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# **INFORMATION LETTER**

**OF**

# **THE INTERNATIONAL PIERRE DE COUBERTIN COMMITTEE**



**1/99**



*Photo of Pierre de Coubertin given by his wife to my father.  
(Christian de Navacelle de Coubertin) with his signature.*

*Y. de N. de C. - 1998*

## PIERRE DE COUBERTIN AND SPAIN

The force which the playing of sports would acquire, making it the great social phenomena which it is today<sup>1</sup>, started its European path at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century and the beginning of the next. A group of pedagogues, trainers and educators, dignify the sporting task, assessing it as the basic, fundamental instrument in the formation of the individual<sup>2</sup> and some, remembering the glories of Hellenic class-consciousness, organise sports meetings which they entitle with the pompous cataloguing of «Olympic»<sup>3</sup>. Johann Bernard Basedow, Christian Guts Muths, Francisco Amoros y Gandeano, Marquis of Sotelo, Per Henrik Ling, Federico Luis Jhan, and a little later, Dr. Brooks of Much Wenlock, form, with others, an outstanding group of forward thinkers, who with great vision, proposed the restoration of sport in the modern world. But it was to be an English priest, Reverend Thomas Arnold<sup>4</sup>, who, with his inspired system of «sports pedagogy» carried out at Rugby University where he was the principal, would influence as a decisive trigger on the key figure in the re-establishment of modern Olympism. This person would be Pierre de Fredi, Baron de Coubertin<sup>5</sup>, the celebrated Norman aristocrat who, with profound knowledge of historical sociology and a visionary conception of the future, undertook the enormous task of re-establishing the Olympic Games. After a century along the historical path of the inspired venture, the figure of the French humanist can be described, without any mistake in assessment, as the most famous unknown person in history<sup>6</sup>. Despite the fact that Olympism, with its Games, has established itself at the gateway to the 21st century as the most important sociological force of the times<sup>7</sup>, the rich character of its brilliant restorer, the abundant written work with a legacy of more than 12,000 pages and the arduous problems which he had to overcome to achieve the triumph of his undertaking, are progressively disappearing in the mists of time for a high social percentage of the world today, even in the world of sport.

The initial proclamation for the re-establishment of the Olympic Games was launched by Coubertin on 25<sup>th</sup> November 1892 in the University Cloisters of the Sorbonne<sup>8</sup> in Paris. The idea was warmly applauded, but was met with incomprehension and its initial attempt, full of illusion, was a failure.

Two conclusions can be made from what occurred. The first is to point out that Olympism as a cultural and humanistic phenomenon attempted to resurrect itself, as was to happen two years later in the prestigious, solemn cloister of a famous University, pre-

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1 DURÁNTEZ, Conrado: *Factores culturales y humanísticas del deporte (Cultural and humanistic factors of sport. II I.O.C. World Congress of Science and Sport. Barcelona, 26th November 1991.*

2 DURÁNTEZ, Conrado: *Olímpia y los Juegos Olímpicos Antiguos (Olympia and the Ancient Olympic Games). Madrid, 1976, pages 347-349.*

3 DURÁNTEZ, Conrado: *Olímpia page 350*

4 DURÁNTEZ, Conrado: *Olímpia page 354.*

5 DURÁNTEZ, Conrado: *Olímpia page 552.*

6 DURÁNTEZ, Conrado: *Pierre de Coubertin, el Humanista Olímpico. Cadiz 1992, page 3.*

7 DURÁNTEZ, Conrado: *Le mouvement olympique: su philosophie. Olympic Academy, 1976, minutes. Pages 84 and foll.*

8 DURÁNTEZ, Conrado: *The International Olympic Academy. Madrid 1988, page 18.*

sented with careful academic expression to a select group of intellectuals, rather than the expected setting of a theatre, square or market, or even in a sporting setting. The second conclusion to be considered is the patent incomprehension which reigned, in spite of the high level of intelligence of those present, over the Olympic theme, both sporting and its underlying factors. The key to the reasons for the idea were enclosed in the exceptional, lucid mind of the famous aristocrat. Looking back at the event, Coubertin was to say «I was applauded, it was accepted and they wished me success. However, nobody had understood me»<sup>9</sup>. Two years later, on 23<sup>rd</sup> June 1894, in the same hall, Coubertin's undertaking was fulfilled. The re-establishment of the Olympic Games was passed unanimously by those present<sup>10</sup>.

The celebration, evolution and success of the Olympic Games in Athens, in 1896, the first of the modern era, strongly motivated Coubertin to totally dedicate all his efforts to the arranging, structuring and promotion of the colossal undertaking<sup>11</sup>. His first measure was to increase the membership of the International Olympic Committee given that its meditated and calculated social influence could be a decisive guardian of his idea in the respective countries. At the end of the Athens Games, the number of members of the International Olympic Committee had risen to 16, while, as far as sports associations were concerned, there were only three International Federations and thirteen National Olympic Committees<sup>12</sup>.

At the beginning of the century, and within his plan to increase the number of Olympic ambassadors in the world, Coubertin made contact with the royal family in Spain. Due to its global importance, this country was a key part of the plan formed by the far-sighted restorer. Professors Aniceto Sela and Adolfo Posada of Oviedo University together with the Rector of Law from the same university had attended the Founding Congress of Modern Olympism in Paris in 1894. In a personal letter dated 29<sup>th</sup> July 1894, Sala asked Coubertin to forward the conclusions of the Congress to him, so that he could give it the deserved attention through articles in the press<sup>13</sup>.

Coubertin's petition for a member of the I.O.C. in Spain coincided with the reign of Queen María Cristina. Her husband, Alfonso XII had died on 25<sup>th</sup> November 1885, and she had sworn the Constitution a month later, on 30<sup>th</sup> December. At the time she was expecting the heir who would become King Alfonso XII. The child was born on 17<sup>th</sup> May 1886 and would come to the throne on 17<sup>th</sup> May 1902, his sixteen birthday<sup>14</sup>.

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9 COUBERTIN, Pierre: *Memorias Olímpicas (Olympic Memoirs) Madrid, 1953, page 9 and following.*

10 DURÁNTEZ, Conrado: *Olímpia, pages 358 and 359. The journalist of the French newspaper Le Figaro, writing in the edition of 25<sup>th</sup> June 1894, highlights the events in the Sorbonne and comments on the small, lively figure of Coubertin: «Mr Coubertinis not what one would normally consider an athlete to be. He is small but lively and restless, his voice is weak, but he has an easy, quick manner.*

11 DURÁNTEZ, Conrado: *Olímpia page 360.*

12 DURÁNTEZ, Conrado: *La dimensión jurídica del Movimiento Olímpico. La Ca\*\* Olímpico The Legal Dimension of the Olympic Movement. In Conclusions of the I Sports Law Week. The College of Lawyers of Barcelona 1987.*

13 I.O.C. RECORDS: *Olympic Magazine, 1976, page 514.*

14 MENEZO, Juan José: *Reyes y Jefes de Estado desde 712 (Monarchs and Heads of State from 712) Madrid 1987, pages 205 to 209.*

The Queen entrusted Coubertin's request to the care and criteria of Prince Carlos of Borbon. He chose, from among the numerous and wealthy members of Spanish nobility with more or less international sporting interests, Don Gonzalo de Figueroa y Torres, Count of Mejorado del Campo and Marquis of Villamejor. In a letter addressed to Coubertin and dated 21st February 1902, Don Gonzalo de Figueroa said, «I accept with satisfaction the honour of representing Spanish sport by forming part of your Committee. I am a true sporting enthusiast who, unfortunately has become a simple platonic adorer following a fall from a horse five years ago. Following the death of our cherished King, Alfonso XII, sport is not in vogue in Spain, but one can hope that with our young monarch, we will have a powerful patron<sup>15</sup>.»

The timid sporting restlessness which was stirred by official actions, were mentioned in the October 1902 issue of *Olympic Magazine*, which takes Olympic stock of the time with hope for rapid, notable, future action, «HRH the King of Spain has, on repeated occasions since his coronation, mentioned the interest which our work has inspired. The King has spoken to our colleague, the Count of Mejorado, on the progress and future of the Olympic Games and has recently awarded the President of the Committee with the insignias of the Order of Carlos III. Sport is slowly but finally gaining ground in Spain and possibly, and in the near future, an Olympiad could be held within the walls of Madrid. We would also take the opportunity to highlight the fact that the Count of Mejorado has just won the Steeplechase of Pau for the fourth time<sup>16</sup>.

