

# Unknown Letter by Coubertin Found

## Observations by Baron de Coubertin to the 1928 B.O.A. Official Report

by Karl Lennartz

At the session of 1925 in Prague, Baron Pierre de Coubertin resigned as IOC-President after a term of 29 years. He waived the nomination of honorary president. It was even decided that this title would never be awarded. Coubertin only accepted the title honorary president of the Olympic Games. During the following years, though he was dealing more and more with pedagogical questions, he still had a brisk interest in the development of the Olympic Movement. First of all, he had often very close contacts to the responsible members of the different Organizing Committees of the Olympic Games in 1928, 1932, 1936 and still in 1940. In spite of numeral invitations, he did not visit the Games again. He wrote greetings, made propositions according the ceremony and also criticised if he did not agree to anything.

By fluke, I got hold of a letter from him, wherein Coubertin dealt with the *Official Report*<sup>1</sup> of the IXth

*Olympiad Amsterdam 1928*<sup>2</sup>, edited by the British Olympic Association, respectively Harold M. Abrahams<sup>3</sup> in a very critical way. Coubertin does not want a single detail from the Olympic history, influenced by him, to be presented in a wrong way. I am quite sure that Coubertin's letter is hardly known by anybody. Therefore, a printout seems reasonable to me. Besides, the corresponding text of the report of the BOA belongs to it, too.

Coubertin's letter is not in the possession of the IOC Archives. Coubertin sent his critical comments handwritten to Abrahams and the BOA respectively. My evidence exists of a translation written on a typemachine. The one who translated the document could not decipher several parts, which were indicated by me with []. Several of these, names in the first place, could be reconstructed by me. For that reason, I especially added a few footnotes.

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1. The *British Olympic Association* has published – like other NOC's too – reports in book-form of the participation of British teams at the Olympic Games since 1912.

2. London 1928.

3. Abrahams, Harold Maurice (1899-1978), sprinter and long-jumper, took part at the Olympic Games of Antwerp without success, he improved the English long-jump record three times to 7,19, 7,23 and 7,38 m in 1923 and 1924, became English champion several times and was gold-medallist of 100m in 1924 at Paris, second-best with the 4x100-m relay and took part in the 200-m final. His trainer was Sam Mussabini. Abrahams' Olympic experiences were subject of the award-winning movie *Chariots of Fire*. Due to an injury he had to complete his career in 1925. Abrahams became a sport-journalist, was athletics correspondent of the *Sunday Times* from 1925 to 1967 and sports commentator at the BBC for many years. He had been member of the executive board of the *English Amateur Athletic Association* since 1926, had been secretary since 1931 and president since 1976. He was co-founder of the *Association of Track & Field Statisticians* and the *British Amateur Athletic Board* where he had been treasurer for many years and became chairman afterwards. He wrote numeral books about the history of the Olympic Movement (according to BUCHANAN, Ian, *British Olympians*, Enfield 1991, p. 81-82).

(BOA Report - page 30)

## 2.—THE MODERN OLYMPIC GAMES.

The revival of the modern Olympic Games, the first of which were held at Athens in 1896, was due almost entirely to the energy and enterprise of the Baron Pierre de Coubertin. Baron de Coubertin, during the Franco-Prussian War, was a small boy of seven years of age at a Jesuit school in Paris.<sup>1</sup> It is said that the desire for international athletics arose in his mind when, at the age of seventeen, he began to scrutinise the weaknesses of the French people and the discouragements under which they were recovering hope and self-respect. His life as a student was so gloomy, so narrow and so repellent, that he entered on a course of thorough self-examination. He came to the conclusion that three Monarchies, two Empires, and three Republics during a single century were hardly indicative of stability, and he felt that somewhere in the growing youth there were faculties repressed and powers stunted, which, if properly developed, would assist in the solution of the problem of French regeneration. At this time he was a cadet at St. Cyr<sup>2</sup>, with a wholly unattractive future in prospect. Accordingly, he resigned and became a pupil in the Free School of Political Science<sup>3</sup>.

For a time he contemplated a political future, but within a few years he determined to devote his life and resources to the introduction of sport into the French education. To this end he travelled widely in America and England, and felt convinced that the organisation of sport in these two great English-speaking countries was of real importance in the life of the people.

