from 1896 Up to the Present Day.* London, and *The Fifth Olympiad. The Official Report of the Olympic Games of Stockholm 1912.* Stockholm, 1914.

³⁶ Letter of Windischgrätz to Coubertin from 30 December 1913 (IOC Archives, Lausanne).

³⁷ The list was published in the autumn of 1913 and included: Albania, Argentina, Australia, Austria, Belgium, Brazil, Bulgaria, Canada, Chile, China, Denmark, Egypt, Finland, France, Germany, Great Britain, Holland, Hungary., Ireland, Italy, Japan, Luxembourg, Mexico, Norway, Peru, Portugal, Romania, Russia, South Africa, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Turkey, and the United States. (*Sport*, I(10), p. 12, 2 February 1913) The Czech Olympic Committee immediately protested against the omission of the Czechs to Coubertin and in Berlin (see Protocol from a meeting of the COV [9 December 1913], State Central Archives Praha, fund CSVO, p. 3), in January 1914 published a proclamation in which it denounced the plans of Windischgrätz and the Berlin Organizing Committee (See Guth J [1914]. COV and the Berlin Olympiad 1916. *Sport a hry XIII*(1), p. 3, 27 January 1914.). In March 1914, Guth again addressed Coubertin in a private letter, “COV is convinced that after 20 years of participation without difficulty in the Olympic Games, even with a consent of the Austrian government, it has the right to participate as a nation also in the Berlin Games . . . and the Czechs were recognized as a nation by the IOC itself!” (Letter of Guth to Coubertin, 22 March 1914 [IOC Archives, Lausanne]).

³⁸ For more about the Paris Congress of 1914, see: Kolár F (1981). “Ceská otázka” a mezinárodní olympijský kongres v Paříži v roce 1914. In: *Teorie a praxe telesné výchovy*, Vol. 29, pp. 709-713; and Kössl J. *Dejiny ceskoslovenského olympijského hnutí, esp.* pp. 35-38.

³⁹ Coubertin Pd (1913). *L’emblem et le drapeau de 1914.* In: *Revue Olympique*, August 1913, pp. 119-120.

voluntarily” in the beginning of October 1916,⁴⁰ but by 31 October 1918 Guth had already announced to the Prague police director that the COV had reorganized in the new Czechoslovak state.⁴¹

In the middle of November 1918 Guth also informed Coubertin of the circumstances of his resignation from the IOC in October 1916 with an additional note - “I can never acknowledge that signature extorted by force.”⁴² Coubertin responded quickly, “In your last letter you wrote that I should understand how difficult your situation was. But I know it fairly well. You can now also better imagine, what battles I had to face during the years in order to defend step by step your Olympic heritage and Czech’s [Olympic] independence which was acknowledged by the IOC since the year of its foundation in 1894.”⁴³

Several years of a close cooperation then followed in the development of Olympic work. In 1919 Guth became Secretary-General of the IOC and, in fact, Coubertin’s right-hand man. The most important result of their cooperation may be seen in completing the Olympic Charter, a collection of basic principles of Olympism, rules, and organizational guidelines of the Olympic Movement.⁴⁴ The questions of organization and management of the Olympic Movement were on the agenda already at the Paris Congress in June 1914, but of course, the critical atmosphere at that time was not very favorable for such a task, and similarly also during the war years. Therefore the Olympic Charter was not completed and accepted until the 7th Olympic Congress in Lausanne in June 1921.⁴⁵

The enactment of the constitution of the Executive Board of the IOC was part of that Charter; it was to govern the activity of the IOC and the entire Olympic Movement. The Executive Board started its work on 1 October 1921 and, besides Coubertin, the following were the initial members: Henri de Baillet-Latour from Belgium, Godefroy de Blonay from Switzerland, J. Sigfrid Edstrom from Sweden, Melchior de Polignac from France and also Jirí Stanislav Guth-Jarkosky⁴⁶

Guth was always on the move. After the rise of the Czechoslovak Republic he changed his position as a grammar school professor for the function of the Master of Ceremonies in the office of the President of the Republic and a lecturer on social education at Charles University.⁴⁷ His working load was increased in 1922 by duties connected with the Order of White Lion, the idea of which, as well as the statutes, were his achievement. In the ensuing years Guth’s health was diminishing and his activity slackened. In 1923 he began therefore to resign from his posts; in 1923 he was relieved of his functions on the Executive Board of the IOC; in 1925 he retired from the President’s office; and in 1929 he resigned from his position as President of the Czechoslovak Olympic Committee.