Throughout this period, Coubertin pressed again and again for the formation of an Olympic Committee in Spain, and, as befits his efficient diplomacy of influence on the European monarchies, he sent a commemorative medal to the Queen. Her Majesty expressed her gratitude through Gonzalo de Figueroa, in this way expressing her interest in the Olympic Games and the work of the International Olympic Committee<sup>17</sup>.

As a result of the consultative conference of Arts, Letters and Sport, called by Coubertin in Paris in the spring of 1906 with the objective of introducing artistic competitions (architecture, sculpture, music, painting and literature) into the Games, what would be baptised as «the pentathlon of the Muses»<sup>18</sup>, Don Gonzalo de Figueroa informed Coubertin of the existence of two colleges of architecture in Madrid and the Special College of Architecture in Barcelona. The principal association of the profession being the Sociedad Central de Arquitectura (the Central Society of Architecture) which was located in Madrid, as well as regional associations in Barcelona, Seville and Bilbao. The principal publications of the sector were *La Construcción Moderna*

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15 I.O.C. RECORDS:

16 *Olympic Magazine*, 1976, page 514.

17 *A letter from Villamejor to Coubertin dated 24<sup>th</sup> June 1902*. I.O.C. RECORDS.

18 COUBERTIN, Pierre: *Olympic Memoirs*, pages 81 to 84.

COUBERTIN, Pierre: *Olympic Ideology*, Madrid, 1973, pages 33 to 35.

DURÁNTEZ, Conrado: *Olímpia* page 367.

DURÁNTEZ, Conrado: *Las Bellas Artes y los Juegos Olímpicos. (Fine Arts and the Olympic Games)*. Barcelona, 1992 page 17.

and *Pequeñas Monografías de Arte* in Madrid, and *Arte y Construcción* in Barcelona<sup>19</sup>. The aforementioned artistic competitions were to be introduced to coincide with the V Olympiad in Stockholm in 1912<sup>20</sup>.

But national political events were to influence, in an involuntary but decisive way, on the national Olympic panorama. The assassination of José Canalejas by the anarchist, Pardiñas, in 1912 meant that he was followed in the Presidency of the Council of Ministers by the liberal Don Alvaro de Figueroa and Torres, Count of Romanones<sup>21</sup>. The intellectual, open and active talent of the new President was to stimulate and aid his brother, Gonzalo, who he convinced, influenced and motivated in his Olympic tasks, which up to that time he had been carried out in a rather irregular way. This gave rise to the new period which commenced with the creation of the Spanish Olympic Committee on **23<sup>rd</sup> November 1912**, according to a letter from Don Gonzalo de Figueroa to Coubertin dated 20<sup>th</sup> November of that year., which, due to its importance is transcribed in full: «Dear President and friend, the ghastly crime which has cost the life of Mr. Canalejas, could have also meant the loss of Mr. Alba in the Ministry of Public Instruction which would have involved starting over again in the new Ministry. Fortunately, he continues, as do all the Ministers, under the Presidency of my brother Romanones, and I enclose his favourable response. He has accepted the invitation and is going to appoint a representative to the Congress of Sports Psychology and Philosophy. He has also asked for all the information on the event. I also take satisfaction in informing you ***that on Saturday I will form my Spanish committee of the Olympic Games, having decided to dedicate myself to it in body and soul.*** I have always feared that I was not the right man for the job, but in this case you are to blame for not having replaced me»<sup>22</sup>. Twenty-four days later in a letter dated 2<sup>nd</sup> December 1912, the minutes of Constitution of the Spanish Olympic Committee. He says, «***I enclose the minutes of the Constitution of our Committee. If there is anything incorrect, I beg you to return it for correction. I look forward to obtaining good results and once again it will be due to your perseverance and energy***»<sup>23</sup>.

The dynamic diligence of Coubertin is once again shown with his hasty and jubilant reply, congratulating the constitution of the S.O.C. Villamejor replied to this on the 9<sup>th</sup> of the same month. «It gave me great pleasure to receive your congratulations. But it is you who deserves ***the glory of the constitution of our Committee. As you will see when I have official paper, we are no more than a filial of the International Committee under your esteemed patronage***». After requesting that the *Olympic Magazine* be sent to Messrs. Padros and Sanz, Villamejor, in this stage of overflowing Olympic euphoria, adventures the project «to set up Committees in the other regions of Spain»<sup>24</sup>.

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19 Letter from Villamejor to Coubertin 1909. I.O.C. RECORDS.

20 DURÁNTEZ, Conrado: *Las Bellas Artes y Los Juegos Olímpicos, Barcelona, 1992 pages 12 to 22.*

21 *Encyclopaedic Dictionary LABOR, Madrid, 1971, page 199 (Vol. II), 530 (Vol. III) and 325 (Vol. IV).*

22 A letter from Villamejor to Coubertin dated 20<sup>th</sup> November 1902. I.O.C. RECORDS.

23 A letter from Villamejor a Coubertin dated 2<sup>nd</sup> December 1902. I.O.C. RECORDS.

24 COUBERTIN, Pierre: *Circular from the President of the I.O.C. December 1920. In Texts Choisis. Zurich 1986. Vol. II, pages 628 and 629.*

Whatever had gone before, and in a sociological, juridical focus, one can state that the S.O.C. began its journey with a forceful dynamism on 23<sup>rd</sup> November 1912. This was later to warrant tribute from Coubertin when he was evaluating the Olympic events of 1912 which opened the V Olympiad of Stockholm. He said, «*The Belgian, Danish and Spanish Committees (the later being recently created thanks to our colleague The Marquis of Villamejor, the brother of the Count of Ramonones), are working well ...*»<sup>25</sup>. The same author wrote under the title «Chronicle of the Month», published in the January 1913 edition of Olympic Magazine», in a summary of the year 1912, «*Spain has emerged from its international indifference. Events which are multiply-ing and the formation of the Spanish Olympic Committee are clear indicators of this. This nation will probably have a lot to offer but this will depend on perseverance and willpower*»<sup>26</sup>. At the same time, Villamejor replied to Coubertin in a letter dated 11<sup>th</sup> March 1913, stating, «although you haven't heard from me, I can assure you that I am working hard, although, as I feared, the task is greater than my strengths. All over the country, in Madrid, Bilbao, Barcelona etc. there are road races, football matches etc. ... Dead or alive, I assure you that I will be in Lausanne on the 8th, and I am trying to convince some of my colleagues to accompany me»<sup>27</sup>.

During this period, the work and activities of the S.O.C. were intensified and directed at Olympic propaganda with the printing and circulation of leaflets on Olympism. Coubertin mentions this in his *Olympic Memoirs*, when dealing with his visit to Madrid. A very well-printed brochure called *What is Olympism?* was widely distributed in South-American countries, thus overtaking the actions of the Spanish Olympic Committee, which thanks to the zeal and generosity of the Marquis of Villamejor had been injected with new life. ***In Madrid, in 1916, I had the opportunity to attend a meeting by the said Committee from which another propagandistic effort arose with the distribution of another splendid leaflet on Olympism***<sup>28</sup>. The leaflet Coubertin refers to is precisely a publication written by him which forms the structural base of a subsequent work in more depth called *Pedagogie Sportive*, published in 1921. The translator from the original text into Spanish was Pedro Jaime Matheu, consul-general of El Salvador in Paris and an active member of a Provincial Committee created by Coubertin in The French capital<sup>29</sup>. A vibrant dedication in Paris by Coubertin, dated December 1917, preceded the publication destined to «...I dedicate these pages written to the intrepid youth of Latin America, with the purpose of inviting them to prepare themselves for a continued and tenacious muscular culture, to the future splendour of those privileged regions». P.J. Matheu, who would later be co-opted as a

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25 COUBERTIN, Pierre: *Olympic Memoirs*, page 126.

26 COUBERTIN, Pierre: *In Textes Choisis. Vol.II*, page 664.

27 *A letter from Villamejor to Coubertin dated 1<sup>st</sup> March 1913. I.O.C. RECORDS. The act in Lausanne mentioned in the letter was the constitution of the Congress of Sports Psychology which opened on May 8<sup>th</sup> 1913.*

28 COUBERTIN, Pierre: *Olympic Ideology*, page 119

*Olympic Memoirs*, page 162.