(page 31) It was in 1892 that Baron de Coubertin first propounded his desire for a new era in international sport. On November 25th of that year, at a meeting of the Union des Sports Athletiques in France<sup>4</sup>, he made his first public announcement as follows:—

"Let us export our oarsmen, our runners, our fencers, into other lands. That is the true Free Trade of the future; and the day it is introduced into Europe the cause of Peace will have received a new and strong ally. It inspires me to touch upon the further step I now propose, and in it I shall ask that the help you have given me hitherto you will extend again, so that together we may attempt to realize, upon a basis suitable to the conditions of our modern life, the splendid and

beneficent task of reviving the Olympic Games."<sup>5</sup>

Page 31

The circular of Jan. 1894 is not intelligible unless mentioned that it was a comment to the invitation to attend the Congress.

For a time there was no perceptible result, but on January 15th, 1894, Baron de Coubertin sent a circular to all the Athletic Associations, containing the following sentences:—

"Before all things it is necessary that we should preserve in sport those characteristics of nobility and chivalry which have distinguished it in the past, so that it may continue to play the same part in the education of the peoples of to-day as it played so admirably in the days of Ancient Greece. Imperfect humanity has ever tended to transform the Olympic athlete into the paid gladiator. But the two things are incompatible. We must choose between one formula and the other... Reform is necessary, and must be discussed before we undertake it. There are compromises and there are contradictions in the amateur regulations of the present day, which it will be the business of this Congress to consider. And the last subject on the Agenda paper is the request that you will sanction, if not the realization, at any rate the preparation of an international agreement that will revive the Olympic Games under modern conditions, so that every four years the athletic representatives of the world may be brought together, and the spirit of international comity advanced by the celebration of their chivalrous and peaceful contests."<sup>6</sup>

### *Coubertin's comments:*

*I never was a cadet at St. Cyr because I gave up before entering the School having already decided for a self-[[?]] life.*

To this there was a very irregular response. The German Federation<sup>7</sup> took no notice whatever, the British were lukewarm, the Belgians frankly opposed. Even in France the (page 32) Gymnastic Federation was hostile. Italy, Spain, Greece, and Sweden, however, sent delegates. The Congress opened in June, 1894, in the Amphitheatre of Sorbonne, and unanimously decided upon a revival of the Olympic Games and the institution of the International Olympic Committee. Baron de Coubertin proposed that to Athens should be given the great honour of staging the Olympic revival. The Greek delegate, M. Bikelas, warmly welcomed the suggestion, and for the next two years both turned to the task of organizing this modern revival.

*The Germans at large (not only the Gymnasts) took no notice but except the Gymnasts the Belgians were favourable. Enclosed are documents about the Congress. No Country, properly to speak, had been asked to send delegates, but Associations, Clubs and Universities. There were more than four countries participating somehow or other – in fact, no less than fourteen nationalities were represented, but except M.8 Bikelas of Greece and Prof Sloane of Princeton, my personal co-workers, nobody had real interest in the revival of the Olympic games. The "unanimous vote" was rendered at the end of the Congress, chiefly to please me.*

Encouraged by the welcome given to their enterprise by the King of Greece and the Duke of Sparta, Bikelas and de Coubertin went to Athens in the autumn of 1894 and public interest was, if somewhat indifferent, aroused. Eventually the Prime Minister of Greece authorized the trustees of a legacy left by the brothers Zappas for the erection of a building called the Zappium, in which physical exercises were to take place, to give their help to the work. In the public subscription which followed, M. Averoff, of Alexandria, promised a million drachmas (£37,500) for the rebuilding of the ancient Stadium.

The first Olympic Games were held in April, 1896,<sup>13</sup> and consisted of track and field events, cycling, fencing, gymnastics, lawn tennis, shooting, swimming and weight-lifting. Of the twelve athletic events, nine fell to the prowess of U.S.A., two to Great Britain, while Greece supplied the Marathon winner.

*The King of Greece did not care for the Games and the Prime Minister, M. [Trikoupis<sup>9</sup>], stood decidedly against my plan. The trustees of the Zappas foundation<sup>10</sup> declined to help.*

*It was the Crown Prince Constantine who was the „C [??]“<sup>11</sup> of the 1896 Games. One should never forget it. In fact, he stood in front of M [Trikoupis] (Prime Minister and although the Prime Ministers resignation was due apparently to a political discussion between them, the true reason was the Olympic Games and the support which the Crown Prince had given me. When the King saw the success of the enterprise he began to think it would be pleasant to settle the Games permanently in Athens and tried to obtain this result against the initial decision of the Paris Congress, but the loyalty of his son interfered.<sup>12</sup>*

As soon as the Games of Athens were over, Baron de Coubertin, as President of the International

Olympic Committee, had a long interview with the Crown Prince of Greece. It should here be mentioned that the International Olympic Committee was, from its initiation, a voluntary Association, self-constituted, the guardian and promoter of the Olympic Games, and so it remains. Not one single member of this Committee is nominated by any National Organisation. The members are invited to join the Committee by the Committee itself (See page 36).

