

# The Rebels of 1894 and a Visionary Activist

By Volker Kluge



Pierre de Coubertin, at the age of 30, as he prepared for the Founding Congress of the Olympics. Photo: IOC Archives/OSC

On 23<sup>rd</sup> June, the International Olympic Committee (IOC) celebrates the 125<sup>th</sup> anniversary of its foundation, which was announced on the eighth day of an international congress at the University of Paris – the Sorbonne<sup>1</sup>. Originally called the Comité International des Jeux Olympiques, its purpose was to run the Olympic Games, whose rebirth was decided after a ‘solar eclipse’<sup>2</sup> of more than 1,500 years.

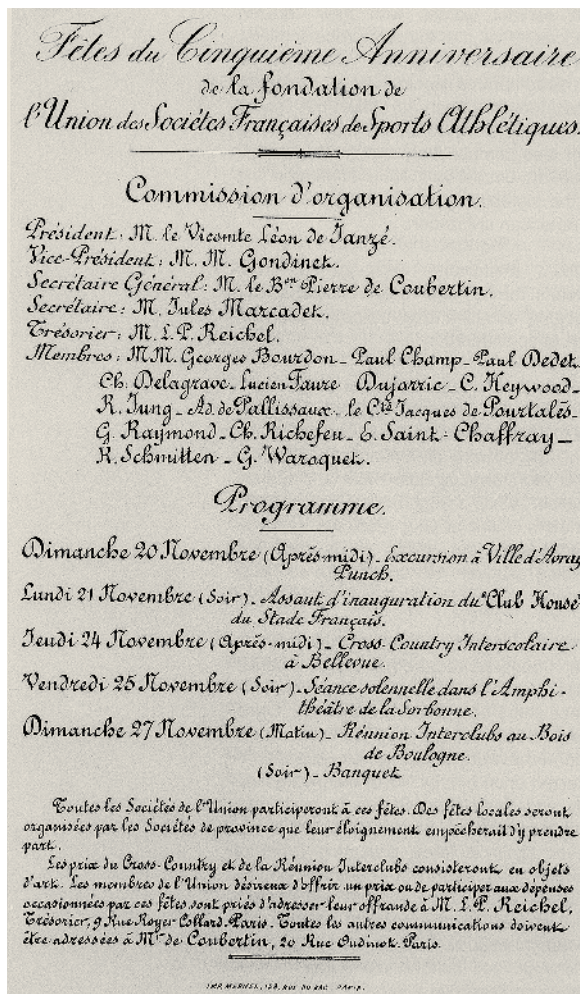
The official address of the committee was an office at Rue de Saint-Honoré 229 in Paris, which the Union des Sociétés Françaises de Sports Athlétiques (USFSA)<sup>3</sup> had rented. In reality, the ‘IOC headquarters’ was in the parental home of Pierre de Coubertin at 20 rue Oudinot. Its founding father also paid the remaining expenses out of his own pocket, which was to ensure the existence of the committee for a long time.

It all began with a young aristocrat who was just about to do his A-levels and was passionately interested in contemporary history. In his first autobiography, Coubertin admitted he was more affected by the constant failures of his native country than his contemporaries.<sup>4</sup> He saw this in the fact that France had already experienced three monarchies, two empires and three republics in the course of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. The sheer number of different portraits adorning the coins of his country was symbolic of wounded national pride.

Coubertin renounced a career as a military officer, favoured by his parents, and began to study law and political science, which led to an encounter with the English education system. For the 20-year-old, it was an important moment when he came across the novel *Tom Brown’s School Days*<sup>5</sup>. In it, Thomas Hughes tells the story of a boy at Rugby School who meets the reformist educator Thomas Arnold. The headmaster of Rugby School from 1828 to 1841, Arnold sought to educate his students by including sports and community games for ‘Christian gentlemen’. “I was confronted with something completely new and unexpected, athletic education”, Coubertin wrote.<sup>6</sup>

The book accompanied him on his first major journey to England in 1883 and on other occasions that he crossed the English Channel. He published the result of his studies in 1888 in his work *L’Education en Angleterre*.<sup>7</sup>

Financially independent, Coubertin pursued the ambitious goal of fundamentally changing the French education system and removing national barriers



Programme of the USFSA Five-Year Ceremony, which was celebrated on 25<sup>th</sup> November 1892 with a conference at the Sorbonne. For the first time, Coubertin voiced the idea of restoring the Olympic Games.

Photo: IOC Archives/OSC

against all odds. As a model he had in mind the Anglo-Saxon public schools, where students organised their sports activities on an extracurricular basis and on their own initiative.

Coubertin was initially involved in founding student sports clubs and later as USFSA Secretary General. Another important step came in 1888 when he succeeded in the establishment of a committee with the rather cumbersome name 'Comité pour la propagation des exercices physiques dans l'éducation'<sup>8</sup>. As president, he enlisted the former Minister of Education Jules Simon.

The Paris Exposition Universelle of 1889 which was organised on the occasion of the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the French Revolution offered a first opportunity to publicise this committee. Coubertin was assigned to organise a congress about physical exercise, which took place on 15<sup>th</sup> June at the School of Civil Engineering and which he incorporated in the school's sports competitions. Simon delivered a brilliant speech, while Coubertin gave an overview of his Anglo-Saxon studies. He had meanwhile continued this with a questionnaire campaign for the dissemination of the 'Arnold System' at British and American colleges and universities.

In addition to publicity, the congress brought him a multitude of new acquaintances that broadened his

network. He met Captain Viktor Balck, chief instructor of military gymnastics and fencing at the Stockholm Central Institute of Gymnastics, who brought a team to demonstrate Swedish gymnastics on the eve of the congress. A defining event was an encounter with the 'Peace Friends', into whose circle he was introduced by Simon. They met immediately after the sports discussion, chaired by Frédéric Passy, who had founded the Peace League in 1867.<sup>9</sup> Coubertin attended, and he also wrote a short report in which he described boxing as a "peace maker".<sup>10</sup>

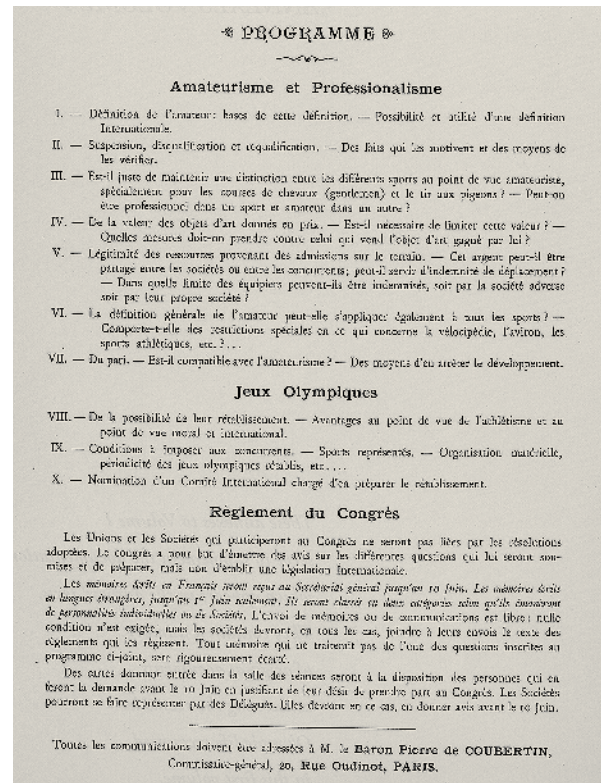
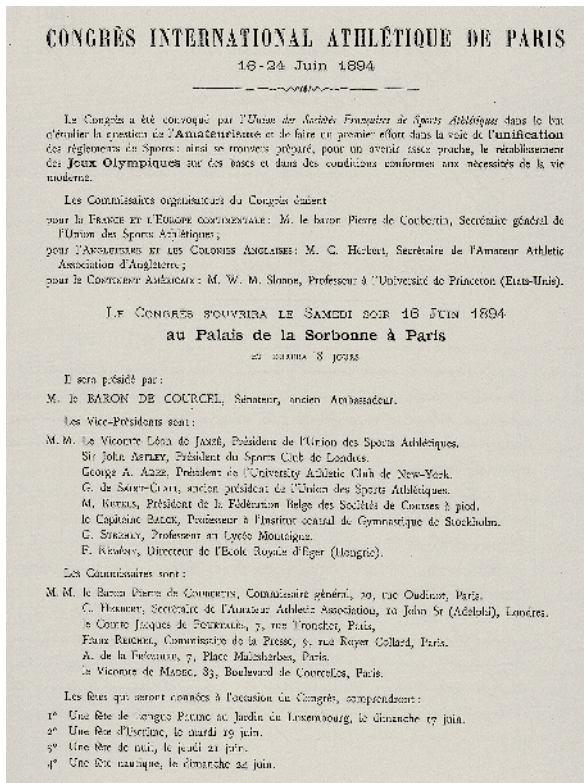
In recognition of the organisation of the Sports Congress, the French Minister of Public Instruction sent Coubertin to the United States and Canada to study education systems at colleges and universities. From New York, he first went to New England in the autumn of 1889, where he presented his ideas about French physical education at the Boston Conference on Physical Training at the end of November.

Among his partners was Professor William M. Sloane, who had been President of the Athletic Committee of Princeton University since 1885 and whom he met in 1888 in Paris in the house of the philosopher and historian Hippolyte Taine.<sup>11</sup> Sloane, whose specialty was French history, enabled Coubertin to gain access to American universities. They became lifelong friends.



The beginning of 1894 programme sent for the International Athletic Congress of Paris – the name in those days. Half of the Vice-Presidents who had been announced did not attend. The congress, due to end on 24<sup>th</sup> June with a boating party, was overshadowed by the assassination of the President of France, Sadi Carnot.

Photos: IOC Archives/IOC



Coubertin travelled from the north to the south, and from there he went on to the east coast.<sup>12</sup> He was impressed by what he saw. There were exemplary sports facilities, which enabled the students to continue to train in their chosen sports in all seasons. He visited the hygienic facilities and admired the club sport scene with its multitude of competitions between the universities. He was surprised to find that women were also involved. Compared to his experiences in England, Coubertin generally found the American system more effective. He saw lower membership fees as one reason for this.