*Textes Choisis. Vol. II*, page 340

29 COUBERTIN, Pierre: *Olympic Memoirs*, page 161.

member of the I.O.C. where he would remain from 1918 to 1941<sup>30</sup>, specified in the prologue of the translated text how the Olympic spirit and its philosophical principles were to transform American society by taking part in athletics in a *lively, regularly and tenacious*<sup>31</sup> manner. Coubertin's aforementioned visit to the S.O.C. in Madrid was reported in succinct accounts in the press of the time: «Yesterday, Baron Pierre de Coubertin, who is in at present in Madrid, attended a meeting held by the Spanish Olympic Committee at the home of the Marquis of Villamejor. The exchange of opinions with this globally recognised authority on Olympism, should be very beneficial to the aforesaid Committee, which is as we are aware the delegate in Spain of the International Olympic Committee. The illustrious propagandist was very impressed of the work in progress of the Spanish Olympic Committee is excellent<sup>32</sup>.

Spain, as an Olympic go-between with the old colonies of America is used with shrewd diplomacy in Coubertin's expansion plans. Villamejor is the official negotiator to these ends and he carries them out with enthusiasm doing groundwork in Argentina, Chile, El Salvador and Brazil<sup>33</sup>. At an unknown time, but presumably in 1915, Villamejor in his role as President of the Spanish Olympic Committee wrote the prologue to the book entitled «*Juegos Olímpicos*» (Olympic Games) by Manuel Nogareda of the library *Les Sports*, in Barcelona, run by Elias y Juncosa «Corredisses who also figures as author of a volume dedicated to football<sup>34</sup>.

In a letter sent by the Marquis of Villamejor to Coubertin dated 5<sup>th</sup> January 1914, and after expressing the difficulties he has to attend, together with 6 representatives, the Paris Congress, Villamejor expresses thanks on behalf of H.R.H. King Alfonso XII for the award of the Olympic Diploma which was made to him, and the hope that one of the Spanish Princesses would attend to receive it<sup>35</sup>. He stated in a letter written ten days before the development of a large national athletics competition in preparation for the Berlin Games and that H.R.H. had designated two of the six requested representatives, the Count of Cimera and Justo San Miguel<sup>36</sup>.

During the XXIV Session of the I.O.C. inaugurated on 26<sup>th</sup> May 1925 at the City Hall in Prague, with 30 members present, Coubertin announced his resignation as President naming the Belgian count, Henry de Baillet-Latour as his successor<sup>37</sup>. From this date, the great French humanist, now free of the direct pressure of controlling and directing the now complex Olympic structure which he had created, could dedicate himself to

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30 *Biographies Vol. II, C.I.O., 1987, page 93*

31 MAYER, Otto: *Through the Olympic rings, page 93.*

32 *Heraldo de Madrid. Sunday, 4<sup>th</sup> June 1916 Num. 9317.*

*El Mundo Deportivo 19<sup>th</sup> June 1916.*

33 *Letter from Villamejor to Coubertin 19<sup>th</sup> July 1916. I.O.C. RECORDS*

34 NOGAREDA, Manuel: *Juegos Olímpicos. Imprenta Rayer Hermanos, Barcelona.*

35 *Letter from Villamejor to Coubertin dated 5<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> January 1914. I.O.C. RECORDS*

36 *Letter from Villamejor to Coubertin dated 15<sup>th</sup> January 1914. I.O.C. RECORDS*

37 COUBERTIN, Pierre: *Olympic Memoirs, page 214.*



pedagogical tasks and to Olympic dissemination which he held so highly. In this new phase of his life, one can include the journey he made to Spain at the beginning of 1926 and specially his stay in Barcelona, one of his favourite cities due to its outstanding athletic and Olympic talent and to the fact that he had several friends there. These friendships had arisen as a result of the continuous attempts made by the representatives of Barcelona to obtain the Games for 1924 which will be referred to later. In a letter dated 11<sup>th</sup> January 1926 written from the Hotel Bristol in Cannes, Coubertin informs Elias y Juncosa of his coming visit to the city<sup>38</sup>. Coubertin, accompanied by his wife and daughter, arrived in Barcelona on 1st November 1926 and stayed at the Majestic Hotel in the Paseo de Gracia<sup>39</sup>. The admiration which Coubertin raised in the sporting circles of the Catalonian bourgeoisie in Barcelona, together with the friendly and hospitable nature of the group, meant that a full program of official ceremonies and receptions were arranged for the illustrious visitor and his wife. Thus, on the 5<sup>th</sup> he received the President of the emblematic Sports Federation of Cataluña, Mr Fornes, together with the members of the S.O.C. García Alsina and Mesalles Estivil. Together, they visited the R.C. Marytimo where they were received by the vice-president Roure and several leading members of the Board of Directors. Later they moved on to the Parque de Montjuic where they were informed about the location of the future stadium. They had lunch at the Martín restaurant in preparation for a full afternoon program with visits to the Polo Club, F.C. Barcelona (the Barcelona Football Club), the Tennis Club, the Equestrian Circuit and the Excursionist Circuit of Barcelona. Following a detailed cultural visit to the city on 6<sup>th</sup> November, on the 7<sup>th</sup> he went to the port of Barcelona, in the company of Elias y Juncosa, Mas Ferrer and Mesalles Estivil to watch a rowing regatta. His last engagement, on the same day, was a visit to the Frontón (Pelota) Condal of the Club Vasconia where he was received by its President, Manuel Ballet. He watched a game of pelota as a demonstration of a truly Hispanic sport. Dated the same day is the postcard where Coubertin praises the sporting vitality of Barcelona, the high level of the facilities visited and the hospitality of its leaders with the famous phrase of his personal assessment of his experiences: *Before coming to Barcelona I thought I knew what a sporting city was*. Coubertin, together with his wife and daughter, left Barcelona for Madrid by train on the 9<sup>th</sup> of the month. He sent letters to Elias y Juncosa from the hotel Castilla in Toledo (19<sup>th</sup> November), from the Hotel Inglaterrre in Seville (20<sup>th</sup> November) and from the Savoy Hotel in Madrid (3<sup>rd</sup> December). He returned once more to Barcelona on 5<sup>th</sup> December, and visited the Hall of Arms in the Military Casino of Barcelona the following day. On the 8<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> he was in Tarragona to give a conference in the French Institute before leaving for Greece by ship<sup>40</sup>.

*Conrado Durántez*  
*President of CIPC*

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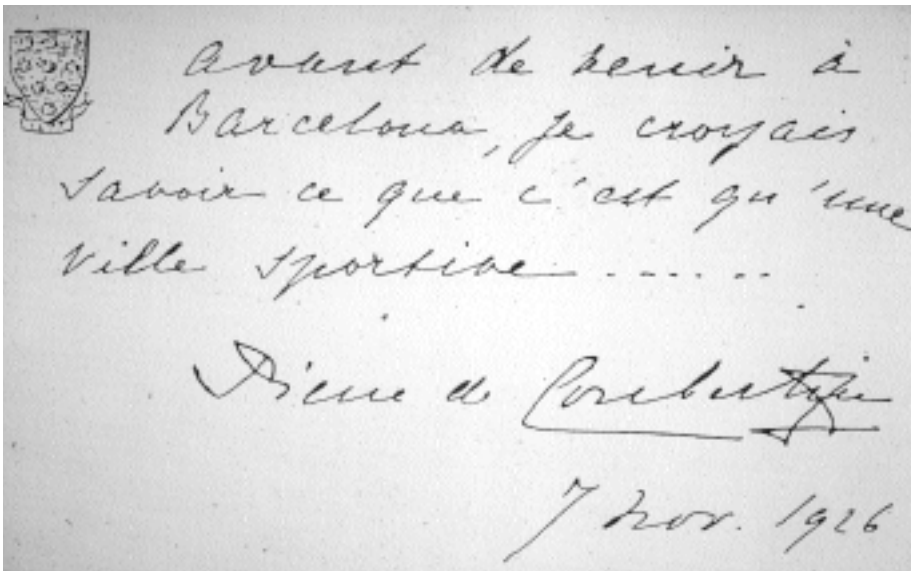
38 Letter from Coubertin to Elias Juncosa dated 11<sup>th</sup> February 1926. I.O.C. RECORDS

39 Letter from Coubertin to Elias Juncosa dated 2<sup>nd</sup> November 1926. I.O.C. RECORDS

40 Lettre from Coubertin to Elias Juncosa mentioned dates. ARCHIVOS C.O.I.



*Pierre de Coubertin in Barcelona, November 1926.  
His daughter Renée (third from left); his wife Maria (fifth from left).*



Avant de venir à  
Barcelone, je croyais  
savoir ce que c'est qu'une  
ville sportive.....