The suggestion had been made that all future Olympic Games should be held at Athens, but there were many obvious difficulties in the way, if the Games were to achieve the *wide* international aspect which their founder contemplated. Baron de Coubertin, however, suggested that there (*page 33*) should be Athenian celebrations every four years in the years between those in which the Olympic celebrations were being held elsewhere. In fact, Games were held at Athens in 1896, but have never since been revived at that venue.

In 1900 Paris was the favoured city. Here the contests were entirely confined to track and field events.

*It is an entire mistake to say that the I.O.C.: "was, from its initiation, a voluntary Association, self-constituted." – self-recruiting, yes, self-constituted, no. It was the Congress that created the I.O.C. and elected its first Members.<sup>14</sup> The I.O.C. received from the Congress the [??] of perpetrating itself and taking care of the institution for the future.<sup>15</sup>*

*Page 33. Far from being confined to track and field contests, almost every known sport took place in 1900 but the arrangements were mediocre and a great deal of confusion resulted of the local leadership of men who knew very little about sport.<sup>16</sup>*

Of these events America proved successful in seventeen, Great Britain in three, while France and Hungary each gained a single victory. During the progress of the Olympic Games at Paris in 1900, the International Committee decided, in view of the American victories at the previous Games, and the wide interest America had always shown in the revival, that it would be just and fair to award to America the Games to be held in 1904. As Chicago was considered the most central point in the United States, that city was selected for the Games.

Subsequently, however, in view of the St. Louis Exposition - the Exposition commemorating the purchase of the Louisiana territory - the Amateur

Athletic Union of the United States granted the Exposition Authorities permission to hold the Games during that event. These Games met with no great response from foreign competition. Entries from the home country were naturally numerous, and of the twenty-four track and field events held, the United States gained twenty-three victories, the other event falling to Canada. The Games again were mainly concerned with track and field athletics. Australia, Canada, Germany, Cuba, Greece, Transvaal, and Zululand sent representatives.

*It was in 1901 and not in 1900 that Chicago's demand for the IIIrd Olympiad Games was accepted. A powerful case had been started by Mr. Furber, Jr. with prominent Chicago-eans (?) at its head and above all President Harper of the University of Chicago. The vote of the I.O.C. was received with enthusiasm by the students with a "[?]"<sup>17</sup> on the Congress. But a year later it became clear that the Louisiana C[?] Exhibition of 1903 would not be ready in time and a postponement until 1904 was contemplated, hence some friction between the two cities. The I.O.C. finally was asked to allow the transfer of the Games from Chicago to St. Louis. The Amateur Athletic Union of the U.S. it is said granted permission to hold the Games during the Exposition. The A.A.U. had nothing to say in this matter. After due consideration the I.O.C. decided to call in President Roosevelt to arbitrate, his decision becoming law. So it was. The President decided in favour of the transfer although not entirely convinced of the good of it. Nor it was. The games included Athletics, Gymnastics, Football, Fencing, Cycling, etc.*

In 1904 the International Olympic Committee held its Congress in London and the proposal was made that the IVth Olympiad should take place in Rome; but somewhat unexpectedly the Italian Committee were prevented from carrying out this decision, and during the Athenian Games of 1906 it was proposed that Great Britain should organize the Games of 1908. This offer proving acceptable to the British representatives, a British Olympic Council was formed, and the organization of the IVth Olympiad was immediately put in hand. The reader can find all details of the 1908 Games, and a special chapter on the preliminary organization, in the Official Report of the IVth Olympiad, which was admirably compiled by the late Sir Theodore Cook.