Coubertin also was planning his resignation after the war. At the Antwerp Olympics in August 1920, he noted that “the war of 1914-1918 has not shaken the Games and also social revolution will not affect them a bit more,” and that a long denied fact was now generally

⁴⁰For the circumstance of the decline of COV, see: Guth-Jarkovský JS. *Pameti*, pp. 255-258.

⁴¹Protocol from a meeting of CSVO from 17 December 1918, SUA Praha fund CSVO, p. 3.

⁴²Concept of Guth’s letter to Coubertin of 15 November 1918, LA PNP Praha, fund Guth-Jarkovský.

⁴³Coubertin’s letter to Guth of 8 December 1918, LA PNP, fund Guth-Jarkovský.

⁴⁴Text of the *Olympic Charter*, including later adjustments and supplements. Lausanne, 1981 yearly through 1992.

⁴⁵See Müller N. *Von Paris bis Baden-Baden* pp. 85-91.

⁴⁶Coubertin Pd. *Mémoires Olympiques*, p. 173.

⁴⁷During World War I, Guth summarized his knowledge of courtesy and social convention in three volumes of Social Catechism (1914), which were re-edited in the years 1921-1922 and again in 1939-1940, after the rise of CSR in the fundamentals of social education (1920). For the publications of Guth-Jarkovský, see the entry “Jirí Stanislav Guth-Jarkovský,” in: *Lexikon české literatury. Osobnosti, díla, instituce*. Vol. I: A-G (1985). Praha, pp. 833-836.

recognized “that sport is not a manifestation of luxury and idleness, but a necessity called by a need of harmony between mental work and physical movement.”⁴⁸ Coubertin presented his intention to resign after the 1924 Olympic Games to the Lausanne Congress of 1921. In that regard he expressed his wish, “At this moment, when the man who revived the Olympic Games regards his work as concluded, no one should deny his right to ask that exceptionally the favor is done to his native town Paris, in which upon his initiative the revival of the Olympic Games was on 23 June 1894 so solemnly announced,” and the Games of the VIIth Olympiad in 1924⁴⁹ were allocated to Paris. With the help of Guth-Jarkovský, Coubertin’s wish was fulfilled.⁵⁰

However, after the apocalypse of the world war conflict and the Russian revolution, “mere” Olympism could not satisfy Coubertin’s active character and restless mentality. He did not lose his love for it, but merely tried to simplify his life and his approach to the problems of human society. To Coubertin, the lack of knowledge and understanding were at the root of all troubles.

Therefore, Coubertin continued his work in two directions; on the one hand, he decided to notify mankind of its “collective, mutually and internally interdependent history”; on the other hand, he returned to his previous idea of education and upgrading of workers and all social classes.

His *Histoire universelle*, published in the years 1919-1924 in Aix-en-Provence, developed from lectures that he gave during the war in Lausanne. It was divided into four parts: 1) Introduction and the empires in Asia; 2) The Mediterranean drama; 3) Kelts, Germans and Slavs; and 4) Origin and development of modern democracies.⁵¹ He wanted, as he noted in the introduction, to remove from his history all the prejudice of contemporary historiography. According to Coubertin that was as follows: comparing the life of nations to the life of man; accentuation of the influence of races on the development of mankind; absolutistic approach to the importance of ideas for the determination of the development of mankind; or on the conflict of economic causes. All the aspects of Coubertin’s comprehensive work are above all characteristic of his former opposition to violence in social triangles.⁵² Therefore the French revolution was for him the most gloomy period of history; he regarded it as a period of “vice and mediocrity,” and the representatives of that era as “sad figures in the history of mankind.”⁵³ More surprising was Coubertin’s evaluation of Czech history which reflected Palacky’s traditional concept with a positive assessment of Hussitism. This was only up to the time when Coubertin elaborated on Czech history using comments of Rudolf Urbanek which had been secured for him by Guth-Jarkovský in the year 1923.⁵⁴