Pierre de Coubertin

7 Nov. 1926

## WHY WE FIGHT

The work of the International Committee Pierre de Coubertin, through brief educational activities, inauguration of busts and stadiums, may appear futile to the eyes of the uniformed observer. To believe this would be a mistake.

Our struggle is much more dense, much more important, much more serious. It is located far beyond conventional customs, we at the service of the education of humanity by spreading the thoughts of Pierre de Coubertin; a thinking which as we know is always open and, we believe, is critical.

Our reason for being is, above all, philosophical and humanist. We believe that Modern Olympism, in the way it was contrived at the beginning of the century by Coubertin and his friends is opportunity for humanity. Our duty, when facing the unknown and the misunderstandings which may occur, is to show and very often to reveal the fact that Olympism can not be simply reduced to the single four-yearly celebration of the Olympic Games, rather that it is a way of life which responds to the needs and demands of our societies, be they industrial, post-industrial, modern or post-modern.

### What is Olympism?

Olympism as it is defined in the fundamental principles of the Olympic Charter (a contribution which Professor Norbert Müller and I are proud to have given the International Olympic Committee) as «a philosophy for life» which extols in a balanced whole, duality of body, will and spirit.

Olympism is «a style of life» an existential way of considering man's place in time and space, in history and in society. Founded on the basis of respect for individual life, of tolerance and the recognition of equal rights for all cultures, Olympism is humanism.

Thus here in modern times we find the fundamental contribution of Pierre de Coubertin, this humanism is based on the recognition of sport for its educational value. Olympism is certainly the union «in a harmonious flash» of all the intellectual and artistic disciplines with sport, but at the root of the Olympic system, sport occupies the highest place, «the heart», which is to say moral.

Olympism rests on the concept of moral elevation, achieved thanks to sports training, subject to the laws of universal morals.

### Why we fight

We struggle so that sport can have its place, **but only its place**, in the education system dedicated to children, adolescents and every day more to men and women.

We mean that we fight against the derivations which the Olympic Games have become victims because of money, agents, and the media. Because the Games should not be a kind of spectacular World Championship held every four years even though they are

accompanied by magnificent cultural events. The Olympic Games should be a sacred demonstration of the union of men on the planet and their specific character.

That is the reason why, for us, Olympism should blend everyday life with an education based on very simple moral principles:

- Respect for the psychosomatic integrity of the child, the adolescent and man in general.
- Fight against the xenophobic and racist deviations brought to the Games and sport by over-coverage by the media.
- Respect for the opponent and the referees, we consider that respect for moral rules begin with learning the rules of sport.
- Respect, from infancy, for other cultures and the customs of different civilisations.
- An education towards peace between nations.

**We fight:**

- So that Olympism, a social fact, is integrated into the education system in Primary, Secondary and Higher.
- So that the Olympic system (I.O.C., Olympic Commissions) are as clear and open-minded as possible.

We are steadfastly in favour of Olympism and the I.O.C. hand in hand in the crisis (understandable and normal) which it is going through, it is a fact of life that Olympism cannot stand aside from the struggles faced by humanity and cannot turn away from man's weaknesses.

**We fight:**

So that, in the twenty-first century, Olympism will be in concordance with everyday life.

*Prof. Dr. Yves Pierre Boulongne  
Vice-President of the Intenational Committee Pierre de Coubertin.*

## ON COUBERTIN'S TEXT «WHAT IS OLYMPISM»

We find ourselves in 1916 in the middle of the First World War and the Olympic Games, planned in Berlin, could not take place as could none of the Olympic activities planned in Europe.

In 1915 Coubertin transferred the headquarters to the neutral territory of Switzerland. Throughout his studies of history in preparation for his universal history in several volumes, Coubertin also became actively interested in the history of South America and he was impressed by this continent of culture and tradition. For many years previous, North America had played an active role in the Olympic Movement. Why should South America be left behind?

Among the founding members of the International Olympic Committee in 1894, there was a South American, the Argentinean pedagogue. Profesor Dr. José Benjamin Zubiaur, who had met Coubertin in 1890. His efforts, together with those of the South American members who entered the IOC shortly afterwards (1901 Mr Biessegui from Mexico, and in 1903 C.F. de Candamo from Peru) did not manage to make Olympism popular in that great continent. Coubertin's numerous writings could not reach the readers of the Spanish language.

The proposal by the city of Havana to organise the 1920 Olympic Games meant the entry of Latin America into the Olympic Movement.

Coubertin wrote on the subject in his Olympic memoirs:

«whether the project has a successful outcome or is withdrawn, it should help in the conquest of South America, where the services of propaganda in which I was involved, afforded me great help»

In order to intensify the propaganda work in South America Coubertin founded his own committee in 1916 «where Mr. Pedro-Jaime de Matheu, consul-general of El Salvador, was the master-key and thanks to him, the propoganda was distributed very quickly (Olympic Memoirs, page 152).

Not only should Mr. Matheu be thanked for the leaflet «What is Olympism?» as it was he who dealt with the translation and the introduction. In his Olympic Memoirs, Coubertin mentions that the leaflet was widely distributed in South America. Doctor Matheu was elected as a member of the International Olympic Committee for Central America in 1918 and remained a member until 1941.

The contents of the leaflet reflect Coubertin's pedagogic intentions. It is almost a pre-study of the book «Pédagogie sportive» (Olympic Pedagogy) which appeared in 1921.

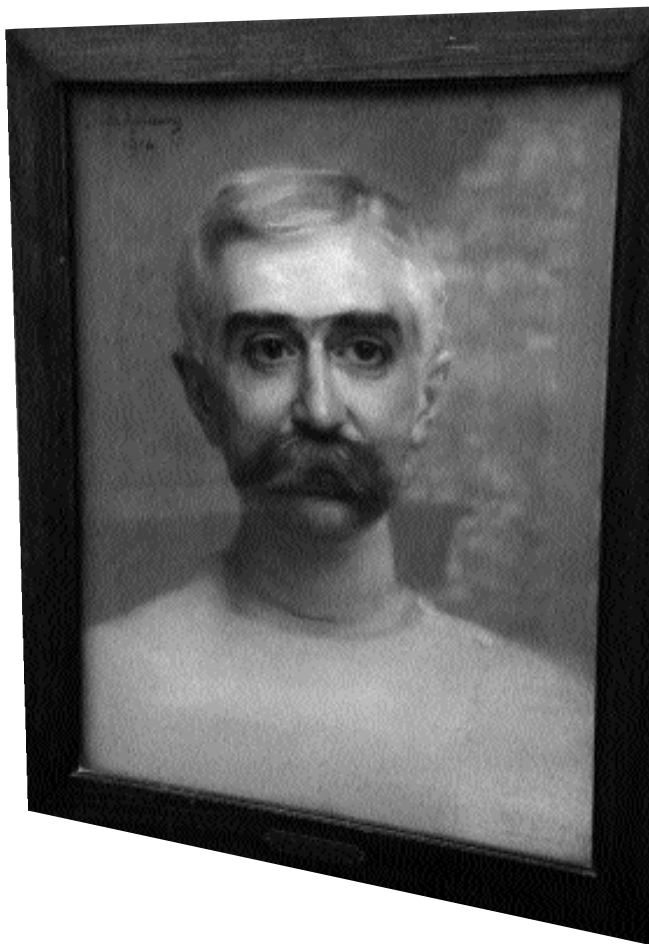
The Olympic movement did not gain much ground, and Coubertin wanted to make clear his representation of Olympism and its greatness. This was the burning desire of Coubertin, to present, during those years of destruction in Europe, a new formation of

humanity with the idea of the moral values of sport. For Coubertin, Olympism was not a system, rather spiritual behaviour (and this point is clearly stated in the leaflet).

This first Spanish printing of Coubertin's writings, has today passed into oblivion. The reprinting reminds us, in a chapter on Olympic history, of the importance of South America. Nevertheless, many of its passages, are highly topical, in spite of its old-fashioned style.