*By the way, I am enclosing a copy of the Athens program. You will see that it was larger than is said. But aquatic events were interrupted by the very bad state of the sea.*

*In 1903 a regular demand was introduced by the Federa[?] Italiano and its President, Senator Todaro<sup>18</sup> to have the IVth Olympiad Games held in Rome. Political intrigues and jealousy between Rome and Milan did later – in 1906 – cut short the carrying on of the scheme and the Games went to London.<sup>19</sup>*

(page 34) The 1908 Games mark the beginning of the modern Olympiads in their widest form. Whereas at the three previous Olympiads, only some half a dozen sports had comprised the whole programme, at London in 1908 no less than twenty-one different sports were included, and in all, just short of one hundred Olympic titles were available for competition. The Games, which included every conceivable sporting contest, many of which could hardly be recognized as international, went on from the end of April to the end of October, the more important events being held in July.

*I quite agree what is said of London Games on page 34 except concerning the number of events at previous Olympic games. The ceremonial was the same as that started at the last Olympiad Games at Athens (1896).*

On Monday, July 13th, His Majesty King Edward VII. was present at the Opening Ceremony, and no less than eighteen nations, represented by nearly 1,000 athletes, took part in the March Past. To this Olympiad twenty-two different nations sent representatives, the entries totalling over 2,500 and fourteen nations provided Olympic Champions. In the number of wins Great Britain led the world with a total of fifty-six out of a possible ninety-six, America being second with twenty-two. This result was, owing to the nature of many of the contests and the elasticity of the programme, somewhat too 'flattering to British sport, and we were doomed to a serious awakening at the next Olympiad.

For the celebration of the Vth Olympiad a unanimous vote was given at a meeting of the International Olympic Committee, held in Berlin on 28th May, 1909, that the venue should be Stockholm. The Official Record published by the Swedish Olympic Committee supplies in the minutest detail (it is a volume of over 1,000 pages) all the information that even the most inquisitive reader could require.

At the request of the International Olympic Committee, when awarding the Vth Olympiad to Sweden, that the programme should not be so comprehensive as the London one, the number of events was reduced to fourteen, but in fact there were

just as many Olympic titles available. Sweden and U.S.A. each gained twenty-three victories, Great Britain recorded but nine. The outcry in the Press concerning the supposed decadence of British sport occupied public attention for some months after the end of the Games, and this matter is referred to in the chapter on the work of the British Olympic Association (see pp. 44 and 45).

For the VIth Olympiad, the International Olympic Committee selected Berlin, but, owing to the Great War, this Olympiad of course never took place.

(page 35) In 1920 the VIIth Olympic Games were held at Antwerp. Considering that a large majority of the nations represented (there were twenty-five in all) were still suffering from the aftermath of the war, the Games were a decided success. This time there were twenty-one different sports, making up a programme with 117 Olympic titles, and sixteen different countries enrolled their names on the Olympic scroll.

The Olympic Games of 1924, held at Paris, far exceeded in importance, comprehensiveness and organization, any previous Olympiad.\* There were nineteen different sections (including for the first time an Art section<sup>20</sup>) and 129 titles. Forty-one nations sent representatives and to twenty countries fell the distinction of winning an Olympic event.

The IXth Olympiad, held at Amsterdam, marks the climax of the modern Olympic movement. This is not the place to give the details of the Amsterdam Games, for this Official Record contains all matter relative thereto. As at present advised the 1932 Games will be held in the United States, at Los Angeles. It is hardly conceivable that any Olympic Contests held outside Europe could ever approach the international character of the Games held in Holland, for at Amsterdam more nations than ever before gained Olympic victories, and it is to be recorded that twenty-seven countries were successful.

What of the future? The ever-increasing standard of efficiency demonstrated in the various sports has made it more and more plain that specialization in its acutest form is to be the dominating feature of future Olympiads. Whether in the course of years the standard of competition will become so high that no one will be able to succeed unless he becomes a professional, in fact, if not in name, is a matter on which opinions are diverse, but it can hardly be doubted, when we contemplate the inconceivable elevation of standard which a generation has produced, that success at future Olympiads will be within the grasp only of supermen, and supermen who spare nothing in training and preparation to attain the greatest results of which they are capable.

(page 36)

#### THE INTERNATIONAL OLYMPIC COMMITTEE.

In June, 1894, an International Congress was held in Paris

"to discuss the true principles of amateur sport." This Congress decided to revive the Olympic Games and to institute the International Olympic Committee. Since that date the ultimate responsibility for the Olympic Games has rested with this Committee, which now comprises representatives from forty-seven different countries. This number has increased from nineteen in 1908, thirty-one in 1912, thirty-six in 1920, and forty-five in 1924 to the present figure.