In his view, the Anglo-Saxon world at that time possessed a wealth of power that was greater than one generally wanted to admit. He saw its main source in the Arnold reforms, which enabled young people to leave school well prepared to apply the lessons they had learned to their future lives.<sup>13</sup>

When Coubertin returned from America at the end of December 1889, he had hope "that we are not taking the wrong path in following the direction that the study of English educational institutions has opened for us", as he wrote to the minister in the report. "Therefore let us pursue our reform, strengthened by the example of England and America. Let us attempt to implement the programme summed up in these words: sports and freedom."<sup>14</sup>

But before Coubertin wanted to popularise something that did not yet exist, he found it more important to internationalise sport. In his experience, there were only three driving forces in France at that time: first, necessity; second, fashion; and third, foreign competition. Since

he considered the first two to be short-lived, only foreign competition remained. "There was the future. It was necessary to establish contacts between our young French athletics and those in other countries who were ahead of us on the path of physical training. However, these contacts had to take place regularly and be vested with a certain prestige. Didn't all of these preconditions ultimately result in a revival of the Olympics?"<sup>15</sup>

When Coubertin wrote that, he could not remember when, in his mind, he had for the first time associated this need with the revival of the Olympic Games. But ancient Olympia had always been a "city of longing" for him. The 'Olympian Games' devised by Dr. William Penny Brookes in Much Wenlock, which Coubertin visited in 1890, and the German excavations from 1875 to 1881 also served as inspiration. "Germany had brought to light what remained of Olympia, why should not France succeed in rebuilding its splendors?" he wondered.<sup>16</sup>

On 25<sup>th</sup> November 1892, Coubertin saw the hour had come to play a role in sport at an international level. The opportunity presented itself on the occasion of the fifth anniversary of the USFSA, which was celebrated with a conference at the Sorbonne. After lectures on physical education in antiquity and the Middle Ages<sup>17</sup>, Coubertin focused on the modern world. For him it was not utopic to believe in progressive re-education in the case of war. He claimed: "It is clear that the telegraph, railways, the telephone and passionate research in science, congresses and exhibitions have done more for peace than any treaty or diplomatic convention."<sup>18</sup> He ended his lecture with the words:



Coubertin made preparations for the congress in his Parisian home at 20 rue Oudinot, where the studio used by his father, a well-known painter, was also located.

*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 this programme; he hopes that you will help him as you helped him hitherto, and that with you 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.<sup>19</sup>*

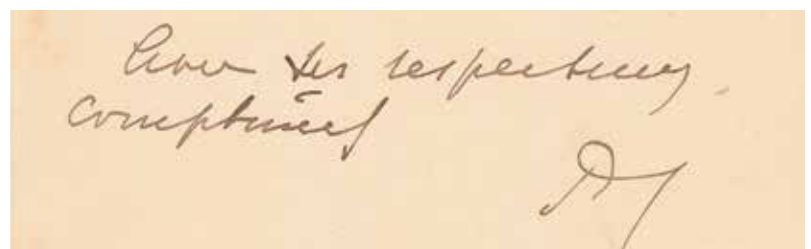
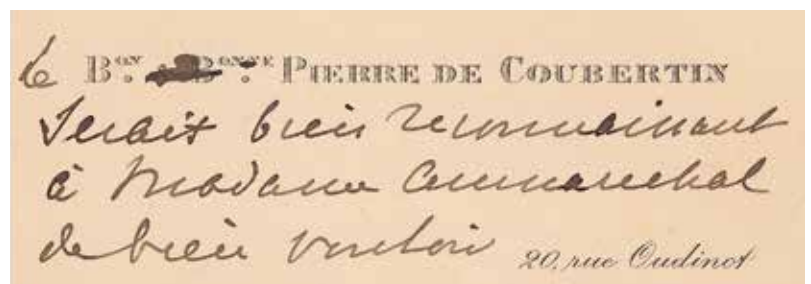
### Neither America nor London could discourage Coubertin

What Coubertin had thought was sensational news, was in reality met with no response. The auditorium applauded, but no one was able to grasp the implications and separate Coubertin's idea from the forms of antiquity. When leaving the hall, some asked what he meant by the 'revival' of the Olympic Games. They understood the term only symbolically. You could perhaps imagine such a project as a play, but not in sporting reality. Others joked and inquired whether women would be allowed and whether general nakedness would be compulsory.<sup>20</sup>

The next spring came without Coubertin's proposal reaching the public. Since nothing happened, he resorted to a trick. He recalled that Adolphe de Pallisau, who published the journal *Les Sport Athlétiques*, had some time before proposed the convening of an international congress to discuss the amateur rules, but

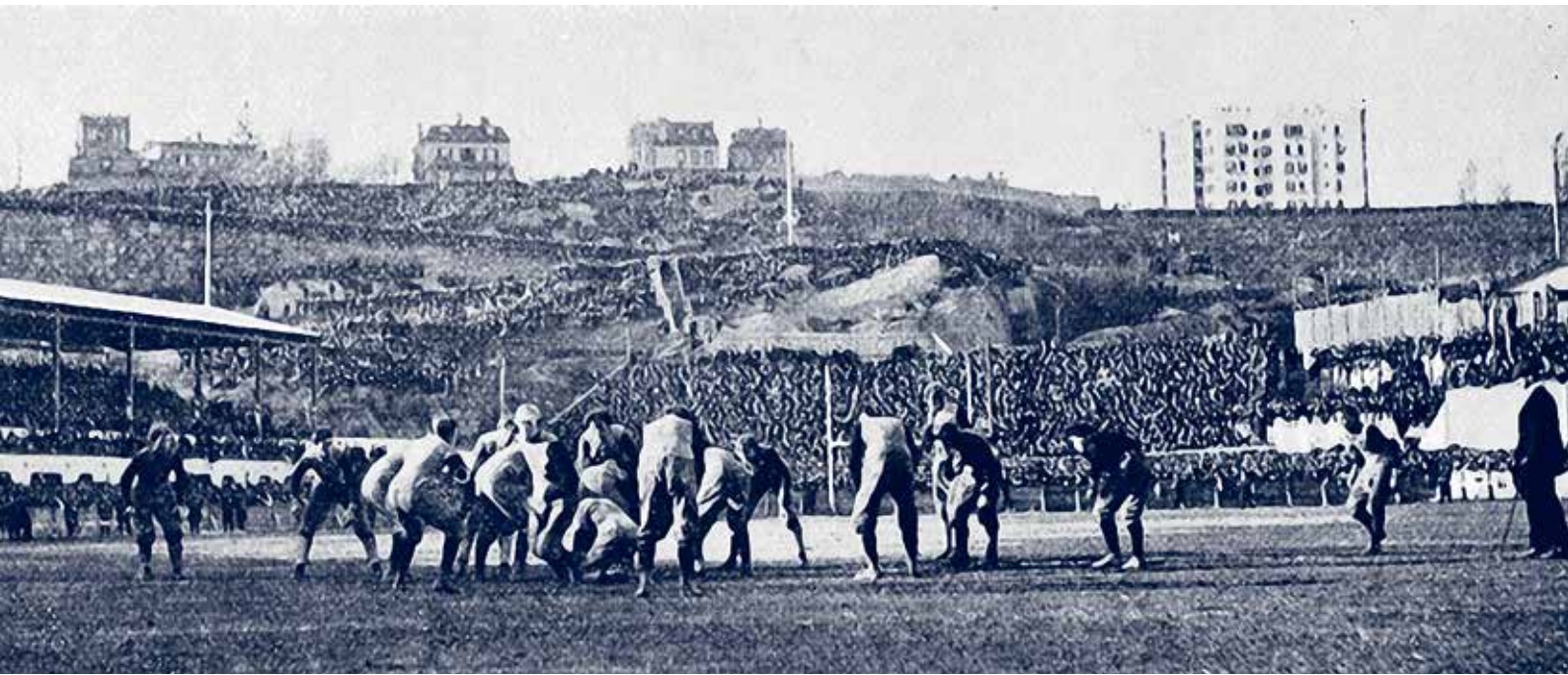
that the idea had been shelved. Together they dug up the paper again, and this time – on 1<sup>st</sup> August 1893 – the USFSA Presidium agreed to host a congress under the motto 'Congrès international de Paris pour l'étude et la propagation des principes d'amateurisme'<sup>21</sup>. The time was set for June 1894.

To prepare, three plenipotentiaries were appointed: Charles Herbert, the Secretary of the Amateur Athletic Association (AAA) for Great Britain and its colonies, and Sloane for America. France and continental Europe were to be handled by Coubertin, who was again sent to



One of Pierre de Coubertin's business cards, which he signed, as was his custom with the abbreviation 'PdC'. Collection de Navacelle, Collection Rüdiger Fritz





**Thanksgiving Day 1893: football match between Princeton and Yale Universities at Manhattan Field in front of 25,000 spectators, including Pierre de Coubertin. Another 20,000 fans watched the game from the neighbouring Dead Head Hill.**

Photo: The UT History Corner

'New World' on behalf of his government in September 1893 – this time as a member of a team of educators at the World's Fair in Chicago. Unfortunately, it was too late to be able to participate in the International Congress of Education, which took place at the end of July and at which he was listed as a speaker.<sup>22</sup>

After visiting the Columbian Exposition, Coubertin crossed the United States for the second time. In particular he wanted to advertise his plans at the universities. From Chicago he went via Denver to California. He went on to Texas, Louisiana, Washington DC and back to New York, in order to take a three-week break with Sloane in Princeton.<sup>23</sup>

On Thanksgiving Day, the two attended the annual football match between Princeton and Yale Universities at Manhattan Field, where the Princeton 'Tigers' celebrated their first win in ten years against their rivals with a score of 6–0.

Although Coubertin did not see much value in the harsh American national sport, it was an unforgettable experience for him to sit among 25,000 excited spectators and some 20,000 fans on the neighbouring Dead Head Hill.<sup>24</sup>

Previously, on 27<sup>th</sup> November 1893, Sloane had invited Coubertin to lunch at the New York University Club and met a series of "most influential" people<sup>25</sup>, to win them over to participate in the Paris Congress. But this contact confirmed what he had already felt during the tour: American sport, in which the universities were in conflict with the Amateur Athletic Union (AAU), was not immediately won over. Therefore, Coubertin was content that they did not actually oppose him. His only ally remained Sloane, whose Olympic enthusiasm he knew how to increase.

He expected less support from Herbert. According to Coubertin, Herbert had only collected contacts in these years.<sup>26</sup> The Englishman was interested in the technical part of the programme, whereas he considered the Olympic Games themselves as neither "viable nor useful".<sup>27</sup>

Coubertin found even less understanding in Herbert's homeland. On 7<sup>th</sup> February, 1894 he attended a private dinner with "about six personalities" in the London Sports Club. President Sir John Astley, a prominent Conservative Member of Parliament and sports enthusiast, had invited guests to attend.