*Professor Norbert Müller*

*Vice-president International Committee Pierre de Coubertin*



*Pierre de Coubertin. Photo of a J. de Lalaing's pastel (signed and dated 1914).*

*At Y. de Navacelle de Coubertin (Navacelle's castle)*

*Y. de N. de C. - 1998*

## SECRETARY GENERAL'S NOTES

The International Committee Pierre de Coubertin takes pleasures in congratulating its members who have received distinctions or nominations. The following have been named:

- Conrado Duránte: President of the ANOC commission for the Olympic Academy;
- Donald J.W. Anthony: Membre à vie de la Société Olympique de Wenlock;
- Ivan Curkovic: Member of the Executive Committee of the Technical commission of FIFA and Honorary Council of the Republic of the Seychelles in Belgrade;
- Ada Wild to the disciplinary commission of the International Fencing Federation;
- Jean Rodenfuser and Robert Pringarbe, Honorary Secretary Generals of the CNOSE.

Distinctions were received by:

- Yves Pierre Boulonge: The Pierre de Coubertin Prize for his work on the Council of Administration of the French Committee Pierre de Coubertin.
- Marie-Andrée Duranton: promoted to Commandeur in l'orden des Palmes Académiques and to the rank of Chevalier de la Légion d'honneur.

Thanks to the work of Professor Norbert Müller and his students at the University of Mayence, the book «Coubertin and Olympism, Questions for the Future, Le Havre 1897-1997 has appeared and has been widely distributed. This work has been a great success. There are still some copies available which can be ordered through our secretary at a price of 25CHS, DM 34, FF 100.

The second international schools forum Pierre de Coubertin will be held from the 5<sup>th</sup> to the 12<sup>th</sup> of September 1999 in Much Wenlock (Great Britain) and will be organised under the supervision of Professor Norbert Müller.

Any invited school can take part in this meeting with ten students, boys or girls, accompanied by a teacher.

During the year, our committee has agreed to sponsor the expositions on Olympism and Coubertin at the sports games of Amou.

*Ada Wild*

# OBSERVATIONS ON THE LANGUAGE OF PIERRE DE COUBERTIN

Daniel Poyan

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*« ... Language and Style are the natural product of time and the biological person. »*

Roland Barthes (1)

## **Starting point**

Pierre de Coubertin continues to be an unknown even 134 years after his birth, 60 years after his death and 100 years after the Olympic Congress of Le Havre. However, in recent times, considerable effort has been made to make the true Pierre de Coubertin more widely known, through a growing number of biographies, see hagiographies. This fact is not surprising as it is difficult to delimit such a complex character, committed and dedicated to an overwhelming activity throughout his whole life.

When we try to simplify his character, we have to take into account three main aspects:

- 1) The restorer of The Olympic Games and the Olympic ideology;
- 2) The pedagogue;
- 3) The historian.

A great number of pages already exist on the first point, and this increases day by day. However, the brilliance, the flourishing and opening of the Olympic Movement and above all, the four-yearly festival of the Olympic Games cause us to overlook his scope as a pedagogue and historian. It is true that recently there has been an awareness of this negligence and that this has left his work like an «unfinished symphony». This is the mission and work taken up by specialists such as Marie-Thérèse Eyquem, Ives P. Boulongne, Geoffroyde Navacelle, George Rioux, Norbert Müller Andrés Mercé Varela, Christian Gillieron, Jean Durry, Conrado Durántez, Patrice Cholley, etc, etc...

At the moment there are important writers dealing with three of the essential points of the biography of Pierre de Coubertin. But, from my point of view, no one has agreed to give the necessary attention to the methods used to transmit his visions, to discuss and debate the ideas received and to make new propositions. In effect, a deep and methodical study still has to be carried out on the language, both written and spoken, which he used in his day. The language he used to write so many pages and give so many conferences and speeches. Nobody has delved into his lexical, stylistic, rhetorical or literary methods.

During our first approach we neither have the time nor the space to develop the systematic or meticulous analysis which such an extensive work requires. Moreover, one would have to study this language from two aspects, graphical and oral, as if one considers that he wrote in abundance, his activity as an orator should not be overlooked.



We know that the spoken language and the written language do not have the same linguistic code. The ancient Latin proverb, «verba volant, scripta manent» implies an eulogy to the written word. However, linguistics in the XX century have given value to the importance of spoken language. The phrase «you speak like a book» which is known in several languages, advises us that what was just heard was not something which one normally hears. The irony implied is an invitation to not confuse the two dimensions of the language.

### **The orator**

We do not have many testimonies of Pierre de Coubertin as an orator. That is to say, as a pure orator, without a text in front of his eyes at the moment of speaking. He did give a great number of conferences and speeches throughout his life. The majority were printed which leads one to think that a written text already existed. This leads us to believe that he did not have confidence in his powers as an orator or his ability to improvise a speech. For those lucky enough to have heard radio recordings, Pierre de Coubertin had a weak, high pitched voice (2).

This explains his admiration for people blessed with the gift of being able to express themselves in public in a more or less improvised manner. During the Congress of L'Harve he was enthusiastic about the brilliant, easy way of speaking of Père Didaon and Courcy Laffan. We can even remember an article published in the **Revue del Pays de Caux** in 1903, where he praises Jules Simon for his talent as an orator. Simon was someone for whom he always showed great admiration. I quote:

The depth of the speech was well prepared: reflected reasoning, perfect graduation, logical conclusion. But, above all, there was marvellous emotional improvisation, lively and irresistible. The words selected – chosen by weight we would have thought – exactly balanced, a kind of harmony reigned between the phrase and the thought. (3)

We note a eulogy to Pierre de Coubertin the orator. In 1895, at the age of 33, he gave a series of talks in the Franklin Hall in Le Havre,. The Journal L'Havre published a chronicle on this and spoke of «eloquent speech» and of «brilliant and patriotic improvisation» (4).

### **The writer**

The thousands of words written by Pierre de Coubertin mean that he spent thousands of hours, pen in hand, in the long, hard work of explaining in writing his thoughts and ideas. What we have here is a case of genuine devotion as a writer.

His texts often express a pleasure for writing, which translates in pleasure from reading it. If he was an intense writer during his life, one can deduce that he was, without doubt an accomplished reader.

In terms of his education, one must add to the subjects he studied - up to the level of baccalaureate in arts, science, law and some courses of political science -, the cultured surroundings in which he spent his childhood, the educational journeys he undertook at a very young age, thanks to the economical situation of his family and, of course, his talent and sensitivity.

His character as a writer took advantage of other qualities he possessed. He had, without doubt, a feeling for language, and above all a remarkable feeling for written language. His opinions and comments on style and on the art of the «good speaking» were frequent and this can help us to outline a coubertinian poetic art. I quote:

And without doubt, they paid attention to their style, those illustrious authors (he was referring to Greek and Latin writers) who took pleasure in placing the right word with elegance. (5)

... He particularly loved the well-rhymed contrasts, the quick malice and the unexpected changes of direction. (6)

Another fundamental aspect in the formation of every author is his reading, his influences, the authors who in some way were his role-models or objects of admiration. There is still a delicate question which allows us to better understand the direction and formation of the future writer. Several researchers have highlighted certain works, authors ideologies of the time which played a more or less important role in the stylistic formation of the young Coubertin. (7)

### **Language, style and literary groups**

Coubertin's style evolved considerably between 1886 and 1937, the limits of his activity as a writer. The analysis of this evolution during half a century, should be the object of a long study. Here we can highlight several aspects of his work which are, in my opinion, useful to enable us to characterise his language and style.

First consideration: He always wrote in prose, except perhaps in «Hymne à la France» (1888), when he was 25 years old. As this text has been lost we can only make a vague reference to it. Contrary to «l'**Ode au Sport**» (1919) even if it is prose, its impulse, its rapture and its inspiration are essentially lyrical as we will see later.

An important part of his written work corresponds with his untiring activity as a lecturer and regular collaborator in magazines and newspapers. We should add his sizeable epistolary production, in which we can single out his business correspondence, personal letters and those which appeared in periodical publications.

One should also point out the writings on historical subjects, which are numerous, and his Memoirs. These correspond to those written as reports, such as «Universités Transatlantiques» (1890), or other more personal ones such as «**Une Campagne de vingt-et-un ans**» (1909), «**Mémoires olympiques**» (1932) and the handwritten

memoirs of his last years. These are human texts, which remain practically unpublished to date. «**Le roman d'un rallié**» (1902) in which Coubertin openly enters the world of literary creation. This is not the only occasion, we should remember the story «*Les réflexions du bonhomme Noël*» (1911), «*Le faux sportsman*» (1910) taking the formula of «**Les caractères de la Bruyère**»; «**Paterne, Pierrefeu, ou l'Ennemi du Sport**». (8)

On the other hand, we can consider a large number of his texts as essays. His capacity for synthesis, his abundant reading, his rich imagination, and his «easy way» with the pen, possibly led him to use this method of transmitting ideas with its strong tradition in French correspondence dating back to Montaigne, one of the authors who he esteemed.