Baron de Coubertin, whom we rightly regard as the father of the modern Olympic movement, was the first President of this body, and remained in that position until 1925, when he was succeeded by Count Baillet-Latour. It will be of interest to mention the British members of the International Olympic Committee since its inception. As will be explained in a moment, it is not correct to call these men "British representatives," for the International Olympic Committee is a self-elected body and invites new members to join its ranks.

1894-1898 THE LORD AMPHILL.  
1894-1906 THE LATE MR. C. HERBERT.  
1897-1927 THE LATE REV. R. S. DE COURCY LAFFAN.  
1901-1907 THE LATE COLONEL SIR HOWARD VINCENT.  
1906-1909 THE LORD DESBOROUGH OF TAPLOW.  
1909-1915 THE LATE SIR THEODORE COOK.  
1913-1920 THE LATE DUKE OF SOMERSET.  
1920- BRIG.-GEN. R. J. KENTISH.  
1922- THE EARL CADOGAN.  
1927- THE LORD ROCHDALE.

The modern Olympic Games are controlled by the International Olympic Committee in close co-operation with the National Olympic Committees and the various International Federations which govern the different sports. The International Olympic Committee draws up the general programme, decides the venue of each Olympiad, and determines the rules governing the qualification of competitors. The National Olympic committees collect and (page 37) forward the entries from the various governing bodies of sport, and are responsible for the amateur status of athletes from the country which they represent. The International Federations are responsible for the rules and conditions of their own particular section of the Games, and in conjunction with the Executive Committee of the International Olympic Committee fix the events and the number of entrants in each. Each Federation has complete power in the appointment of officials.

*Now I must add that all these mistakes are of very small importance if compared with what follows on Pages 36 to 40. I do not allude in so saying to the second paragraph. I was not exactly the 1st President of the I.O.C. because I had at first established the rule that the Presidency would change every four years, belonging to the Country where the coming Olympiad was to be celebrated. Thus M. Bikelas of Greece was President*

from 1894 to 1896 and I became President at the closing of the first Olympiad Games. In December 1903 it would have been Prof W. M. Sloane's turn, but as early as 1897 he had begun to move that the rule be changed, considering that it was bad in itself and that a kind of General-Secretary as I had been from '94 to '96 was not powerful enough to lead the movement. Thus it was that a term of ten years was decided upon. My first decade ended in 1907; at the Hague meeting I was re-elected and again in 1917 during the war, all (Germans included)<sup>21</sup> voting for me. The third decade would have ended in 1927 but I resigned in 1925 (?) owing to the other great work (preparations for a general reference of the public instruction system) which I had undertaken since 1900 about and to which I meant to devote henceforth my time entirely. The work under the cover of the Union Pédagogique Universelle was achieved in five years (1925-1930) and the results have been recently sent to the Public Instructions Department of every civilized country.

What grieves me in the pages 35 to 40 of the B.A.O. book is the complete ignorance shown towards the moral, artistic and, if I may say, religious aspects of the I.O.C.'s work under my personal guidance. You say that the danger lies in the extension of professionalism throughout the Games. But who is responsible for that? Certainly as is said on page 35 the standard of competition is becoming dangerously high, but the greatest danger lies in the fact that all of you gentlemen of England and British States, since the death of Rev. De C. Laffan, are forgetful almost entirely of the fact that the Olympic Games are by no means simple World Championships but something much greater and higher, the attempt to revive the "religious athlete" of old. Therefore the technical and business sides of Modern Olympism are of less greater importance than the spirit of international chivalry and brotherhood that lies at the root of the institution.

In the historical resume I am criticizing I find unimportant details concerning the number of events and competitions at the Games but I find no mention whatever of the introductions of opening and closing ceremonies, of the art contests and literary, the Olympic Calendar, the raising and saluting of the national flags for each victory, the introduction of the oath, the beautiful religious celebrations at Stockholm in the Stadium, at the Antwerp Cathedral, at Notre Dame. You consider all that secondary; it is everything. Nothing of the kind ever existed since the ancient Greek Athletic ideal was swept away by the Church. Any International body can start World Championships. But only the Olympic Games can be celebrated without being ridiculised with that kind of pomp and gravity.