Coubertin had received setbacks in both America and in London but this did not detract from his optimism. As soon as he returned home, on 15<sup>th</sup> January 1894, he sent a circular letter inviting people to the congress. The attached Princeton programme contained eight questions, of which the first seven concerned the amateur rules. The eighth question was:

*VIII. On the possibility of restoring the Olympic Games. – Under what circumstances could they be restored?*<sup>28</sup>

In his letter Coubertin, emphasised that in the case of the amateur rules, he considered reforms necessary to be discussed. As for point eight, he did not hurry. For he was still looking towards the turn of the century, which France wanted to celebrate in Paris with another World Expo. For this, Coubertin and the gym teacher Georges Strehly had already submitted a project for an Olympic Pavilion to the General Commissioner Alfred Picard.<sup>29</sup> But that did not figure in his circular. Rather, he wrote:

*The project referred to in the last paragraph would be the pleasing sanctions of international harmony that we are, as yet, in no way seeking to achieve,*

*merely to prepare for. The re-establishment of the Olympic Games, on a basis and in the conditions in keeping with the needs of modern life, would be brought together, every four years, representatives of the nations of the world, and one is permitted to think that these peaceful, courteous contests constitute the best form of internationalism.*<sup>30</sup>

As spring approached, the first difficulties became apparent: no trace of enthusiasm, and hardly anyone who offered support. Since only a few international sports federations existed at the time, Coubertin had to turn to clubs whose addresses had to be painstakingly obtained.<sup>31</sup> Added to this were the problems with the Union des Sociétés de Gymnastique, whose former president Joseph Sansbœuf gave him early notice that the French Gymnastics Federation would withdraw if the Germans were to appear in Paris.<sup>32</sup>

Since Coubertin did not want to organise the congress without their participation, he visited the German military attaché in Paris, Maximilian von Schwartzkoppen, who had no idea however about the sports scene.<sup>33</sup> In addition, Coubertin turned 21-years-old student Walther Bensemann, who had recently

founded the Strasbourg Football Club. Bensemann advised him to contact the editor of the Berlin journal *Sport und Spiel*, John Bloch.<sup>34</sup>

In fact, Bloch provided Coubertin with a variety of addresses, but this did not bring in a single participant. Even the late release of the programme produced no result.<sup>35</sup> Bloch did not publish it until 2<sup>nd</sup> June 1894, possibly because he did not want to compete with the International Sporting Association (ISA). This had recently been founded in London and had also adopted sports promotion as its goal. Bloch had become Vice-President. On the other hand, he offered Coubertin recognition of his journal as an “official German organ”.<sup>36</sup>

Thus, Germany, which had a gymnastics association with half a million members, was not represented in Paris. The only German registered as a guest was Baron von Reiffenstein, a friend of Coubertin living in London. He found Coubertin’s intentions “most excellent”.<sup>37</sup>

### International celebrities in a glamorous setting

Coubertin had divided the invitations into two categories. First, sports federations and clubs were asked to nominate delegates. In the second category,

### Honorary Members of the Olympic Congress in 1894

**Leopold II** (1835–1909), King of Belgium  
**Albert Edward** (1841–1910), Prince of Wales  
**Gustaf** (1858–1951), Crown Prince of Sweden and Norway  
**Konstantin** (1868–1923), Crown Prince of the Hellenes  
**Grand Duke Vladimir Alexandrovich** (1847–1909), brother of Tsar Alexander III  
**Dr. Stanislaus Ritter von Madeyski–Poray** (1841–1910), Austrian Education Minister  
**Paul Champoudry** (1847–about 1900), President of the Paris City Council  
**Duc Henri–Eugène d’Aumale** (1818–1897), French General  
**Count Albin von Csáky von Körösszeg und Adorján** (1841–1912), Hungarian Education Minister  
**Henry Austin Bruce, 1<sup>st</sup> Baron Aberdare of Duffryn** (1815–1895)  
**Hodgson Pratt** (1824–1907), President of the International University Alliance, co-founder of the International Peace Bureau  
**Ernest Lavisse** (1842–1922), French historian and author  
**Joseph Reinach** (1856–1921), French author and politician, International Arbitration and Peace Association  
**Frédéric Passy** (1822–1912), Member of the Institut de France; co-founder of the Ligue internationale de la paix  
**Ruggiero Bonghi** (1826–1895), Professor, Member of the Italian Parliament  
**Richard Feldhaus** (1856–1944), President of the German Peace Society in Königsberg  
**Alexei Butovsky** (1838–1917), General, instructor of the Russian Military Schools  
**Dr. William Torrey Harris** (1835–1909), US Commissioner of Education

**Fredrik Bajer** (1837–1922), President of the Danish Peace Society, co-founder of the International Peace Bureau  
**Lord Arthur James Balfour** (1848–1930), Member of the House of Commons  
**Comte Carlo Fisogni** (1854–1936), Member of the Italian Parliament, President the Italian Shooting Federation and Gymnastic Federation  
**Henri–Marie La Fontaine** (1854–1943), Professor for international law, founder of the Belgian League for the Rights of Women, co-founder of the International Peace Bureau  
**Alexander Hegedüs** (1847–1906), Member of the Hungarian Parliament, President of the Hungarian Gymnastic Federation  
**Elie Ducommun** (1833–1906), President of the International Peace Bureau  
**Georges de Saint–Clair** (1845–1910), President of the Racing Club de Paris  
**Vicomte Léon de Janzé** (1848–?), Senator, President Union des Sociétés Françaises des Sports Athlétiques and of the Sociétés de Sport de l’Ile de Puteaux  
**Eugène Spuller** (1835–1896), Member of the French Parliament, Minister for Public Education  
**Henri Marion** (1846–1896), French philosopher, Professor of the Faculté des Lettres  
**Sir John Astley** (1828–1894), Member of the House of Commons, President of London Sports Club  
**Viktor Balck** (1844–1928), Captain, President of the International Skating Union (ISU) and of the Swedish Gymnastic Federation, teacher for military gymnastics and fencing at the Stockholm Central Institute  
**Ferenc Kemény** (1860–1944), Hungarian headmaster, Eger  
**Charles Jules Simon** (1814–1896), former Prime Minister of France, Member of the Académie Française, Honorary President of the USFSA  
**Jules Janssen** (1824–1907), Member of the Institut de France, astronomer and physicist  
**Count Ladislaus Hoyos** (1834–1901), Ambassador of Austria–Hungary in Paris

**Dr. Daniel Coit Gilman** (1831–1908), President of Johns Hopkins University, Baltimore  
**Baron Jean Théobald Lagé** (1816–1898), Admiral, President of the Union des Yachts Français  
**Ioannis Phokianos** (1845–1896), headmaster, President of the Greek Gymnastic Federation  
**Comte Charles Gustave Le Clerc de Juigné** (1825–1900), Member of the House of Representatives, Vice-President of the Société Hippique française  
**Baron Arthur Gundaccar von Suttner** (1850–1902), Austrian author and pacifist, founder of the Association for the Defense Against Anti-Semitism in Austria  
**Dr. Jiří Guth** (1861–1943), Czech Professor of the Lyceum of Klatovy,  
**Luigi Capuccio**, Secretary of the Italian Rowing Club Turin  
**L. Parmentier**, General, President of the Union des Sociétés de Gymnastique de France  
**Dr. William Penny Brookes** (1809–1895), English surgeon, magistrate and botanist, founder of the Wenlock Olympian Society  
**Charles Waldstein** (1856–1927), Anglo–American archaeologist, director of the American School of Classical Studies in Athens  
**Lord Frederik Hamilton, Marquess of Dufferin and Ava** (1826–1902), Ambassador of the United Kingdom in Paris  
**Georges Augustus Adee** (1847–1908), former President of the New York Athletic Club  
**Georges Strehly** (1851–1906), professor at the Lycée Montaigne  
**Dr. José Benjamin Zubiaur** (1856–1921), headmaster of the National College of Uruguay  
**Leonard Albert Cuff** (1866–1954), Secretary of the New Zealand Amateur Athletic Association  
**Felix de Meleniewski** (1846–1908), Deputy of the Nobility of Kiev





Invitation to the opening at the Grand Amphitheatre of the Sorbonne on 16<sup>th</sup> June 1894 with the final designation 'Congrès International pour le Rétablissement des Jeux Olympiques' (International Congress for the Re-establishment of the Olympic Games).

Photo: IOC Archives/OSC

he gathered Honorary Members, whom he did not necessarily expect to attend but hoped their names would add prestige for the congress. Coubertin managed the latter with the support of USFSA President Vicomte de Janzé and his friend Jean Jules Jusserand.

The 50 personalities were included can be divided into six groups. The first comprised members of the high nobility. The King of Belgium, the Prince of Wales, the Crown Prince of Sweden and Norway, the Crown Prince of Greece and the Russian Grand Duke Vladimir were all ready to offer their honorary patronage.

A second group consisted of government representatives from Austria, Hungary, the USA and France. The third group included politicians and diplomats such as the President of the City Council of Paris, the ambassadors of Britain and Austria-Hungary, and personalities such as Lord Balfour who later became British Prime Minister.

A strong fourth group stood for the close integration of the Olympic project with the peace movement<sup>38</sup>, whose common credo was international understanding. In addition to Passy and Simon, were Hodgson Pratt of

## President of the Congress

**Baron Alphonse Chodron de Courcel** (1835–1919), Senator, Ambassador

## Commissioners

**Pierre de Coubertin** (1863–1937), General Commissioner

**Ernest Callot** (1840–1912), mining engineer, former President of the French Gymnastic Federation

**Armand de la Frémoire** (1866–1909)

**Ar. Masson**, auteur

**Le Vicomte Armande de Madec** (1835–1917)

**Fernand Hecquet d'Orval** (1851–1911), globetrotter, former cavalry officer

**Comte Jacques de Pourtalès** (1860–?), co-founder of the USFSA, founder of 'Cercle Madrid'

**Theodore Stanton** (1851–1925), American journalist, IOC Member 1900–1903

**Comte H. de Villers**, USFSA Vice-President

## Press Commissioner

**François Etienne 'Frantz' Reichel** (1871–1932), journalist, Olympian 1896/1900 athletics, rugby

## Delegates

### 1. ASSOCIATION DES INSTITUTEURS POUR L'EDUCATION PHYSIQUE DE LA JEUNESSE

**Moulin**, teacher

**Picart**, professor of the school games

### 2. UNION VÉLOCIPÉDIQUE DE FRANCE

**Félix Roussel** (1856–1925), Vice-President, lawyer

**Henri Pagis**, President

**Dr. Louis Minart**, Vice-President

**Duval**

**Mousset**, publicist

### 3. RACING CLUB DE FRANCE

**Dr. Michel Gondinet** (1855–1936), President, lawyer

**P. Lejeune**, EB member USFSA

### 4. SOCIÉTÉ DE SPORT DE L'ILE DE PUTEAUX

**André Toutain** (1861–?)

**Maurice Borel**, Secretary of Embassy

**(Jean Jules Jusserand** [1855–1932], literary historian and diplomat)<sup>1</sup>

### 5. POLO CLUB DE PARIS

**Le Vicomte Charles de La Rochefoucauld** (1857–1945), co-founder of the Polo Club Bagatelle

**René Raoul-Duval** (1864–1916), co-founder of the

Polo Club Bagatelle, President of the Mining Company in Yekatarinenburg, Olympian 1900 Polo

### 6. SOCIÉTÉ D'ENCOURAGEMENT DE L'ESCRIME

**Henri Hébrard de Villeneuve** (1848–?), Master of Petitions to the Congress of State

**François Jules Derué** (1835–1922), Colonel, military and Inspector General of Physical Education

**Adolphe Corthey** (1834–?), author

### 7. SOCIÉTÉ PANHÉLLÉNIQUE UNION DE GYMNASTIQUE D'ATHÈNES

**Demetrios Vikelas** (1835–1908), Dr. jur., writer, poet, member of the board of Directors of the Panhellenic Gymnastic Federation, IOC Member 1894–1899

### 8. UNION DES YACHTS FRANÇAIS

**Alfred Morel-Fatio** (1850–1924), romanist und hispanist, Member of the Académie des Inscriptions et Belles-Lettres

**Gaston Fournier**

**Pierre de Boulougue**, Vice-President du Cercle de la Voile des Paris

**Deha**, Vice-President de la Société des Régates de Dieppe

**Loste**, Société de la Voile Pauillac et Gironde

**Le Vicomte de Rochechouart**, President of the Union des Yachtsmen de Cannes

### 9. SOCIÉTÉ GYMNASTIQUE DE SAINT-PETERSBOURG

**Alexei Lebedyev**, Secretary of the circle 'Friends of Sports' of St. Petersburg

### 10. FEDERAZIONE GINNASTICA ITALIANA

**Le Comte Ferdinando Lucchesi-Palli** (1860–1922), Vice-Consul in Paris, IOC Member 1894

### 11. SOCIÉTÉ HIPPIQUE FRANÇAISE

**Baron Georges du Teil du Havelt** (1854–1933),

President

**Baron Henri de Carayon la Tour** (1850–1916)

### 12. NEDERLANDSCHE VOETBAL EN ATHLETIEK BOND

("not sure that we can attend")