We should highlight the oral character of a large part of his texts which were conceived as lectures or public conferences. This oral character could have influenced his style at the time of writing them. On the other hand, journalism, which he practised earlier, (9) was to be excellent training in redacting which allowed him to keep his hand in as a writer. The classical advice «*nulla dies sine linea*» which he certainly followed, helped him in the moment of picking up a pen to easily transform his ideas into the written word. If at times his handwriting is difficult to read, on the whole his style is fluent and adapts naturally to its subject. One can often appreciate the clarity of his exposition, a feature which must be emphasised in a special way, clarity constitutes the golden rule for all French writers. «He who is not clear, is not French! proclaimed Rivarol with a self-sufficient air at the beginning of his «**Discourse on the universality of the French language**» (1784).

Another feature of his style which should not be overlooked in these simple observations on the language of Coubertin, is the pedagogical intention of teaching which appears in a large number of his pages. He looks to transmit, to interpret, to spread the message. When he speaks on Olympism, we have the sensation of listening to the words of a preacher spreading the Good News. The religious origin of Olympism which some classify as profane religion, and which was described by Coubertin as «*philosophical-religious doctrine*», needed an idealist, a visionary, a missionary to communicate and interpret a state of spirit to the initiated. «Olympism is a state of spirit which emerges from a double cult: that of effort and of *eurhythmics* (10).

One aspect not to be overlooked in the thousands of pages written by Coubertin is the fact that they are handwritten. Until the end of his life, he confessed to being «free of the unbearable yoke of the pedantic typist» (11). «Everything was written by hand» added Geoffrey de Navacelle, one could say that it is self-written (12).

In the great majority of his work he used narrative or descriptive discourse. He rarely employed dialogue, as in the case of «*Paterne, Pierrefeu, Helleus et moi*», mention above (13). A methodical study of his rich vocabulary is still required. A lexicon which recorded the voices of the popular professions or jobs, as well as that of the countryside of Normandy which was so near and dear to him.

At times he used a colloquial style which gave depth to the narrative, as in the passage from «**Une Campagne de vingt-et-un-ans**»:

*... I had only just left Greece when he called the other three vice-presidents together and I started to tell them off.* (14)

Helenisms sometimes illustrate the subjects which deal with the history of Greece or the ancient Olympic Games. In the same way as he uses anglicisms when dealing with England or the United States. This fact makes us wonder about his knowledge of languages. How much Greek or Latin did he know? We know that the slogan «Citius, altius, fortius» had been found by Père Didon. And that he asked A. Morlet, a Latin scholar in the Liceo Michelet, to redact the «Mens fervida in corpore lacertoso». If we do not have examples which show his ability to write in Greek or Latin, we could ask ourselves if he could, at least, translate them without too much difficulty.

With regard to modern languages, it seems he was familiar with English and German from an early age. But, did he speak them well?. His «Ode au Sport» was presented during the V Olympic Games in French and German. We have not had the opportunity to see the text in German. Anyway, it would be necessary to know if he redacted it in its entirety. We cannot remark on his knowledge of other languages such as Spanish, Italian or Portuguese.

In the fifteenth or twenty thousand pages he wrote – according to authoritative calculations – he language is presented in a diversity of registers, ranging from epistolary genre, in all its varieties, to the simple, vulgar style of journalism, from the language of administration, which corresponds to the wording of statutes and regulations, to the prolonged style of academics and political speeches.

We still lack a deep analysis of his stylistic methods. Comments such as the one made by Y.P. Boulogne, «he had a short precise style» are not very frequent. However, his prose has details which are his own and have allowed those responsible for the publication of Selected Texts to recognise the authorship of several published pages without the name of the author. «**This text**, which is unsigned, has been recognised by the redaction team as a text written by Coubertin».

### **Literature and sport**

The feeling and inclination for literary creation which Coubertin demonstrated on repeated occasions are obvious. At the age of 39, he published «Le roman d'un rallié» and ten years later he wrote «l'Ode au Sport». We can also read pages of remarkable lyricism written at the start of his life as an author which are accurate proof of his intention for literary style . In the «Lettres olympiques» (1896), written for the Athens Games, he shows feeling for the Greek landscape, history and art. He transmits his emotions during his pilgrimage to Olympia after the Games in the following way.

Leaving by the Peloponneso: a sunny escape through the great red plain of Athens, later along the bay of Eleusis, all blue and gold. The waves of the endless sea which hide the secret of mysterious rites, breathe with melancholy on the beach or leap ironically over the rocks. And this same mixture of melancholy and irony are exhaled by the ruins. It impregnates the atmosphere, penetrates the traveller and follows him until he reaches the small station with plaster walls on which a strange inscription appears, that great name of Eleusis, the sense of which was lost forever. The letters which make it up have the lightness of embroidery... (15)

This is not the only occasion when his pen finds pleasure in a lyrical vein and he surrenders to motives of inspiration which allow him to demonstrate the rich possibilities of his style. For reasons of space we are unable to comment on other passages which are worthy of a truly lyrical Coubertinian anthology.

### **The Ode to sport (L'Ode au sport)**

To conclude these simple commentaries on the written work of Pierre de Coubertin, we return to l'Ode au Sport, presented at the arts contest at the Stockholm Olympic Games under the pseudonym MM Georges Hohrod and M. Eschabach (16). Hohrod is the same name he had used in **the Roman d'un rallié**, possibly due to certain autobiographical passages in the text. In the case of l'**Ode au Sport**, the reason seems clear. Being the President of the I.O.C., he discreetly omits his name so as not to influence the jury who have to award the prize. In spite of these precautions he was awarded the gold medal for literature. We have no knowledge of the other compositions which were candidates for the prize.

He wrote the Ode at the age of 49, always loyal to his idea of harmonising physical activity and the activity of the spirit. The structure reminds us of two illustrious antecedents: the Odes of Pindare and the poems in prose of his contemporaries, mainly Baudelaire, but also Aloysius Bertrand, Lefevre-Deumier, etc ... His Ode in prose demonstrates that versification, rhyme, rhythm, counting syllables, etc. were not his favourite form of expression. In fact, he wrote at a time when free verse and a greater liberty of means were in fashion in French poetry.

The Ode in terms of poetic genre, leads us to Greek lyricism, where it was a song made up of verses and accompanied by music. In the case of Pindare, it was a choral lyricism of gala, that is to say solemn chants in honour of great personalities, in this case the winners of the games. The tradition of the ode is found in all western poetry. In France it is found in the work of the greatest poets: Ronsard, Victor Hugo and many others.

In these circumstances, Coubertin's choice of the ode certainly proves justified. He wanted to write a poem to the exaltation of sport and Pindare's example was inevitable. He was, of course, conscious of the fact that the poetical feeling was not similar, but neither were his objectives. Pindare sings to victory and the immortal glory – thanks to his song – of the winning athlete. Coubertin's intention was to deal with the

superlative values of sport, «the pleasure of Gods», it says in the first verse, evoking Pindare's claim, «The Gods are friends of the Games» (17).

But the closest antecedent to l'**Ode au Sport**, is in our opinion, the **Cinq Grandes Odes**, by Paul Claudel, published between 1904 and 1910. More specifically in the first Ode (1904) Claudel evokes the nine Muses, one by one. Several verses start with an exclamation, a vocative, or a «Oh my Lord». The parallelism with l'**Ode de Sport** is clear. Coubertin's poem is also made up of nine stanzas, of more or less the same length and starting with the same solemn invocation, «Oh sport!»

In the first verse, we read a categorical claim: sport as the «essence of life». In fact, the following eight stanzas develop and justify this declaration, given that sport is beauty, justice, audacity, honour, joy, fecundity, progress and peace. Each of these concepts serve as inspiration for the poet to explain, in a thematic-discursive style, his relationship with sport and thus elevating and honouring it.