*I will end by calling your attention to some other mistake due to ignorance of the past.*

It should further be mentioned that in the year following the celebration of each of the Olympic Games, a Congress is held composed of members of the International Olympic Committee, together with representatives from the National Olympic Committees and the various International Federations. It is fair to say that in general Olympic matters this Congress is the supreme authority and it was, for example, the Congress at Prague in 1925 that formulated the amateur definition governing participation in the Olympic Games.

As no little confusion exists in the minds of many people as to the exact powers of the International Olympic Committee, it seems desirable to give first in detail the terms of the Olympic Games Charter, and then in a summarized form the Statutes of the Constitution of the International Olympic Committee.

#### CHARTER OF THE OLYMPIC GAMES AS LAID DOWN BY THE INTERNATIONAL OLYMPIC COMMITTEE. FUNDAMENTAL PRINCIPLES.

1. The Olympic Games are celebrated every four years. They assemble together the *Amateurs* of all nations on an equal footing and under conditions as perfect as possible.
2. An Olympiad need not be celebrated, but neither the order nor the intervals can be altered. The Olympiads are counted as beginning from the 1st Olympiad of the modern era celebrated at Athens in 1896.
3. The International Olympic Committee has the sole right to choose the place for the celebration of each Olympiad.
4. It is compulsory that the Olympic Games include the following events:—Athletics, Gymnastics, Combative Sports, Swimming, Equestrian Sports, Pentathlon and Art Competitions.
5. There is a distinct Cycle of Olympic Winter Games which are celebrated in the same year as the other Games. (page 38) Starting from the VIIIth Olympiad they take the title of First Olympic Winter Games, but the term Olympiad will not be used to describe them.
6. The International Olympic Committee chooses the place for the celebration of the Olympic Winter Games, giving the first refusal to the country holding

the current Olympic Games, on condition that they can give sufficient guarantees to organize both games at the same time.

7. Generally speaking, only those who are natives of a country, or naturalized subjects of that country, are qualified to compete in the Olympic Games under the colours of that country.

## **STATUTES OF THE INTERNATIONAL OLYMPIC COMMITTEE.**

### **OBJECTS.**

At the Congress of Paris, the International Olympic Committee were entrusted with ensuring the regular celebration of the Olympic Games and securing the attainment of the highest ideals of amateur sport.

### **MEMBERSHIP.**

The International Olympic Committee is a permanent body and consists of not more than three members from one country, the number of countries to whom admission is possible being unlimited. The members of the Committee are elected for an indefinite period by the Committee itself, and are to consider themselves as delegates of the International Olympic Committee to the Federations and Sports Associations of their respective countries. They must in no sense regard themselves, while serving on the Committee, as representatives of their own countries. Members may resign and may, in certain circumstances, suffer expulsion.

### **ADMINISTRATION.**

The President is elected by the Committee for a period of eight years and is eligible for re-election. An Executive Committee is chosen from the members of the International Olympic Committee, and consists of six members who serve for a period of four years.

The Executive Committee meets at the summons of the President of the International Olympic Committee or, alternatively, at the request of any three of its members. In urgent cases the President can himself make a decision which must, however, be confirmed at a subsequent meeting of the Executive Committee or the International Olympic Committee itself.

The Executive Committee manages the finances, keeps all records, and ensures the carrying out of the regulations for the Olympic Games. It also submits to the International Olympic Committee the names of persons to be elected to that Committee, and prepares the Agenda for the meeting.

No quorum is necessary at meetings of the International Olympic Committee, but amendments to the present statutes must, to be valid, (page 39) be passed by two-thirds of the

members present at the time of voting. The French language is the official language of the Committee and in the case of any divergence between the texts the French text prevails,

### **CONGRESSES.**

The International Olympic Committee is responsible for convening Congresses and fixes the agenda therefor. These Congresses must be composed of representatives from the National Olympic Committees and the International Federations, as well as the members of the International Olympic Committee.

The International Olympic Committee meets once every year and investigates the many difficult problems which are constantly arising. Similarly the Executive Committee - which is often given the full powers of the International Olympic Committee itself - meets every quarter. and decides questions of a pressing nature; and likewise sets the policy of the International Olympic Committee. The Executive Committee is the Jury of Honour at the Olympic Games and, as such. Intervenes in all questions of a non-technical nature outside the scope of the Juries of the International Federations. It was this Jury that took steps to bring to the notice of certain Federations, after the Paris Games, the necessity of maintaining a chivalrous spirit throughout the competitions. How well they did their work was seen at Amsterdam.