### 13. STADE FRANÇAIS

**Pierre Garcet de Vauresmont** (1875–?), author

**Jean Borie** rugby referee

**(L.H. Sandford**, EB member of the USFSA)

### 14. UNION CHRÉTIENNE DE JEUNES GENS (UCJG)

**Melvin Bagdon Rideout** (1872–?), Sport director,

President of the YMCA (UCJG) in Paris

**Jacques Adrion**

### 15. UNION NATIONALE DES SOCIÉTÉS DE TIR

**Daniel Mérillon** (1852–1925), UNST President, former member of the French Parliament, General Secretary of the sports competition of the 1900 World Exhibition, Olympian shooting 1908–1912

**Florimond Lermusiaux**, UNST General Secretary, lawyer

**Paul Lefèvre**, President of the Société de Tir l'Avenir de Paris

**Lécœuvre**, UNST Regional President of Paris, deputy treasurer

**Er. Chapron**, Director of la Société de tir des gymnastes de la Seine

### 16. ASSOCIATION DES SOCIÉTÉS DE GYMNASTIQUE DE LA SEINE

**H. Derosselle**, President

### 17. UNION DES SOCIÉTÉS DE GYMNASTIQUE DE FRANCE

**Louis Loutil** (1852–1909)

**Joseph Sansbœuf** (1848–1938), former USGF President

### 18. AMATEUR ATHLETIC ASSOCIATION, LONDON

**VICTORIAN AMATEUR ATHLETIC ASSOCIATION, MELBOURNE**

**Charles Herbert** (1840–1924), Honorary Secretary,

IOC Member 1894–1906

**Norman Jones**

the USA, Ferenc Kemény of Hungary, Elie Ducommun of Switzerland, Henri-Martin La Fontaine of Belgium, Fredrik Bajer of Denmark, and Richard Feldhaus of Germany. Four of them were later awarded the Nobel Peace Prize.<sup>39</sup>

The fact that pledges were not based solely on courtesy is reflected in Bajer's response. Since he was also an animal rights activist, he protested against the shooting of live pigeons mentioned in the programme. He suggested using flying discs and machines instead.<sup>40</sup> How far-sighted!

Baron von Suttner should not be forgotten. He was a proven pacifist, who had set up an Austrian branch of the German Association for Defence Against Antisemitism in 1891. His wife Bertha von Suttner had written a most important work of anti-war literature, a novel entitled *Die Waffen nieder!*<sup>41</sup> It is not likely that it would have occurred to Coubertin to offer her an honour.

Kemény<sup>42</sup>, a headmaster from Eger, can also be classified in a fifth group along with Balck and the Russian General Butovsky, Argentinian professor José Benjamin

Zubiaur and Czech teacher Jiří Guth. Coubertin had met all five before in Paris. He had been corresponding with Kemény, a student friend, since the mid-1880s. He had Butovsky and Guth named USFSA Honorary Members.

One of the most interesting personalities of this circle was undoubtedly Charles Waldstein, who came from a Jewish family in New York and had received his doctorate in Heidelberg, Germany. Director of the American School of Classical Studies in Athens from 1889 to 1893, he regularly dined with the Greek princes. When he was visited by the royal family in the spring of 1894 during the excavations he was leading in Argos, he convinced the Duke of Sparta to accept the honorary membership of the congress.<sup>43</sup> This was done at the request of Coubertin who sometime later received an official confirmation from the court marshal.<sup>44</sup>

Finally, there were the sports leaders who represented the largest group in terms of numbers. Half were French; Coubertin knew them from their work together in the USFSA. He had convinced Sir John Astley in London. As for the 84-year-old Dr. Brookes, he sent regrets that he was

#### 19. NATIONALIST CYCLISTS' UNION LONDON

N.L. Clark  
R. Todd  
T.W.J. Britten, honorary treasurer

#### 20. IRISH AMATEUR ATHLETIC ASSOCIATION

Daniel Delany Bulger (1865–1930), IAAA Competition's Committee  
Joseph T. Magee

#### 21. CLUB ALPIN FRANÇAIS

Charles Durier (1830–1899), President, geographer and alpinist  
Pierre-Henri Puiseux (1855–1928), professor, President of the Société astronomique de France

#### 22. AMIENS-CYCLE

Charles Chenu (1855–?), lawyer for the Paris Court of Appeal  
Lamy

#### 23. SVENSKA GYMNASTIKFÖRBUNDET STOCKHOLM

Fredrik Bergh, Lieutenant, Institute of Medical Gymnastics in Paris  
Sten Drakenberg (1861–1942), fencing student at the École de gymnastique in Joinville-le-Pont

#### 24. LIGUE VÉLOCIPÉDIQUE BELGE

Albert Carreon  
Jules Hansez (1870–1949), law student, writer of the journal *Le Vélo*

#### 25. ASSOCIATION VÉLOCIPÉDIQUE D'AMATEURS

Louis-Philippe Reichel, President, USFSA Treasurer  
René Lacroix, Secretary  
Gustave Armand de Lafreté (1866–1933), Olympian 1896 cycling

#### 26. DÉCIMAL BOATING & LAWN TENNIS SOCIÉTÉ

Gaskett-James  
J.-H. Le Cocq, Treasurer

#### 27. UNIVERSITY OF OVIEDO

Adolfo Gonzalès-Posada y Biesca (1860–1944), professor

Aniceto Sela Sampil (1863–1935), professor (Adolfo Álvarez Buylla y Alegre [1850–1927], professor, sociologist and educator)<sup>2</sup>

#### 28. ATHLETIC AND RUNNING CLUB, BRUSSELS

Adolphe Eugène Ziane (1864–1934), President, lawyer

#### 29. NEW YORK ATHLETIC CLUB

William Milligan Sloane (1850–1928), professor at the Princeton University, IOC Member 1894–1924

#### 30. LA 'JEUNE EPÉE'

Jean-Joseph Renaud (1873–1953), Honorary President, writer, critic, Olympian 1900 fencing  
Sauton, Vice-President  
(Willy Sulzbacher [1876–1908], Secretary, journalist, Olympian 1900 fencing)<sup>3</sup>

#### 31. STADE BORDELAIS

A. Mangeot, Secretary, multiple French rugby champion

#### 32. UNION SPORTIVE DES ETUDIANTS DE CAEN

François Etienne 'Frantz' Reichel

#### 33. FÉDÉRATION BELGE DES SOCIÉTÉS DE COURSES À PIED, BRUSSELS

Maurice Ketels (1863–1905), President  
Charles De Reine

#### 34. ASSOCIATION VÉLOCIPÉDIQUE INTERNATIONALE (A.V.I.)

James-Stuart Sloan, President  
Oswald Sloan, Secretary, EB member of the USFSA

#### 35. WENLOCK OLYMPIAN SOCIETY

("to adhere in a general meeting held in Wenlock, 24 May 1894")

#### 36. ACADÉMIE D'ARMES

Adolphe Rouleau, Fencing Master, Olympian 1900  
Robert

#### 37. POLYTECHNIC CLUB, LONDON

Comte O'Connell

#### 38. SOCIÉTÉ D'ENCOURAGEMENT AU SPORT NAUTIQUE

Charles Fenwick, EB member of the USFSA, Olympian 1900 motorboating  
F. Boudin

#### 39. UNION ATHLETIQUE DU 1<sup>er</sup> ARRONDISSEMENT

Léon Guillebont  
Jean Lécuyer, Olympian 1900 athletics

("The following Societies unable to send delegates had sent their adhesion in writing")

#### 40. SOCIEDAD GIMNASTICA ESPAÑOLA, MADRID

#### 41. LIGUE PÉDESTRE BELGE, BRUSSELS

#### 42. NATIONAL SKATING ASSOCIATION OF GREAT BRITAIN, CAMBRIDGE

#### 43. SCOTTISH AMATEUR ATHLETIC ASSOCIATION, EDINBURGH

#### 44. ČESKÁ OBEC SOKOLSKÁ V PRAZE, PRAGUE

#### 45. NEW ZEALAND AMATEUR ATHLETIC ASSOCIATION, CHRISTCHURCH

#### 46. UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA, OAKLAND

#### 47. VICTORIAN ROWING ASSOCIATION, MELBOURNE

#### 48. ROWING CLUB ITALIANO, TURIN

#### 49. LONDON ROWING CLUB

1 Delegates list, June 1894

2 Letter from Buylla to Coubertin, 2 June 1894, OSC. In it, Buylla announced that he would accompany the two professors. On 20 July Aniceto Sela asked Coubertin for a participation certificate for Buylla.

3 Letter from Sulzbacher to Coubertin, 8 June 1894, OSC.



The Great Amphitheater of the Sorbonne, where the Olympic Congress was opened on 16<sup>th</sup> June 1894. In the background: the painting 'Le Bois Sacré' by Puvis de Chavannes.

Photo: Michael Nicht, Collection Rüdiger Fritz



too old to travel to Paris. He wanted to leave the decision whether to support Coubertin to the Wenlock Olympian Society. Since he was sure that these would agree, he recommended Coubertin a "prompt and energetic action during the period of enthusiasm. You will not regret acting upon my advice." Furthermore he wrote:

*In one, however, you will, I feel assured, have their cordial concurrence, viz. the establishment of an international Olympian Association and the arrangement that such gatherings shall be held in rotation in or near the capitals of all nations joining in the movement. This has long been a cherished idea of mine so far as making Greece the centre, but the plan of your congress, embracing as it does all nations, is a really superb one, and deserving of the liberal support of all nations.*<sup>45</sup>

The stone fragments of the Hymn to Apollo were found on the south outer wall of the Athenian Treasury in 1893 by the French archaeologist Théophile Homolle. The hymn was played on the occasion of the opening of the Olympic Congress.