From the first moment, the reader's attention is drawn to the repetitive beginning of each verse: «Oh sport, you are....». Repetition constitutes one of the most legitimate recourses of poetry as do alliteration, parallelism, assonance, the proverb, etc. And, it is thanks to there recourses and means that the poem can be expected to contain a correct union of composition and rhyme.

### **The finish**

As an urgent conclusion, given that our path must reach an end, we can affirm that Pierre de Coubertin loved writing. The pen and paper were his trusty companions throughout his life. He had an easy way of writing, thanks to his great amount of reading, his talent as a writer, and the daily training. His love of writing was a love that never betrayed him. Very often, at the end of his life, he confessed to the blank page. This was his outlet, a catharsis of the tragic side of his existence. Perhaps the most emotional, the most poignant of the lines he wrote were those of his memoirs - partially unpublished - written from the depths of his soul, in the last stage of his life. These touch, in a special way, the heart and sensitiveness of today's reader, an admirer of Pierre de Coubertin.

## NOTES

1. *Le Degré zéro de l'écriture*. Paris, Seuil, 1972, page 14.
2. Jean Durry, *Le vrai Pierre de Coubertin. La vie. L'œuvre. Les textes-clé*. Paris, French Committee Pierre de Coubertin, (1994), page 3.
3. Reproduced in *Pierre de Coubertin. Selected Texts*. I.O.C. Edition co-ordinated by Prof. Norbert Müller – Zurich, Hildesheim, New York. – Weidmann (1986), Vol. 1, page 595.
4. Quoted by Yves P. Boulongne. *La vie et l'œuvre pédagogique de Pierre de Coubertin, 1863-1937*. (Ottawa), De. Leméac (1975), page 90.
5. «*L'Éducation des adolescents au XX<sup>e</sup> siècle*», in *Textes choisis*, (Selected Texts), op. Cit Vol. 1, page 297.
6. «*Jules Simon*», in *Revue du Pays de Caux*, Reproduced in *Textes choisis*, (Selected Texts), op. Cit. Vol. 1, page 595.
7. This is one aspect of the formation of P. de C., how he thought and wrote. A complete analysis would more time and space than we our purpose affords.
8. All of these extracts, among others, have been reproduced in the appendix of *Texts choisis*, op. cit. Various literature on Sport. Vol. III, pages 665-680.
9. A membership card of l'Association de Journalistes Parisiens, 1895, and reproduced in Geoffroy de Navacelle, *Pierre de Coubertin, sa vie par l'image*. And illustrated album which accompanies the three volumes of *Textes choisis*, op. cit.
10. P. de C. La Gazette de Lausanne, 22<sup>nd</sup> Nov. 1918, page 1, in *Textes choisis*, op. cit., Vol. II, page 385 .
11. I.O.C. Records., quoted by Y. P. Boulongne, op cit., page 54.  
I1 and (Coubertin) «... I have the honour of writing by hand and with a pen».
12. Geoffroy de Navacelle, loc. cit., page 22: «Everything is without a secretary, typewriter or telephone. Everything is hand-written.
13. Published in *L'auto*, 31. XII, 1927 and 1.I.1928. Cfr. *Textes choisis* (Selected texts), op. cit. Vol. III, pages 672-678.
14. *Textes choisis*. (Selected texts, op. cit., Vol. II. page 137.
15. «*Olympic Letters*», in *Souvenirs d'Amérique et de Grèce* (Souvenirs from America and Greece. Paris, Hachette, 1987. See *Textes choisis* (Selected texts) Op. cit. Vol. II, page 160.

16. Y. P. Boulongne has pointed out that, curiously, Eschbach and Hohrod, wrote to two small places in Germany, in the Land of Baden-Württemberg, near Landau.
17. Coubertin himself quotes the phrase of Pindare in a conference given in Paris in 1929. The oral characteristics of all speeches and conferences probably made the author leave out any reference to the title so as not to make the conference boring. Neither did he bother to mention it at the time of sending his text to be printed. This was normal in Coubertin's way of working. Cfr. the text of the conference in *Textes Choisis*, op. cit., vol. II, pages 414-429.

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## ODE AU SPORT

### Pierre de Coubertin

- I O Sport, delight of the Gods, distillation of life! In the grey dingle of modern existence, restless with barren toil, you suddenly appeared like the shining messenger of vanished ages, those ages when humanity could smile. And to the mountain tops came dawn's first glimmer, and sunbeams dappled the forest's gloomy floor.
- II O Sport, you are Beauty! You – the architect of this house, the human body, which may become object or sublime according as to whether it is defiled by base passions or cherished with wholesome endeavour. There can be no beauty without poise and proportion, and you are the incomparable master of both, for you create harmony, you fill movement with rhythm, you make strength gracious, and you lend power to supple things.
- III O Sport, you are Justice! The perfect fairness which men seek in vain in their social institutions rises around you of its own accord. No man can surpass by one centimetre the height he can jump or the time for which he can run. His combined strength of body and mind alone set the bounds to his success.
- IV O Sport, you are Daring! The whole meaning of muscular effort lies in one word – to dare. What good are muscles, what good is it to feel nimble and strong and to train one's nimbleness and strength if not to dare? But the daring you inspire is far from the rashness which impels the gambler to stake his all on a throw. It is a prudent and considered daring.



- V O Sport, you are Honour! The titles you bestow are worthless save if won in absolute fairness and perfect unselfishness. Whoever succeeds in deceiving his fellows by some ignoble trick, suffers the shame of it in the depths of himself and dreads the dishonourable epithet which will be coupled with his name if the fraud from which he prospers should come to fight.
- VI O Sport, you are Joy! At your call the flesh makes holiday and the eyes smile; the blood flows free and strong in the arteries. Thought's horizon grows lighter and more clear. Even to the grief-stricken you can bring a healing distraction from their sorrow, while you enable the happy to taste the joy of living to the full.
- VII O Sport, you are Fecundity! You tend by straight and noble paths towards a more perfect race, blasting the seeds of sickness and righting the flaws which threaten its needful soundness. And you quicken within the athlete the wish to see growing about him brisk and sturdy sons to follow him in the arena and in their turn bear off joyous laurels.
- VIII O Sport, you are Progress! To serve you well, man must better himself in body and in soul. You enjoin him to observe a loftier hygiene, you require him refrain from all excess. You teach him wise rules which, will give his effort the maximum intensity without impairing the balance of his health.
- IX O Sport, you are Peace! You forge happy bonds between the peoples by drawing them together in reverence for strength which is controlled, organised and self-disciplined. Through you the young of all the world learn to respect one another, and thus the diversity of national traits becomes a source of generous and peaceful emulation.

*Revue Olympique,*  
*déc. 1912, pp. 179-181.*  
*Brochure spéciale, Lausanne 1912.*

# CHILDREN'S SPORTS HOLIDAYS IN THE SPIRIT OF PIERRE DE COUBERTIN

(Sponsored by the CIPC)

July 1998, the birth of the first Sporting Games of AMOU (France, Landes)

The APAS<sup>1</sup> is a French association with a social character which organises holiday camps for the children of B.T.P. from the Paris region. With the aim of promoting sport during their holidays, they have decided to promote some days during the stay dedicated to the Olympic Games... This organisation is associated with the sporting bodies of the city of Amou (L.J.S.C.<sup>2</sup>) the site of the holiday centre.

«For several days the three-coloured flag has flown over la Técoùère and the flame HAS burnt continuously to illustrate the values of Olympism which the APAS has promoted during the young people's stay... This initiative recognises all the splendour of the Olympic Games within the geographical boundaries of la Chalosses and Amou.»

An extract from the newspaper «South-West», dated 17/07/98.

## «I declare the 1<sup>st</sup> Games of Amou open!»

When, on the evening of 13<sup>th</sup> July 1998, the Mayor of Amou pronounced these words, there many «lumps in throats». The Opening Ceremony had just begun. The athletes paraded in uniform behind flags and banners, «just like on TV». The anthems of the 10 «represented» nations sounded, highlighting the municipal harmony and the Olympic Flame was lit with the torch which had been carried from Paris, while a young child pronounced the «Athlete's Oath». Then the spectacle commenced. It was made up of «a Living Tableaux», illustrating the different sporting events: athletics (running, jumping and relays), swimming (25m, 50m, and relays), team sports (basketball and football), canoe-kayak (slalom and races), biathlon (roller-skating and archery), «marathon» (5km) and cycling (VTT on a track). This was followed by the release of balloons destined for other children. (Could they be from the five continents?)