The evolution of Coubertin’s concept of “pedagogie sportive” was another instrument that should contribute to the “improvement” of mankind and to the elimination of the phenomenon of brutality from the life of society. In his speech at the 25th anniversary of the

⁴⁸Coubertin Pd. *Mémoires Olympiques*, pp. 212-213.

⁴⁹*Ibid.*, pp. 165-166.

⁵⁰*Ibid.*, p. 171.

⁵¹Coubertin Pd. *Histoire universelle* I-IV, Aix-en-Provence. According to the latest research, the individual volumes were edited between the years 1919 and 1924.

⁵²He expressed this more explicitly in the introduction to the last volume, “If those four centuries include periods of accelerated progress, especially as far as scientific technology is concerned, and its application to practice, that period includes other spells in which fruitless storms brought only moral and political reactions.” *Ibid.*, 1st part, Introduction, p. XVII.

⁵³*Ibid.*, 2nd part, pp. 101 and 108.

⁵⁴See Coubertin’s letter to Guth-Jarkovský from the year 1923, LA PNP Praha, fund Guth-Jarkovský. More can be found in *Histoire Universelle*, Kroutil F. “Pierre de Coubertin. Zivot a dílo.” (1977) and in Coubertin Pd. *Olympijské paměti*, Praha, pp. 160-174.

revival of the Olympic Games, which took place in Lausanne in April 1919, it was possible to understand the direction of Coubertin's ideas. He got as far as the formulation of his theory of "sport for all," that sport not only hardens, but educates in individuals the sense of fairness, responsibility, discipline, fair play. In Lausanne, Coubertin expressed this in the following words, "It is necessary to attract people. In the name of what-should they be excluded from Olympism?" A year later during the Olympic Games in Antwerp he persuaded his colleagues and the Ring of Belgium that in the future "the perspectives should be sought in the sphere of spreading democratic ideas."⁵⁵ He later noted, "And therefore it is urgent to require that every individual finds a kind of physical activity he wishes. It is not sufficient that every four years spectacular Olympic Games are celebrated with the elite. It is more important to assure that everybody makes use of the benefits of Olympic culture in everyday life."⁵⁶ Coubertin suggested to establish the modern equivalent of antique secondary schools, called gymnasia, in all towns at the expense of the community; these would enable everyone to exercise and practice sports free of charge. Unlike the Olympic Games, his idea of antique gymnasia met with no success. Not even the Pedagogical Congress called by Coubertin to Prague in the spring of 1925 reacted to that idea. Its propagation also failed in the institutions founded for that purpose, in November 1925 at the World Pedagogy Union (Union Pédagogique Universelle) and in the year 1928 at the International Bureau of Sport Pedagogy (Bureau International de Pédagogie Sportive).⁵⁷

In April 1923 Coubertin was invited by the Czechoslovak Minister of Foreign Affairs, Edward Beneš, to arrange the Olympic Congress in Prague planned for the year 1925.⁵⁸ After learning of the attitude of President T. G. Masaryk and learning that he "had an interest in Olympism," Coubertin accepted the invitation. After all, as he admitted in his memoirs, "All in all it was most justified to pay tribute to that magnificent city - Prague, certainly one of the most beautiful in the world, a city, where dramatic and deeply human transformations took place. For me, who has since the very beginning annexed the Czech Lands to the Olympic Movement and never ceased to defend their rights, it was especially desirable to conclude my Presidency in the Olympic Committee there. And I could so demonstrate my gratitude to my faithful compatriot and friend Jirí Guth-Jarkovský, the only remaining representative of the original 'old guard'."⁵⁹