To sum up, the International Olympic Committee maintain that in a great movement like the Olympic Games, the controlling body must be strong and impartial and, therefore, all its members must be pledged not to accept any mandate which could affect the complete independence of their vote at the International Olympic Committee meetings.

Anyone who knows the difficulties which have attended the development of the Olympic movement, will realize how impossible it would have been in the past to carry on that movement, if there had been among the members of the International Olympic Committee the rivalry of competing nationalities, and the fear of disapproval of their national societies. Nothing but the absolute freedom of the International Olympic Committee to deliberate and decide with a single eye to the progress of the Olympic ideal, has made the work of these thirty-two years possible.

The British Olympic Association have shown, by the resolution passed in November. 1927. that they are desirous (page 40) of determining, once and for all, the exact constitutional status of the International Olympic Committee. This resolution reads: -

"The Council further directs that all necessary steps be taken to secure the appointment of a Committee by and from the Congress to decide any necessary interpretation

of matters on which the Congress have previously recorded a decision." \*\*

It would be most unfair to suggest that the International Olympic Committee have not in the past rendered extremely valuable services to the Olympic Movement; but it is certainly a matter for some comment that the constitution of this body is such that they owe no responsibility directly (and even claim to owe no responsibility indirectly), to any of the nations participating in the Olympic Games.

While the method by which this body is self-elected is certainly open to some criticism, it may be possible to find a way of associating the International Federations and the National Olympic Committees more closely with the International Olympic Committee, and there seems no reason why the following practical compromise should not be arrived at: -

(a) It should be definitely laid down that the decisions of Congresses are absolutely final until the next Congress.

(b) The interpretation of such decisions can either be in the hands of a special committee, nominated by the Congress, or indeed, in the hands of the International Olympic Committee.

(c) What must at all costs be avoided in the future is a repetition of a position analogous to the "broken time" controversy, in which the International Olympic Committee entirely ignores rulings of a previous Congress, because it says a position has arisen which was not considered at the Congress and, therefore, the International Olympic Committee is competent to deal with it.

The above suggestions need not be read as a condemnation of the International Olympic Committee. No one will deny that the untiring efforts of this Committee have resulted in the formation of a truly international sporting spirit as exemplified by the IXth Olympiad. It is only suggested that a perfectly sincere attempt at the next Congress to clarify the whole constitutional position will result in a much better understanding between all the Associations who combine to organize the Olympic Games; and, indeed, in a strengthening of the authority of and increase in the respect for the International Olympic Committee itself.

\* See Official Report, 1924 Games

\*\* See also Page 1.

*Page 37. The charter was not laid down by the I.O.C. but by the Inaugural Congress of 1894. It was be unchangeable and the articles on Winter Games ought not to stand in the Charter itself but in an annex. As to the Statutes (p.38) the t[??] (?) given in the B.O.A. book is not complete and gives a false idea of the ensemble. Whole articles and parts of others are left out. The President's powers are not mentioned even in the [??] given. The President for many years formed a kind of Executive Committee (?) with the Secretary and the Treasurer. Then in 1920 I considered useful to call another Congress to finish the work begun in 1914 and I proposed to form in view of my coming retirement a Sub-Committee of five which entered on office October 1st, 1921. – The object of the great Paris Congress of 1914 had been to settle once for all the technical program of the Games. The work was practically done when the war broke out and therefore we were thrown back into the precedent regime under which the Organizing Committee was in fact the maker of the program and the I.O.C. had only to approve. I never favoured the interference of the I.O.C. in technical questions. From the beginning (1896) the Federations and Clubs were asked to take up the technical questions but as, for years, they were, most of them, hostile and anxious to overthrow the work and interrupt the cycle, we had to do often without them. In 1914 for the first time they accepted to combine the efforts of all for the good of Olympism at last definitely accepted. Yet the unloyal attitude was resumed once more after the Antwerp Games movement but it did not last. The "Congress" therefore was never considered as regular but as an occasional consultation and only on technical questions. Therefore I protest absolutely against what is said on page 37 that "in general Olympic matters the Congress is the supreme authority." The example chosen to illustrate the matter is not correct. Nothing more was done in 1925 at Prague than before. Ever since the beginning the I.O.C. called in the Federations to say what an Amateur was and the discussion of 1909 at Berlin on the subject and the world-wide enquiry that followed remain the corner-stones laid down then and upon which no further real construction was erected.*