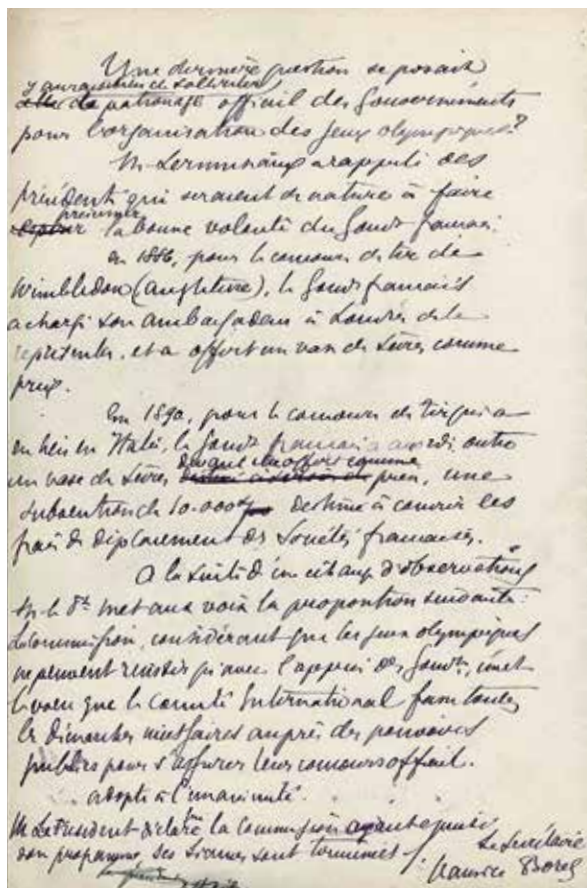
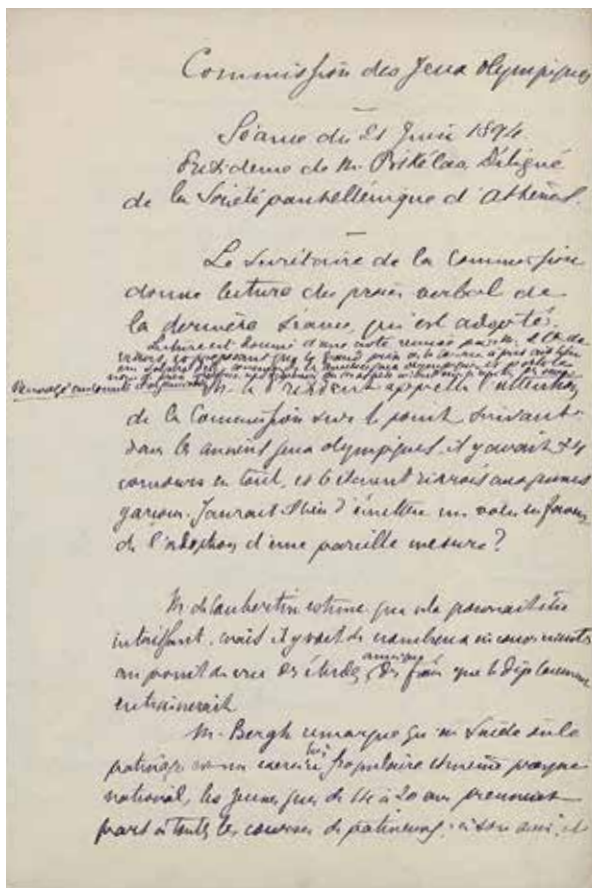


### Foreign countries were represented by only a minority

The Wenlock Olympian Society was admittedly on the list, but in fact it was missing at the congress. Of the 49 associations and clubs listed, only 37 were actually present. The number of delegates was 78, though Coubertin insisted there were 79. Of these, 58 came from France, more than two-thirds of the entire gathering.<sup>46</sup>

The foreign delegations were limited to 20 delegates from eight countries. The United Kingdom (including Ireland) had four representatives. Herbert represented both the London and the Victorian AAA. Sloane, a member of the New York Athletic Club, stood for the USA. Three Belgian clubs sent representatives. In addition there were the gymnastics federations of Greece, Italy, Sweden as well as the Gymnastic Association of St. Petersburg. Great interest was shown by the University of Oviedo, which sent two professors. They belonged to a group of intellectuals called the 'Grupo de Oviedo' which had embarked on the moral and scientific renewal of Spain.

The remaining 13 associations and clubs served as a device for Coubertin to give the impression of the largest possible international participation. To be listed as a 'delegate', a letter of consent sufficed. Some representatives seemed to have waited until the last minute. At the Dutch Football and Athletics Association



Two pages of the report of the Commission for Olympic Games of 21<sup>st</sup> June 1894, written by the Secretary of Embassy, Maurice Borel. This was when the delegates agreed on Athens as the venue of the First Olympic Games.

Photo: IOC Archives/IOSC

the additional remark ran: "not sure that we can participate". Coubertin also hoped in vain for the presence of Baron Frederik W. van Tuyl van Serooskerken, to whom he had offered honorary membership. The chamberlain of Queen Wilhelmina wrote that he would drop by after his holiday in Biarritz.<sup>47</sup> He did not specify when this would be.

Cancellations such as those by the Paris rowers, who did not want to be forced into foreign competition rules, are the exception in the archived documents.<sup>48</sup> Presumably there was no response at all to many invitations. Sometimes however Coubertin received a hostile reception, as in the case of the Belgian Gymnastics Federation.

President Nicolaas Cupérus explained their absence because they were engaged with preparations for the XXI<sup>st</sup> Federal Gymnastics Festival in Antwerp and added: "On the other hand, the federation was always aware that gymnastics and sport are two opposites, that we have always considered as incompatible with their principles."<sup>49</sup>

Cupérus was so offended by the answer that he took revenge with a hateful propaganda campaign. This had some effect on the Germans, who were absent anyway, perhaps also with the Swiss gymnasts, who pointed out their federalism.<sup>50</sup>

The Greeks, for whom the revival of the Olympic Games was "a matter full of interest", remained unimpressed

as they saw their Panhellenic Gymnastic Club built on the "foundation of ancient athletics" as President Ioannis Phokianos emphasised.<sup>51</sup>

Since Phokianos was unavailable as he was inaugurating a gymnasium, he had asked one of the "most competent members" to represent Greece: Demetrios Vikelas.

The writer and poet lived in Paris (due to his wife being unwell) and was admittedly interested in education. He also belonged to the club's board of directors, but he was actually a stranger to sports issues.

### Only amateurs and true champions should participate

To gain more publicity, Coubertin focused his energy on the grand opening on 16<sup>th</sup> June 1894. The Vice-Rector Octave Gréard took care of the ambience by providing the large amphitheatre of the Sorbonne, at whose gable end a huge mural by Puvis de Chavannes had been resplendent since 1889.<sup>52</sup>

Coubertin's hope to persuade the President of the House of Representatives Jean Casimir-Périer to make the opening speech, remained unfulfilled. The politician, who was also Foreign Minister, was fighting for his political survival.

Then Coubertin turned to the well-known diplomat Alphonse de Courcel, who was somewhat bemused. He



The final banquet was held on the evening of 23<sup>rd</sup> June 1894, at the Winter Garden of the Jardin d'Acclimatation amusement park.

Photo: IOC Archives/OSC, Volker Kluge Archive



asked Jusserand what kind of speech he could give, since he did not consider himself as a sports person.<sup>53</sup>

But then de Courcel managed a dignified speech, which ended in the call to win over contemporaries of the twentieth century for peaceful competitions between the nations. In mutual respect he saw the “first basis for the maintenance of peace between peoples”.<sup>54</sup> Some 2000 listeners, among them many students and schoolchildren, also heard a performance of the *Hymn to Apollo*, which had recently been discovered in the Treasury of Athens at Delphi.<sup>55</sup> This created a mood of antiquity.

Two days later, the delegates were brought back to the present. However, their ranks had already significantly dwindled. The remaining 42 had the choice between two commissions. In the first, presided over by the President of the Racing Club de France, Michel Gondinet, the amateur problem was discussed. The treasurer of the Victorian Rowing Association, Walter B. House, had already provided a good basis for discussion with a five-page letter.<sup>56</sup>

The second commission, which initially attracted only 17 delegates, was concerned with the possibility of reintroducing of the Olympic Games. In addition Coubertin wanted to clarify two more points, which he had added to the programme in May. They concerned questions of organisation, participants and types of sport, as well as the nomination of an international committee as a governing body.

Vikelas, whom Coubertin had commissioned with the presidency of this commission, first read out a memorandum written by Phokianos on the ancient Games, in which the pentathlon was praised as a Greek ideal.<sup>57</sup> The Swedes also attached importance to this event.<sup>58</sup> Coubertin, who shuttled back and forth between commissions, pointed out that sports such as rowing, which the Greeks did not know, had also started up. Apparently it took some time for the delegates to realise that he was concerned with modern sports. He just wanted to put the competitions under a protective umbrella, “which could throw over them a hallow of greatness and glory: ‘The patronage of Classical Antiquity!’”<sup>59</sup>

In his memoirs, Coubertin wrote that his proposals had been accepted without opposition.<sup>60</sup> The minutes however, say something else. There was lively and serious discussion, and the ‘manager’ could not always prevail with his ideas. For example, the delegates did not consider Paris, which Coubertin had planned for the Olympic premiere, as favourite, but London.

Some also said that the proposed six-year period before the first Games would be too long. In response Coubertin brought Athens into the discussion at the next session.<sup>61</sup> But there were also objections to that, because Greece, already in financial trouble, was also considered to be too far from the centre of Europe. London remained as an option, as Coubertin had proposed as a compromise to wait until the arrival of Herbert, who for some unknown reason did not participate in the deliberations.<sup>62</sup>

There was agreement, however, that the international Games should take place every four years, and, with the exception of fencing, only amateurs should take part. No nation should be represented by athletes of another. Countries were recommended to run trial competitions and to name only true champions.

On the sporting programme it was accepted without dispute that athletics should represent the crowning glory of the Games with the pentathlon. The inclusion of water sports – swimming, rowing, sailing – was just as natural as the martial arts (fencing, boxing, wrestling), equestrian sports, cycling and gymnastics as well as sports matches (football, tennis, jeu de paume, etc.). The climbers were promised a prize for the “most interesting ascent”.

At the request of the Swedes, skating was also added to the list without having discussed the necessary conditions for it. However, their application to advertise competitions for boys was rejected – a proposal that Vikelas had previously suggested with reference to antiquity. Unlike in the past, modern Games should be reserved exclusively for adult men. The participation of women was not up for debate.

There was a concern that organisers should ask governments for official support. However, Florimond

Parmentier, Secretary-General of the French Shooting Association, recalled that in 1886 his country's ambassador donated a Sèvres vase for a Wimbledon competition and in 1890 the government had subsidised the participation of a team at the Italian shooting festival with 10,000 francs.<sup>63</sup>

It remained as an open question, whether the first Games should be celebrated in London or Athens. Whether it was discussed again (with or without Herbert) is unknown. The *Bulletin du Comité International des Jeux* mentions only one speech by Vikelas, in which he pleaded for Athens and for which he received the support of Coubertin, Sloane, Gondinet and the Comte de Villers.

The telegram from King George to the Greek ambassador in Paris, Konstantinos Kriezis, in which he gave his thanks for the "decision of Baron de Coubertin" proves that the die was cast two days before the end of the congress.<sup>64</sup>

The congress ended on 23<sup>rd</sup> June. In the morning they met again in full session to receive the final reports, which turned out to be satisfactory. Thus, the amateur commission had managed to formulate from a variety of opposing opinions, a seven-point definition that authorised only amateur athletes to participate in the Games. Betting and cash prizes were considered incompatible with amateurism.

In principle, these rules were later adopted by the emerging international sports federations. According to that an amateur was considered to be one:

*... who has never participated in open competitions, who has never taken part in a competition in return for money or prize money of whatever origin, in particular if it were entrance fees, who has never challenged professional athletes and who has never been a sport teacher or a coach for money will be considered an amateur.*<sup>65</sup>

With the exception of equestrian sports, shooting and sailing, which cost a lot of money, prizes should only have the character of 'souvenirs'. Sloane's request for a restriction on value was rejected. There was also a clear rejection of the strict Amateur Rowing Association regulations which excluded those who earned their living as boatmen from participation in British racing. Not even the Anglo-Saxons defended this rule, which was described as the "challenge of democracy".