The Olympic Congress in Prague was opened on 29 May 1925. It consisted of an Olympic section and a pedagogical section. The reason for that was explained by Coubertin in his opening speech, "At this moment, the future of civilization does not consist only in a political or economical basis, it consists only in the development of education."⁶⁰ The Congress was organized under the patronage of the President of the Republic T. G. Masaryk, the government, and especially the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Just before the Congress, in the regular meeting of the IOC, Pierre de Coubertin resigned as President of the International

⁵⁵Coubertin Pd. *Mémoires Olympiques*, p. 161.

⁵⁶*Union Pédagogique Universelle I. Année 1926-1927*, p. 15.

⁵⁷For more on Coubertin's pedagogical considerations and intentions, see: Krátký F (1973). Znovu a opet nove Coubertin. In: *Teorie a praxe telesné výchovy*, Vol. 21, pp. 7-12; Kössl J (1977). Pierre de Coubertin (1863-1937), In: *Teorie a praxe telesné výchovy*, Vol. 25, pp. 713-717; and Boulogne YP (1975). *La vie et l'œuvre pédagogique de Pierre de Coubertin*, Montreal.

⁵⁸Coubertin's letter to Guth-Jarkovský from 7 January 1923 (LA PNP Praha, fund Guth-Jarkovský) indicates that the invitation by Beneš to arrange the Olympic Congress in 1925 in Prague was initiated by Coubertin himself. For more see: Kössl J. *Dejiny ceskoslovenského olympijského hnutí*, p. 48.

⁵⁹Coubertin Pd. *Mémoires Olympiques*, p. 198.

⁶⁰*The First Olympic Pedagogical Congress in Prague 1925*, Praha, (1925), p. 13. For more on the Olympic Congress in Prague, see also: Kössl J (1971). Mezinárodní olympijský kongres v Praze v roce 1925 a olympijská soucasnost, In: *Teorie a praxe telesné výchovy*, Vol. 19, pp. 129-137; and by the same author, *Dejiny ceskoslovenského olympijského hnutí*, pp. 47-53.

Olympic Committee, stepping down on behalf of the representative of Belgium, Henri de Baillet-Latour.⁶¹ After that, Coubertin was nominated ‘the lifelong Honorary President of the Olympic Games,’ with a note that no one else would be ever awarded this honor.

Coubertin remembered the atmosphere of the Prague Olympic Congress with love, and not only because it saw the end of the most significant stage of his life, “Every day wonderful festivals were arranged: a presidential garden-party, a festival performance in the National Theatre, a matinee in the famous Vallenstein palace, a dinner given by Mr. and Mrs. Guth-Jarkovský, the Minister of Health, the Prague Lord Mayor, the Automobile Club, the Czechoslovak Olympic Committee, etc. In the opening of the congress in the Old Town Hall there were wonderful chorus singers which reminded me of that historical place of Jan Hus and King Jirí z Podegrad.”⁶²

In the concluding dinner on 4 June 1925 the Secretary-General of the CSOV, Josef Rössler-Orovský, addressed the meeting. Strictly, clearly, and precisely he expressed thanks of the Czechs to Pierre de Coubertin for all he had done for them, “For long years he has been the only person who supported the tours of the Czech athletes abroad. Twenty-five years ago sport became the only means, besides art, which enabled us to manifest our national existence. We are thankful to Mr. Coubertin that it was possible for us to walk in the Olympics in the parade of nations behind the flag of the Czech lands. Dear Mr. President, dear friend! Allow me to express to you our sincere gratitude for all you have done for us. We never forget you!”⁶³ Also Coubertin never forgot the Prague tribute.⁶⁴

After the Prague Congress Coubertin did not participate in further Olympic work.⁶⁵ He devoted his last years to the reform of pedagogy. He retired from public life to his apartment in Lausanne, and faced more and more financial difficulties. He died on 2 September 1937 during a walk in Lagrange Park in Geneva.

