



## Book Reviews

Milshteyn, Oleg: *Olympic Saga, Trilogy: Olympionics, Priests, Pilgrims. (Historical and sociological essays). Volume I, Olympionics.* Moscow, "Terra-Sport", 6/21, building 2, 1st Baltiyskiy Lane, Moscow 113184 Russia. E-mail address: [ter\\_sport@mail.magelan.ru](mailto:ter_sport@mail.magelan.ru); "Olympia Press", 11-3, Skaterniy Lane, Moscow 121069, Russia. Published in 2001, 744 pages. ISBN 5-93127-134-1. Price of the book US\$ 20.00. Reviewed by Nikolai Borovkov,

Ph.D., and Olga Soukhareva, post graduate student, Moscow City Pedagogical University.

A result of a long-term work in the field of history and sociology of Olympism and Olympic movement. Two substantial researches conducted by the author in the beginning of the 1970th and in the 90th compose the basis of the book.

The first project includes the Soviet Olympians – participants of the Winter Olympic Games and Olympiads from 1952 to 1972. The second research conducted 20 years later covers the life and the activity not only of the Soviet Olympians but also the Olympians from many other countries. Actually, not only Olympians were the experts in this research. Totally 500 respondents from 81 countries answered the author's questions about the role of the Olympic Games, Olympic movement and modern Olympism during the first Centenary of their existence, development and functioning in the modern Era. They shared their thoughts and reflections about the lessons and experience that this social phenomenon offered to the modern society, culture and civilisation. This extensive poll covered and elucidated some certain problems of the Olympic Games and Olympic movement: the understanding of the modern Olympism; the nature of victory and defeat in sport; the dialectics of talent and genius in sport; the Olympians' way of life, their sport career and life story; their social status on different stages of their sport career and after its completion depending on their sport, citizenship and residence, and on the historical period of the Olympic movement.

To unite all these various notions, the results of two above-mentioned researches and, especially, two approaches in the consideration of the received data (historical and sociological) – it is rather a task! Therefore, it is not by chance that the author rejected a purely academic style of a monograph, but chose the popular-scientific narration. Answering numerous questions, he operates not only the interview materials, arguments and analysis of different scientific facts but also shares his personal experience that he gained in sport and in the Olympic movement.

That is why, probably, the author constructed the architectonics of the book as the separate and at the same time historically and logically connected Essays. I think the first Essay "Athens, Spring 1896: Virtual Interview with the Russian General Boutovsky" is of a special value for an Olympic historian. Dr. Milshteyn thoroughly selected the original form of narration. It was not and it could not be a real interview with General

Boutovsky. The author used this method only to restore the historical justice: to acquaint a modern reader with this belles-lettres masterpiece – the first in the Russian literature evidence about the Olympic Games in Athens.

This article was published in Moscow in summer 1896 as a reprint from the "Russia review" Magazine. That time, in the end of the 19th century, there were very few people in Russia who knew about this event – the first Olympic Games, and much fewer who were interested in them. Later, in the end of the 1920th, all readers in the new Socialist Russia were deprived of that modest 33-page reprint. It was hidden even from the specialists who knew about it. It was withdrawn from all Soviet libraries and locked into the so-called "special storehouse" together with thousands and thousands of other articles, brochures and books written by the "bourgeois authors". The only reason for that book-genocide was that those books connected the truth about the "bourgeois", "anti-socialistic" Olympic Games; the truth about the phenomenon common to the whole mankind and directed at the mutual understanding of all people all around the world. That was the truth about the global sport event that, like Phoenix, had revived from the ancient civilisation, but its values did not match the dogma of the socialist ideology and the philosophy of the proletariat culture. That was the truth that frightened the leaders of the Bolsheviks party who anathematised the "bourgeois sport" and together with it the newly born Olympic movement.

But the main reason for the irritation, even fury of the USSR leaders was that the author of that article was a General of the Tsar Army. And his genealogy! His roots originated from Count Rjurik! He was of the same feather with many noble people, even with those who belonged to the reigning Dynasty! No, no! Never! Never!!! Even the fact that Alexei Boutovsky was the first IOC Member for Russia, and one of the brightest intellectuals of his time, that he had published quite an amount of books and articles about physical education and training of children, teenagers and young people of pre-military and military age – all was forgotten. And even the



name of that outstanding Russian patriot and true internationalist was forgotten. Only in the end of the nineteeneighties, when the stupid system of the "special storehouses" in the Soviet libraries was cancelled, the historians who knew about the contribution of the first IOC Member for Russia into the revival of the Olympic Games, into formation of the international Olympic movement, found this reprint in the "closed funds" of the Central State Library.

Thus, the author entered the well-forgotten historical document into the circulation of the resource basis of the history of Olympism. We hope that sooner or later General Boutovsky's article will be of easy reach not only for a Russian reader but also it will be translated into other languages. By the way, though this edition is a Russian one, attached you will find the English translation of the contents and summary of all three volumes. It gives us hope that a foreign reader, at least in general, will manage to get acquainted with this book.

To my mind, from the point of view of Olympism history the second Essay "Theurgs of the XX Century: Genealogy of the Contemporary Olympic Gods" is mostly interesting. Here the author suggests us the social portrait of the International Olympic Committee based on its Centenary. Indeed, the educational and professional status of all IOC members from 1894 till 1994, their sport career and their attitude towards the administration in sport, etc. were thoroughly analysed.

An inquisitive reader shouldn't skip other six Essays, though they are of more sociological than of a historical character. The logic of the narration together with the closing Essay will bring him from spring Athens of 1896 into sunny Olympic Sydney in 2000.

And then, finally: July 10, 2001. The 112th IOC Session in Moscow. The IOC Executive Board meeting. The special donation ceremony. Dr. Oleg Milshteyn conveys his collection of 500 interviews to the Olympic Museum in Lausanne and also presents this edition to the IOC members.