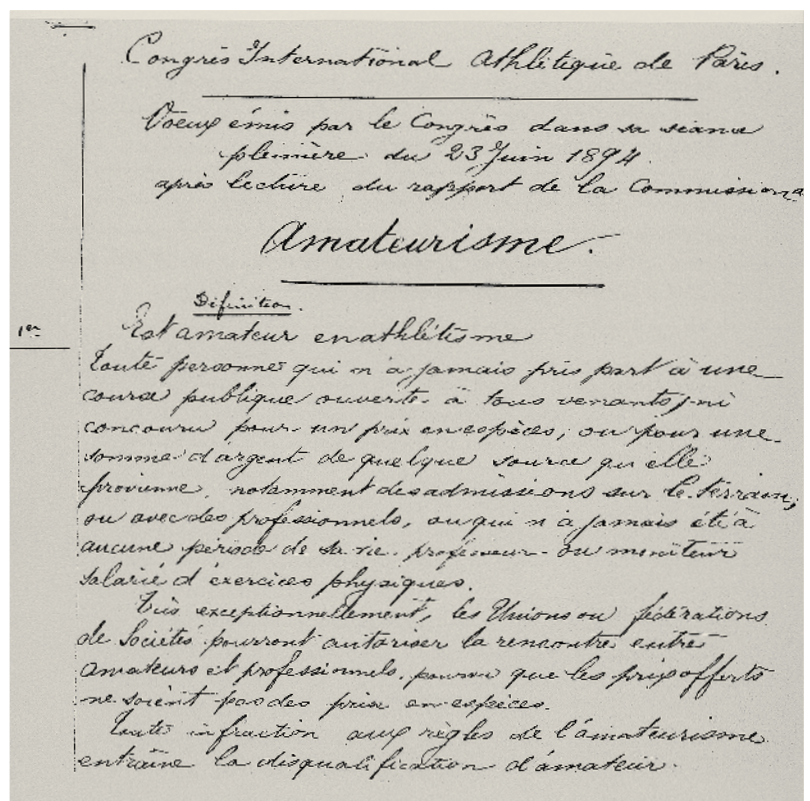
The entire work had also been done by the Commission for Olympic Games, whose recommendations were unanimously accepted. Membership of the International Committee, however, remained unanswered. Although Coubertin had the composition long since in mind, he probably did not want to exaggerate it with democracy and instead left himself room for manoeuvre. Forty years later he wrote:

*I was allowed a free hand in the choice of members of the IOC. Those proposed were elected without any amendment ...*<sup>66</sup>

However, the committee was constituted only a few days later in Vikelas's apartment on 4 rue de Babylone in the presence of Sloane and Ernest Callot. The latter had provided Coubertin as treasurer with a largely empty cash box. Reluctantly, Vikelas agreed to take over the presidency until the end of 1896, while Coubertin wished to settle for the office of General Secretary, from which he expected to exert greater influence.

After Athens, he wanted to lead the committee for an Olympiad. In his opinion, the president should always come from the host country of the next Games, so that after him Sloane would have his turn, since in his mind Coubertin had already awarded the Games of 1904 to the United States.<sup>67</sup>

The remaining nine members were missing in Paris, but their names should have been familiar to the delegates, since they were on the list of Honorary Members, with the exception of Lord Amphyll, who had been recommended to Coubertin by the London Rowing Club<sup>68</sup>. They only learned, however, about their nomination by letter. In the IOC Archives, however, only the thank-you letters from Butovsky and Cuff can be found.



The definition of the amateur rule in the report of the Amateur Commission, which was headed by the President of the Racing Club de Paris, Michel Gondinet. The minutes were written by the delegate of the National Cyclists' Union of London, R. Todd. Photo: IOC Archives/OSC



The commemorative medal of the restoring of the Olympic Games in 1894. Far right: The medal which was struck in 1994 on the occasion of the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary.

Photos: Volker Kluge Archive



Count Lucchesi-Palli, who had represented the Italian Gymnastics Federation at the congress probably did not realise that he had also become a member of the committee. Three weeks later, the Duke d'Andria announced his intention to take over the membership of his friend – giving the count the record for the shortest tenure ever.<sup>69</sup> Coubertin accepted this as well as the proposal of the President of the Ligue Vélocipédique Belge, Raoul Claës, subsequently accepting Comte Maxime de Bousies as a representative of his country.<sup>70</sup>

The Olympic Founding Congress ended on the evening of 23<sup>rd</sup> June 1894 with a banquet in the Palmarium of the Jardin d'Acclimatation. Coubertin gave a speech in which he targeted some the conservatives who would have baulked at the meeting in the venerable Sorbonne. In a sharp-tongued speech he said:

*Those of the old school are moved to see us taking our seats in the Sorbonne; they felt that we were rebels and that we would end by throwing down the edifice of their out-dated philosophy. This is true. Gentlemen, we are rebels and that is why the press, which has always supported well-meaning revolutions, has understood and helped us, for which, in passing, I thank them most sincerely.<sup>71</sup>*

Academician Michel Bréal, who proposed a toast to the speaker (and gave birth to the idea for the marathon race in September), even saw on 23<sup>rd</sup> June 1894, the 'Olympic Day', the starting point for the 'United States of Europe'.

How wrong he would be: a few hours after the rebirth of the Olympic Games, French President Sadi Carnot was murdered in Lyon by an Italian anarchist. On the final day, the congress had sent him a message of greeting.

It was not the last shadow to fall on the Olympics. Their unique development, however, was unavoidable, despite all the gloomy prophecies that have predicted

its downfall for 125 years. That the Games became reality was the work of one man. Pierre de Coubertin – a true visionary. Small in stature, he was big on action. ■

- 1 Since the fourteenth century, the common designation for one part of the University of Paris has been attributed to Robert de Sorbon (1201–1274). In 1268, the chaplain of King Louis IX opened a college for students of theology.
- 2 According to Coubertin in his closing speech.
- 3 Founded on 18<sup>th</sup> January 1887, the Union of French Sports Associations (USFSA) represented the first umbrella organisation of French sport. It was the result of a merger of the Union des Sociétés Françaises de Courses à pied (French Running Societies) and the Racing Club de Paris. The *Bulletin du Comité International des Jeux* appeared at the address Rue Saint-Honoré 229 in July 1894 for the first time, which, however, only had three sequels: no. 2: October 1894, no. 3: January 1895, no. 4 April 1895. After a break of more than five years, the *Revue Olympique* followed, also published by Coubertin, which in its first edition (January 1901, pp. 5–11) gave an overview of the history of the Comité International Olympique – the new name.
- 4 *Une Campagne de vingt-et-un ans (1887–1908)* [A Twenty-One Year Campaign (1887–1908)], Librairie de l'Education physique, Paris 1909, p. 4
- 5 The novel first appeared in 1857 by Macmillan Publishers, London.
- 6 *Campagne*, p. 5
- 7 *L'Education en Angleterre. Collèges et Universités*, Hachette, Paris 1888
- 8 Committee for the Propagation of Physical Exercise in Education
- 9 The International and Permanent League of Peace was dissolved after the Franco-Prussian War of 1870–71, but reorganised one year later under the name Société française des amis de la paix. Out of it came in 1889 the Société française pour l'arbitrage entre nations.
- 10 Quanz, Dietrich R., "Die Gründung des IOC im Horizont von bürgerlichen Pazifismus und sportlichen Internationalismus", in: Gebauer, Gunter (Ed.), *Die Aktualität der Sportphilosophie*, Academia, St. Augustin 1993, pp. 135–156
- 11 *Allgemeine Sport-Zeitung*, Vienna, No. 30, 4<sup>th</sup> May 1913, p. 545. During a lecture on 28<sup>th</sup> April, 1913 in Vienna, Sloane, who was a visiting professor at the University of Berlin, reported on his first encounter with Coubertin "about 25 years ago". The American received his doctorate from the University of Leipzig and spoke fluent German.

- 12 See map with 22 stations that Coubertin visited, in: Müller, Norbert (Ed.), *Pierre de Coubertin, Olympism, Selected Writings*, IOC, Lausanne 2000, p. 80.
- 13 *Campagne*, p. 6–7
- 14 Conclusions, in: Pierre de Coubertin, *Universités Transatlantiques* [Transatlantic Universities], Hachette, Paris 1890, pp. 361–379
- 15 *Campagne*, p. 89
- 16 *Ibid.*
- 17 The writers Georges Bourdon and the literary historian and diplomat Jean Jules Jusserand spoke about antiquity and the Middle Ages. The five-day programme of celebrations included an excursion, the inauguration of the clubhouse of Stade Français as well as sports competitions.
- 18 Conférence faite à la Sorbonne au Jubilé de l'U.S.F.S.A., le 25 novembre 1892, in: François d'Amat (Ed.), *Pierre de Coubertin, Le Manifeste Olympique*, Lausanne, Les Editions du Grand Pont, 1994, pp. 66–79, Revised: Müller/Skinner, in: *Selected Writings*, pp. 287–297
- 19 *Ibid.*
- 20 Cf. Pierre de Coubertin, *Olympic Memoirs*, IOC, Lausanne 1997, p. 16
- 21 Paris International Congress for the Study and Propagation of the Principles of Amateurism
- 22 Cf. John A. Lucas, "Coubertin One Hundred Years Ago: His Second American Visit in 1893", in: *Olympika*, Vol. II, 1993, pp. 103–108
- 23 Coubertin published his travelogue, *Souvenir d'Amerique et de Grèce* [Memories of America and Greece], in 1897 with Hachette.
- 24 *New York Herald*, 1<sup>st</sup> December 1893; *Harper's Weekly*, 9<sup>th</sup> December 1893. The hill, later known as Coogan's Bluff was blocked off by a clever entrepreneur, who pocketed 50 cents per person for each seat.
- 25 Among those present was the Columbia student Gustavus T. Kirby (1874–1956), who was elected chairman of the college athletes (IC4A) in 1895. From 1911 to 1912 Kirby was AAU President and from 1912 to 1924, President of the American Olympic Committee.
- 26 From a letter dated 10<sup>th</sup> January 1894, which is in the IOC Archives, it appears that Herbert had sent "some dozen invitations" to Leonard A. Cuff, Secretary of the New Zealand Amateur Athletic Association.
- 27 *Campagne*, pp. 92–93
- 28 *Memoirs*, p. 18; Programme préparatoire, January 1894, Olympic Studies Centre, Lausanne (OSC)
- 29 Georgiadis, Konstantinos, *Olympic Revival*, Ekdotike Athenon, Athens 2003, p. 76. The project, which Coubertin and Strehly submitted on 30<sup>th</sup> January 1984, describes a pavilion that would consist of three epochs: 1. Antiquity, 2. Middle Ages, 3. Modern Sport. Up until then, four world exhibitions had already taken place in Paris: 1855, 1867, 1878 and 1889.
- 30 Circular letter, January 1894, OSC
- 31 Until then, only three International Sports Federations had been constituted: gymnastics in 1881, rowing and skating in 1892. No. 34 on the delegate list was the Association Vélocipédique Internationale, a French association with British management.
- 32 A native of Alsace, Joseph Sansbœuf (1848–1938), who had been captured by Germans in 1870 after the Battle of Sedan, was President of the League of Patriots, and dreamed of the liberation of Alsace-Lorraine.
- 33 Schwertfeger, Bernhard (Ed.), *Military attaché of Schwartzkoppen. The truth about Dreyfus*, Verlag für Kulturpolitik (Publishing House for Cultural Politics), Berlin 1930. Shortly after the congress Schwartzkoppen played a dubious role, as the Jewish-French officer Alfred Dreyfus was accused of espionage for Germany and banished to Devil's Island. Schwartzkoppen was later quoted as stating that Dreyfus had been wrongfully convicted.
- 34 Bensemann (1873–1934) linked his answer to the question of whether Coubertin could finance his team's trip to a football tournament in Paris. The trip then took place in 1898 – presumably without Coubertin's donation – when Bensemann played with a 'national team' against the White Rovers, consisting of nine British



Honorary Members and delegates received commemorative diplomas and medals. Photo: IOC Archives/OSC



23 JUIN 1894  
 CREATION EN CES LIEUX  
 DU COMITE INTERNATIONAL OLYMPIQUE  
 PAR PIERRE DE COUBERTIN

23 JUIN 1994  
 100<sup>ème</sup> ANNIVERSAIRE DU C. I. O.  
 SOUS LA PRESIDENCE DE  
 SON EXCELLENCE JUAN-ANTONIO SAMARANGH

It was only 100 years later that a memorial plaque for the revival of the Olympic Games was inaugurated at the Sorbonne.