“Life is simple, because every contest is simple. A good wrestler may step back, but he does not give in; he gives way, but he does not give up . . . life is beautiful, because the contest is beautiful: not a bloody contest, the fruit of tyranny and evil passions, caused by lack of knowledge and by routine, but a healthy competition of souls seeking for truth, light and justice,” - by this Coubertin creed, expressed in his *Roman d'un Rallie*,⁶⁶ Jirí Guth-Jarkovský introduced his recollection of his great friend in a solemn meeting of the CSOV in autumn 1937. He remembered Pierre de Coubertin as a distinguished scientist, pedagogue, publicist and organizer, and as an “influential friend and brave supporter of the

⁶¹In his *Mémoires Olympiques*, (p. 199) he described his feelings at that time, “. . . and therefore I was a little unattentive and absent-minded during the Olympic agenda in Prague. I felt that my role there was concluded. At the same time I was aware that to my successor I handed all affairs and a quite secure situation, enjoying the highest prosperity.” Henri de Baillet-Latour [1876-1942] was President and Founder of the Belgian Olympic Committee and an IOC Member from 1903 until his death. From 1921 he was a member of the Executive Board and from 1925-1942, the President of the IOC.

⁶²Coubertin Pd. *Mémoires Olympiques*, p. 201. Jan Šrámek was Minister of Health at that time, Karel Baxa was Lord Mayor of Prague. It was remarkable also how in this memoir, Coubertin reflects, in contrast to his view on the personalities of Czech history, those who personified the period of Hussitism.

⁶³Quoted according to F Kroutil, c. w., p. 167.

⁶⁴See Coubertin's letter to Josef Gruss from 20 February 1937 in the Archives of the Museum of Physical Education and Sport, Praha, fund Josef Gruss. Josef Gruss [1884-1968], a physician and professor of obstetrics and gynecology at Charles University in Prague, was chairman of the CSOV from 1929-1951, and a member of the IOC from 1946-1965.

⁶⁵His *Mémoires Olympiques*, edited in Lausanne in 1931, were his only remaining permanent contribution to the history of Olympism.

⁶⁶Published in 1898 under the pseudonym Georges Hohrod. Quotation selected from *L'actualité de Pierre de Coubertin*. Le mot de la fin de Geoffroy de Navacelle. Comité International Pierre de Coubertin, Schors-Verlag Niedernhausen (Taunus, 1987), p. 294.

Czechs during the Austrian times and the same faithful friend of the Czechoslovak Republic.” as a Frenchman of genuine character, and a rare patriot “who was accorded little honor in his own country for his qualities and was recognized more abroad, nevertheless he regarded the revival of the Olympic Games as the greatest contribution to the treasury of mankind and human culture.”

“The Olympic idea and Coubertin’s work,” he ended his remembrance, ‘goes victoriously through the educated world as a noble movement which does not know any national, political, religious or class differences.’⁶⁷

Half a century has passed since Guth’s remembrance of Coubertin and a hundred years since the revival of the Olympic Games. At the end of the 20th century we can only confirm that, in spite of many problems, the Olympic Idea continues its way in the world as a successful phenomenon. By its endeavor to seek among people that which unifies them, and to surmount all which divides them, the Olympic Movement is still ahead of its time. It was Pierre de Coubertin who placed the qualities of democratism, tolerance and recognition into the cradle of Olympism. It was Pierre de Coubertin who created an institution which, though on a small scale, but realistically, proved that people may live in mutual respect, competition and cooperation. It was also Pierre de Coubertin who enabled the Czechs to help in the birth of that phenomenon of the 20th century and participate actively in shaping its image. We are thankful to him for that.

⁶⁷Guth-Jarkovský JS. *Vývoj českého olympismu. Pierre de Coubertin*, pp. 19-23.