*I quite agree personally with paragraph C on page 40 but things of that sort will occur as long as there exists no real definition of an Amateur – and there is none yet.*

## NOTES

1. Coubertin was born on 1 January 1863. The Franco-Prussian war (1870/71) is called German-French War in Germany.
2. Here, the Ecole Spéciale Militaire des Saint Cyr, the French Military Academy founded in 1803, is meant.
3. Ecole des Sciences Politiques.
4. Union des Sociétés Françaises de Sports Athlétiques.
5. In: COUBERTIN, Pierre de, *Einundzwanzig Jahre Sportkampagne (1887-1908)*, Ratingen 1974, p. 74.
6. Published several times, the last time as a facsimile in: Comité International Olympique (ed.), *Un Siècle du Comité International Olympique*, Vol. 1, Lausanne 1994, p. 191.
7. Probably, Coubertin had not invited any German sport organisation deliberately. There was no sport association in Germany. Either the German Federation of Sport, Games and Gymnastics (Deutscher Bund für Sport, Spiel und Turnen), the Central Committee of Public and Youth Games (Zentralausschuß für Volks- und Jugendspiele), or the German Gymnastics Federation (Deutscher Turnerbund) is meant. Later, all these organisations refused to participate in the Olympic Games. Cf. LENNARTZ, Karl, "Die Beteiligung Deutschlands an den Olympischen Spielen 1896 in Athen", in: LENNARTZ, Karl und Mitarbeiter (ed.), *Die Olympischen Spiele 1896 in Athen. Erläuterungen zum Neudruck des Offiziellen Berichtes*, Kassel 1996, pp. 92-106.
8. Monsieur.
9. Trikoupis, Charilaos (1832-1896), politician, from 1875 to 1895 seven times prime minister, rejected the realisation of the Olympic Games due to the expenses because the Greek state was nearly insolvent. That is why he resigned, among other reasons, and retreated to Nice, where he died shortly afterwards.
10. An institution which dealt with the management of the Zappa brothers' inheritance. From the ranks of these persons, who had seen the Games sceptically at first, the Organizing Committee was established.
11. This means: President of the Organizing Committee.
12. Cf. LENNARTZ, Karl, "Willibald Gebhardt and Germany's Position" in: MÜLLER, Norbert (ed.), *Coubertin and Olympism. Questions for the Future*, Niedernhausen 1998, pp.110-122.
13. From 6 to 15 April 1896 according to the Gregorian Calendar, resp. from 25 March to 3 April according to the Julian Calendar which was in force in Greece until 1923.
14. There was no formal electoral procedure. Coubertin named the persons and the members of the Congress acclaimed.
15. There were no "elections" within the IOC after 1894. In general Coubertin informed the members by circulars, whom he had "acquired" as a new member.
16. Coubertin is still annoyed that the committee, initiated by him, was not instructed by the direction of the universal exhibition to organize the competitions of the Fair. He criticises the realisation extremely hard and unfair (cf. LENNARTZ, Karl / TEUTENBERG, Walter, *II. Olympische Spiele 1900 in Paris*, Kassel 1995).
17. In his Mémoires Olympiques Coubertin writes of a "mammoth bonfire" (Edition Lausanne 1979, p. 40).
18. Todaro, Francesco (1839-1918), doctor and politician.
19. After Athens (antique tradition), Paris (World Culture Capital) and St. Louis (New World), Coubertin wanted the Games of the 4th Olympiad to be implicitly realised in the second antique capital. How far the candidacy was engineered only by himself and whether Rome was really interested must be left undecided.
20. It is surprising that Coubertin doesn't criticise the fact that during the Olympic Games in Paris 1924 the Art Contests had been realised for the third time already.
21. Had there really been a (postal) vote among the IOC members in 1917? During the war, Coubertin had declared his presidency as being suspended, because as a Frenchman he could not be neutral, and he nominated his Swiss friend Godefroy de Blonay as president ad interim. By the way, for him the Germans are no longer IOC members after the war and he declares them dead although they are still alive (cf. LENNARTZ, Karl, "The exclusion of the Central Empires from the Olympic Games in 1920", in: BARNEY, e.a. (ed.), *Global and Cultural Critique: Problematizing the Olympic Games. Fourth International Symposium for Olympic Research*, London, Ontario 1998, pp. 69-74).