Photo: IOC Archives/OSC

- and two French. The match, which was lost 0-7, went down in German football history as the "first original international match". 1895/96 Bensemenn belonged to the German participation committee for the Games in Athens, where he wanted to compete with a football team. But this took care of itself, because no tournament came about. Bensemenn, who came from a Jewish banking family, founded the sports journal *Kicker* in 1920, which he directed until his emigration to Switzerland in 1933.
- 35 *Spiel und Sport*, Vol. 4, No. 22, 2<sup>nd</sup> June 1894, pp. 530-531. The merchant John (Jacob) Bloch (1851 / 1852-1925), who grew up in England, acquired in 1891, the *Deutsche Ballspiel-Zeitung* (Ball Game Newspaper), which he continued under the title *Spiel und Sport (Game and Sport)* until 1901.
- 36 Letter from Bloch to Coubertin, 1<sup>st</sup> June 1894, OSC. Coubertin allowed this in a letter from 10<sup>th</sup> June, 1894, whereupon Bloch published a detailed article on 8<sup>th</sup> September, 1894, in which he did not spare criticism of the German sports federations and associations. See: *Sport und Spiel*, No. 36, pp. 943-944.
- 37 Letter from von Reiffenstein to Coubertin, 10<sup>th</sup> March 1894, OSC. In London in 1891 two families lived by the name of von Reiffenstein, who were supposedly wine merchants. Whether Wilhelm Edward or Christian E. von Reiffenstein was Coubertin's friend is as unclear as the apparently questionable title of nobility.
- 38 Cf. Quanz, Dietrich R., Formkraft der IOC-Gründung: Die zeitgenössische Friedensbewegung, in: Lennartz, Karl (Ed.), *Die Olympischen Spiele 1896 in Athen, Erläuterungen zum Neudruck des Offiziellen Berichts*, AGON, Kassel 1996, pp. 62-63
- 39 The Nobel Peace Prize went to Passy (1901), Ducommun (1902), Bajer (1908) and La Fontaine (1913). Pratt and the popular pacifist itinerant speaker Feldhaus were nominated.
- 40 Letter from Bajer to Coubertin, 8<sup>th</sup> May 1894, OSC
- 41 The novel, published in 1889, was translated into 15 languages. The English version appeared in 1892 under the title *Lay Down Your Arms*, the French version in 1899 entitled *Bas les armes!*
- 42 Kemény (1860-1944), who was entrusted with the organisation of the World Peace Congress of 1896 in Budapest, recommended to Coubertin some Hungarian personalities who should be offered honorary membership. He also made sure that the programme of the congress was published on 1<sup>st</sup> April 1894 in the magazine *Hercules*. Letter from Kemény to Coubertin, 9<sup>th</sup> April 1894, OSC
- 43 Letter from Waldstein to Coubertin, 15<sup>th</sup> April 1894, OSC
- 44 Letter from the court marshal of the Prince Royal to Coubertin, 9/21 May 1894, OSC. Waldstein (1856-1927), also known to Greek Prime Minister Trikoupis, played an important role as moderator after deciding to host the 1896 Games in Athens. He was a member of the Committee for Athletics and Gymnastics, served as a judge and participated as an active participant in shooting. From 1879 to 1880, his correspondents also included Karl Marx, who signed his letters to Waldstein with the nickname 'Der Mohr'.
- 45 Letter from Brookes to Coubertin, 22<sup>nd</sup> May 1894, OSC
- 46 *Bulletin*, No. 1, July 1894, p. 2. If one compares the list of delegates with the programme distributed at the congress, deviations are noticed. At the Société de Sport de l'Île de Puteaux, Jusserand appears instead of Borel (the Embassy Secretary, however, wrote the minutes of the Commission for the Olympic Games). At Stade Français the name L.H. Sandford is used instead of the rugby referee Borie. The second representative of the British Amateur Athletic Association, Norman Jones, is not mentioned at all in the programme, as well as the fencer Willy Sulzbacher, who had registered as the third representative of the club La Jeune Épée (8<sup>th</sup> June 1894, OSC). Coubertin operated with the number 79.
- 47 Letter from van Tuyl to Coubertin, 12<sup>th</sup> March 1894, OSC. Although van Tuyl (1851-1924) had agreed, he did not appear on the list of Honorary Members. In 1898 he was brought by Coubertin to the IOC.
- 48 Letter from Fédération des Sociétés Nautiques Parisiennes to Coubertin, 14<sup>th</sup> June 1894, OSC
- 49 Letter from Cupérus to Coubertin, 15<sup>th</sup> May 1894, OSC
- 50 Letter from Dr. Erwin Zschokke to Coubertin, 17<sup>th</sup> May 1894, OSC. The veterinarian Zschokke (1855-1929) was the Central Council President of the Swiss Federal Gymnastics Association since 1882.
- 51 Letter from Phokianos to Coubertin, 4/16<sup>th</sup> May 1894, OSC
- 52 Letter from Gréard to Coubertin, 31<sup>st</sup> March 1894. The painting shows an allegory entitled 'Le Bois Sacré'. In the middle on a marble block sits the figure of the Sorbonne - a tribute to the living and the glorious dead. On the left and right figures symbolise the different sciences.
- 53 Letter from de Courcel to Jusserand, 29<sup>th</sup> March 1894, OSC. Quotation: "It's been quite some time since I said: *coestus artemque repono.*"
- 54 *Bulletin*, No. 2, October 1894, pp. 2-3
- 55 The stone carved fragments discovered by the French archaeologist Théophile Homolle in 1893 were transcribed by Théodore Reinach and set to music by Gabriel Fauré.
- 56 Letter from House to Coubertin, 16<sup>th</sup> April 1894, OSC
- 57 "Les Jeux Olympiques dans le passé et dans l'avenir", in: *Bulletin*, No. 2, October 1894, pp. 3-4
- 58 Letter from Balck to Coubertin, 7<sup>th</sup> March 1894, OSC. The pentathlon was in May 1894 on the programme of the Swedish Federal Gymnastics Festival in Gothenburg. National Championships were held from 1898.
- 59 De Coubertin, Pierre/Philemon, Timoleon J./Politis N.G./Anninos, Charalambos, *The Olympic Games B.C. 776-A.D. 1896*, Vol. 2, Charles Beck, Athens 1897, pp. 4-5
- 60 *Memoirs*, p. 22
- 61 Minutes, Commission for Olympic Games, 19<sup>th</sup> June, p. 3, 9, OSC. The minutes from the first day of the meeting (18<sup>th</sup> June) are not available. In *Campagne*, p. 98, Coubertin writes that he would have made the proposal together with Vikelas. However, the letter from Vikelas (19<sup>th</sup> June 1894) to Coubertin states: "Unfortunately, I did not see you after our meeting. I wanted to tell you how much I enjoyed your proposal to start in Athens. My only regret is that it was not possible for me to support him better."
- 62 Herbert is mentioned the first time in the minutes of the 3<sup>rd</sup> meeting of the Commission on Amateurism. Minutes, 21<sup>st</sup> June 1894, OSC
- 63 *Ibid.*, 21<sup>st</sup> June, p. 28
- 64 *Bulletin*, No. 1, July 1894, p. 4. The telegram sent to the royal summer residence Tatoi bears the date of 9/21 June 1894. Cf. Georgiadis, pp. 74-75
- 65 *Ibid.* Translation Müller, Norbert, *One Hundred Years of Olympic Congresses 1894-1994*, IOC, Lausanne 1994, p. 35
- 66 *Memoirs*, p. 24
- 67 Minutes, 4<sup>th</sup> IOC Session, 22<sup>nd</sup> May 1901, p. 20. Since Sloane renounced his right after the Paris Games, Coubertin agreed to officiate for another five years. In 1906, he did not attend the Second International Olympic Games in Athens in anger at them taking place. During the Games the other IOC Members offered the Greek Crown Prince the presidency, but Coubertin took no notice of this decision. Although the IOC had pretty much made a fool of itself, this snub was accepted. Thereupon Coubertin voted himself in without opposition in 1907 - this time for 10 years. Despite interruptions because of the First World War he held the office for 24 years, until he took his leave in 1925.
- 68 Letter from Eugène Monteuis to Coubertin, 30<sup>th</sup> April 1894, OSC
- 69 Letter from Duke d'Andria to Coubertin, 15<sup>th</sup> July 1894, OSC
- 70 Letter from Claës to Coubertin, 29 August 1894, OSC
- 71 *Bulletin*, No. 1, July 1894, p. 3

# The 13 Members of the First International Olympic Committee



First vignette of the IOC, which probably served to close the letters. However, it was not produced until after 1900, when Coubertin introduced the name 'Comité International Olympique' (CIO).



**Demetrios Vikelas (GRE)**  
1894-1899



**Pierre de Coubertin (FRA)**  
1894-1925



**Ernest Callot (FRA)**  
1894-1912



**Alexei Butovsky (RUS)**  
1894-1900



**Jiří Guth (BOH)**  
1894-1943



**Viktor Balck (SWE)**  
1894-1921



**Leonard A. Cuff (NZL)**  
1894-1905



**William M. Sloane (USA)**  
1894-1924



**José Benjamin Zubiaur (ARG)**  
1894-1907



**Comte Ferdinando Lucchesi-Palli (ITA), 1894**



**Charles Herbert (GBR)**  
1894-1906



**Arthur Russel, Lord Ampthill (GBR)**  
1894-1898



**Ferenc Kemény (HUN)**  
1894-1907

By agreement with Count Ferdinando Lucchesi-Palli, Riccardo Carafa, Duke of Andria, took over his IOC membership in July 1894. In September that year, Coubertin accepted as 14<sup>th</sup> member the Belgian Count Maxime de Bousies. He remained so until 1901. The Duke of Andria retired in 1898.



# BULLETIN DU COMITÉ INTERNATIONAL DES JEUX OLYMPIQUES

PARIS, 229, Rue Saint-Honoré

Citius — Fortius — Altius

Rue Saint-Honoré, 229, PARIS

Le BULLETIN sera trimestriel jusqu'à nouvel ordre ; il contiendra les communications officielles du Comité International et tiendra ses lecteurs au courant de tout ce qui concernera l'Œuvre du Rétablissement des Jeux Olympiques. Toutes les communications doivent être adressées au Secrétaire-général du Comité, 229, rue Saint-Honoré, Paris.

Il n'a pas été possible, comme on l'avait espéré, de publier dès à présent la partie officielle du BULLETIN en trois langues différentes ; mais des arrangements ont été pris avec différents journaux anglais et américains ainsi qu'avec le Spiel und Sport pour la reproduction des passages principaux.

Il n'y aura pas d'abonnement proprement dit ; une souscription individuelle de 10 francs assurera l'envoi de toutes les publications que le Comité pourrait être amené à faire au cours de l'année.

Le Comité International nommé par le Congrès de Paris pour organiser les Jeux Olympiques est ainsi composé :

Président : M. Bikélas, vice-président de la Société d'Encouragement des études grecques, membre de la Société Panhellénique de Gymnastique.

Secrétaire général : M. le baron Pierre de Coubertin, secrétaire général de l'Union des Sociétés Françaises de sports athlétiques.

Trésorier : M. Callot, ancien président de l'Union des Sociétés de gymnastique de France.

Membres : MM. le général de Boutowsky, attaché à la Direction des Ecoles militaires russes.

Le Docteur Jiri Guth, professeur au Lycée de Klatovy (Bohême).

Le commandant Balck, premier professeur à l'Institut Central de gymnastique de Stockholm.

Léonard A. Cuff, secrétaire de la New Zealand amateur athletic association.

W. M. Sloane, professeur à l'Université de Princeton (Etats-Unis).

Le Docteur Zubiaur, recteur du Collège national de l'Uruguay (République Argentine).

Le comte Bucchesi-Palli, vice consul d'Italie à Paris.

C. Herbert, secrétaire de l'Amateur athletic association d'Angleterre.

Lord Amphyll.

Franz Kémény, directeur de l'Ecole royale d'Eger (Hongrie).

## ATHÈNES, 1896

En exprimant le vœu que les Jeux Olympiques internationaux soient célébrés à Athènes en 1896, le Congrès athlétique n'a fait que ce qu'il est dû à César. L'idée féconde du rétablissement de ces jeux est une idée éminemment hellénique ; ce n'était que justice de la réaliser, pour la première fois, sur le sol même qui l'a vu naître. Du reste, depuis le premier jour jusqu'au dernier, l'esprit de la Grèce antique semblait planer sur le Congrès. Il a inauguré ses travaux par l'hymne à Apollon, il a rétabli les Jeux Olympiques et il a fini par un *Symposium*. Il ne manquait à ce banquet que des bandelettes au front des convives pour justifier tout à fait le délégué Hellène lorsque, répondant au toast du président, aux délégués étrangers, il déclara qu'il n'y avait point là d'étrangers, qu'il ne voyait autour de lui que des petits-fils des anciens Hellènes, des cousins réunis par le souvenir et au nom de l'aïeule commune !

Le choix d'Athènes a été proposé par le délégué grec à la dernière séance du Congrès. Chaleureusement appuyée par MM. de Coubertin, Sloane, Gondinet et de Villers, cette proposition a été adoptée à l'unanimité. Anticipant les objections que l'on aurait pu soulever contre ce choix, M. Bikélas fit observer que l'éloignement d'Athènes n'était point un obstacle sérieux dans ces temps de communications rapides et faciles. Si la traversée de Marseille au Pirée ne sourit pas à ceux qui craignent le mal de mer, il y a la route d'Italie, ou même celle de Salonique. Si Athènes ne possède pas encore de ressources à l'égal des grandes capitales de l'Occident, les Jeux Olympiques y seront célébrés dans un cadre que rien au monde ne peut surpasser. Les spectateurs qui feront résonner de leurs applaudissements le Stade antique, sur les bords de l'Ilissus, n'auront qu'à lever les yeux pour voir le rocher de l'Acropole et les sommets renommés des montagnes de l'Attique. Les monuments, les musées d'Athènes seront un attrait de plus pour les sportsmen qui s'y donneront rendez-vous. On leur montrera, par des excursions aussi faciles qu'agréables, les sites des jeux antiques, Olympie, Isthmie, Nemée, Delphes !

Mais il n'y a pas que des souvenirs en Grèce, et les excursionnistes ne sont pas menacés d'avoir à camper au milieu des ruines. Athènes s'est beaucoup agrandie et embellie durant ces dernières années. On y trouve des hôtels nombreux ; il y en a qui sont tout à fait de premier ordre. Il n'y manque pas de cafés, de restaurants, de théâtres. Le palais de l'industrie (le *Zappeion*), l'Académie, l'Université, la société littéraire le *Parnasse* ouvriront leurs vastes et belles salles pour fêter le rétablissement des Jeux Olympiques. Les sociétés athlétiques grecques, s'empresseront d'offrir une hospitalité cordiale aux concurrents venus de loin.

La Grèce se prépare déjà à faire bon accueil à ses hôtes de 1896. La nouvelle du vœu exprimé par le Congrès Athlétique International y a été reçue avec enthousiasme. La presse tout entière n'a qu'une voix pour remercier le Congrès de la décision prise en faveur d'Athènes, et pour déclarer que le pays fera de son mieux afin d'y répondre dignement. « Athènes » dit le journal *Astý* l'organe semi-officiel du gouvernement, « Athènes se fera « honneur de bien recevoir les étrangers qui viendront à ces concours internationaux. On ne s'épargnera point d'efforts pour leur rendre autant « que possible agréable leur séjour en Grèce. Le « gouvernement, la municipalité, les corporations, « tous les habitants de la capitale rivaliseront de « zèle pour montrer combien nous sommes sensibles à l'honneur fait à Athènes et à la Grèce. Une « bonne partie des applaudissements qui acclameront les vainqueurs aux Jeux Olympiques rétablis « s'adresseront de droit à ceux qui ont conçu l'idée « de leur première célébration à Athènes, ainsi qu'à « ceux qui en adoptèrent la proposition. »

Il y a tout lieu d'espérer que S. M. le Roi et toute la famille Royale de Grèce accorderont à ces fêtes leur bienveillant appui. La société Panhellénique de gymnastique, qui a été représentée au Congrès, est sous le patronage du Prince héritier. Le prince Georges en est le président honoraire ; le prince Nicolas en est membre d'honneur. Quant au Roi lui-même, la dépêche dont il a honoré M. le baron de Coubertin et qui a été communiquée au Congrès, démontre suffisamment l'intérêt qu'il prend au rétablissement des Jeux Olympiques.

## LE CONGRÈS DE PARIS

Le Congrès a été convoqué par une décision du Conseil de l'Union des Sociétés Françaises de Sports Athlétiques au printemps de 1893, sur la demande de MM. Ad de Pallissaux et de Coubertin. Trois commissaires furent chargés de l'organiser : MM. le baron Pierre de Coubertin, secrétaire général de l'Union, pour l'Europe continentale — C. Herbert, secrétaire de l'Amateur Athletic Association, pour l'Angleterre et ses colonies. — W. M. Sloane, Professeur à l'Université de Princeton (Etats-Unis) pour le continent américain.

Une réunion préliminaire eut lieu à l'University Club à New-York, le 27 novembre 1893 et une seconde réunion eut lieu à Londres, au Sports Club, le 7 février 1894. Dans l'intervalle le programme du Congrès accompagné de l'appel suivant, avait été adressé aux fédérations athlétiques et sportives du monde entier : « Nous avons l'honneur, y était-il dit de vous communiquer le programme du Congrès international qui se réunira à Paris le 17 juin prochain, sous les auspices de l'Union des Sociétés Françaises de Sports Athlétiques. L'objet en est double. Il importe, avant tout, de conserver à l'athlétisme le caractère noble et chevaleresque qui l'a distingué dans le passé, afin qu'il puisse continuer de jouer efficacement dans l'éducation des peuples modernes le rôle admirable que lui attribuent les maîtres grecs. L'imperfection humaine tend toujours à transformer l'athlète d'Olympie en un gladiateur de cirque. Il faut choisir entre deux formules athlétiques qui ne sont pas compatibles. Pour se défendre contre l'esprit de lucre et de professionnalisme qui menace de les envahir, les amateurs, dans la plupart des pays, ont établi une législation compliquée pleine de compromis et de contradictions ; trop souvent d'ailleurs, on en respecte la lettre plus que l'esprit.

Une réforme s'impose et avant que de l'entreprendre, il faut la discuter. Les questions qui ont été mises à l'ordre du jour du Congrès ont trait à ces compromis et à ces contradictions qui subsistent dans les règlements amateurs. Le projet que mentionne le dernier paragraphe serait l'heureuse sanction de l'entente internationale que nous cherchons non point encore à réaliser, mais seulement à préparer. Le rétablissement des Jeux Olympiques, sur des bases et dans des conditions conformes aux nécessités de la vie moderne mettrait en présence, tous les quatre ans, les représentants des nations du monde, et il est permis de croire que ces luttes pacifiques et courtoises constituent le meilleur des Internationalismes.

L'Union, en prenant une initiative dont les résultats peuvent être si considérables, n'a pas cherché à usurper une préséance qui, dans la république des muscles, n'appartient à aucun pays et à aucune société. Elle a seulement pensé que la netteté de ses principes et de son attitude ainsi que les hautes amitiés dont elle s'honore, tant en France qu'à l'étranger, l'autorisaient à donner le signal d'un mouvement de réforme dont la nécessité se fait sentir chaque jour davantage. Elle agit ainsi dans l'intérêt général et sans aucune arrière-pensée de mesquine ambition. »

Le programme du Congrès était ainsi conçu :


AMATEURISME ET PROFESSIONNALISME

I. — Définition de l'amateur : bases de cette déf-





**PIERRE DE COUBERTIN**  
**1863 - 1937**  
**PEDAGOGUE - HISTORIEN - HUMANISTE**  
**RENOVATEUR DES JEUX OLYMPIQUES**  
**FONDATEUR DU C.I.O.**  
 naquit et résida en ces lieux, où il établit en 1894  
 la première base permanente du  
 Comité International Olympique




The first IOC office was in the home of Coubertin's parents at 20 rue Oudinot in Paris (at the top). There was no telephone or typewriter. After the IOC headquarters had been relocated to Lausanne in 1915, the city provided the Casino de Montbenon until 1922 (above left). The Villa Mon Repos was then used until 1968 (above). Left: the IOC moved to the Château de Vidy in 1969, which was expanded in 1986 with the addition of a modern annex. Below: The new Olympic House will be inaugurated on 23<sup>rd</sup> June 2019. It will enable all 500 employees to be accommodated under one roof. The house was designed by the Danish architecture firm 3XN.

Photos: IOC Archives/OSC, Collection de Navacelle