It was plain to see that the A.P.A.S., L.J.S.C. had been working hard for several months... Organising a stay dedicated entirely to Olympism (spiritual state, a kind of great international event), to sport (the reality of training and preparation for competition in an open context) and to its values, with reference to the spirit of education so close to Pierre de Coubertin's youth (eurhythmia). These three companions have shown that it is still possible to innovate in a useful way. The «Olympic Games in collaboration» has come about due something which already existed? No, but proposing to the children that they should take part in sport for three weeks thanks to a specific and studied system for all, but with a base of competition. (with leisure) in a festival setting, recognised by numerous personalities and highlighted by the media – this is something out of the ordinary!

And so it was that our young Parisians lived the Olympic Games for three weeks. There was genuine contact with the population. Sport was omnipresent as were the moral and cultural references to Olympism: an exposition<sup>3</sup> on the «real» Olympic Games took place at AMOU, to allow our «athletes» to discover the universe of the Olympic Games in its universal dimension. We wanted to inform the children on the reality of sport, and the history and geography of the countries they represented They had become aware of the history of sport, of Olympism and Baron de Coubertin (videos, reports, expositions, a good library, the Olympic Museum of Lausanne) and above all the current state of sport in those countries. It was an excellent opportunity for them to hear our sporting ambitions.

The setting is important in order to achieve success in the project of holidays for children, but here it reached its greatest importance. The directors of the activities, whose principal role was greatly reduced, adapted perfectly, becoming true Team Captains, encouraging their athletes and dramatising whatever needed dramatising. The state-qualified monitors, who also acted as referees, showed willingness, friendliness, and competence, adapting to the framework of our action as well as the age of the children, without ever overlooking the authority of the position. The chef had cooked, according to the day, typical dishes from Korea, Morocco, Canada, Greece and Jamaica, without forgetting the imperial Japanese pates or the dietetics.

The set direction was certainly not overlooked as the was demonstrated by the sets and their contents: «The Olympic Village», «TV Studios», the sands of the Landes shining for the Closing Ceremony, football pitch, gymnasium, swimming pool, a course laid out with slalom gates in the river, Olympic restaurant in the style of Camp du Drap d'or, an infirmary complete with magic bottles (the kind which revive footballers in a second), podiums with flowers, anthems and icoloursî of the formal ceremonies, officials in blazers, suits and swimming costumes with the badge of the Game, as well as the certificates and diplomas, the Golden book and above all, the medals: gold, silver and bronze so coveted by all ...

This style, this way of life, we wished it that way, authentic and with quality and in the image of the Olympic Games, so that this sports event, which was so real, would be lived passionately but with humility. With the magic of the holidays and great help from the participants, the dream came true. What was really marvellous was the moral support from the personalities from the world of sport, who never hesitated to believe in our project, instilling a genuine interest in the children, and this shows that the spirit of Coubertin is not a vain idea. Ms Ada Wild, Secretary General of the International Committee Pierre de Coubertin, gave us great encouragement throughout the «Games». The Ambassadors of the countries represented, Sports Federations and the Ministry for Youth and Sport helped us (with information, lots). Also famous champions, such as Michel Jazy, who with his straightforwardness and simplicity gave the children a good example and an ideal to follow. I would like to express my heartfelt gratitude to everyone. Who knows if some vocation has been created which could become permanent in two or three Olympiads?

In this way I will finish this «premiere», with eyes full of images, the sound of cheering in the depths of the mind and unforgettable memories.

We already have an appointment for the Games of the year 2000, (in Amou, of course).

*P. BARJONET*

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- 1 Association Paritaire d'Action Sociale du Bâtiment & des Travaux Publics (Paris)
- 2 Association Loisirs Jeunes Sports conseils (Rochefort du Gard)
- 3 Association Voyage au coeur de l'olympisme



*Grange of the river. Drawing of Pierre de Coubertin.*

## FRENCH, THE LANGUAGE OF SPORT

Some time ago, the French government created an inter-ministerial working group with the mission of working on the subject:

«**the French language: the language of sport**».

This excellent initiative should be emphasised, praised and stimulated, as it should help to stop the decrease of the use of French in international sporting circles, and at the same time, modify the lamentable tendency that can be observed over several decades leading to a decrease in the number of French-speaking people elected to these sporting organisations, be it those elected to the centre of Federations, those elected or members co-elected in the centre of multi-sport organisations, such as the International Olympic Committee, AGFIS or the World Games, for example. This tendency should be opposed as now is the time to act.

We should remember that French continues to be a very important language in the world, and above all in the world of sport; it is the first official Olympic language, we give thanks to Baron Pierre de Coubertin, the restorer of Olympism and the creator of the modern Olympic Games.

With should note with satisfaction that the International Olympic Committee perfectly respects bilingualism with preponderance of the French language, and the largest number of the leaders, and in particular President Juan Antonio Samaranch, who never fails to express himself in French in his speeches, before continuing in the language of Shakespeare. Moreover, all the correspondence of the International Olympic Committee is written and published in French and the translation in English figures in italics in order to differentiate in this way the two languages.

It is essential to point out that in the case of a lawsuit between the two languages, over the interpretation of an official document, it is the French text which is *bona fide*. This aspect, the wish of Baron Pierre de Coubertin, must instil the will to work towards stopping an eventual step backwards, which could occur if the elected French speakers of international sport are not on their guard.

If the International Olympic Committee always works according to the thoughts of Pierre de Coubertin, things will not happen as they have done in other worldwide multi-sport organisations such as the World Games, the «*Jeux des Maitres*», or the Association of Recognised International Sports Federations, whose statutes state that the official language be English.

For this reason action in defence of the French language in sport is required, and a large number of French-speaking elected members who were questioned on the matter have adhered to the idea of the creation of an association of French-speaking delegates of international sport.

This is the reason why a constitutional assembly of the AEFISI will be held in the near future where the adoption of statutes will be decided upon. A blueprint of these statutes has already been drawn up. Its President and committee will be elected and at the same time, the location of its headquarters will be decided on.

The most suitable date for such a meeting should coincide with the next General Assembly of AGFIS in Osaka (Japan) next October, and a motion has been presented with this in mind. If we obtain the approval of the AGFIS, an official convocation will be launched on the web-site [worldsport.com](http://worldsport.com) and on all other possible mediums.

The aims of the said organisation could be as follows:

- Support and if possible increase the use of the French language in the heart of all international sporting institutions.
- Assist in the development and the promotion of the French-speaking Games where the audience is far from that which could be expected.
- Assist in increasing the number of French-speaking members at the heart of international sports federations and in international multi-sport organisations (International Olympic Committee, AGFIS, IWGA, University Games, etc.)
- Help its members in their work in the heart of the international organisations (there will be a report with the aims of the association).

In conclusion, let us take this opportunity to thank the International Committee Pierre de Coubertin and its General Secretary, Mme Ada Wild for the support given to our initiative in the columns of the committees periodical newsletter.

Of course, any comments or suggestions will be welcome. These can be sent to the provisional address below.

*Jacques HELE, Vice-president of the  
INTERNATIONAL SURFING ASSOCIATION (ISA)  
promotor of L'AEFSI  
(Association of the Elected French-speakers of International Sport.*

*AEFSI  
2, rue Pont-Blanchet  
17700 VOUHE, FRANCE  
Fax: (33) 546 35 4636*

# INFORMATIONS

## AUSTRIA – Olympic activities in 1998

Though the group engaged in the promotion of Olympism in Austria is rather small the efforts are steadily carried on with undiminished enthusiasm. Due to the fact that most of the members of the Austrian Olympic Academy (AOA) are former participants of IOA-Sessions and therefor working in the field of education almost all projects in olympic education so far have been addressed to teachers and students.

The latest project in close relation to the Olympic Winter Games 1998 at Nagano was especially designed for the age group 10 – 14 (secondary stage 1). Handed on to all schools of the respective grades the brochures were warmly welcomed by teachers and students. More than 400 very positive comments on contents and design were mailed in the first two weeks after the distribution, a very important feedback also for further attempts in this field.

Among the contents of «Participation is More Important...», the title, of the booklet, there are to be found issues like «the Olympic truce at the ancient games», «the Olympic idea and symbols», «Pierre de Coubertin and his vision», «Winter Games and their sites» and informations about Nagano, Japan and the Games 1998. There are some parts also in English (Olympic Pursuit, True stories on fair play) for the use in language classes, and as a motivating factor there is a «patriotic section» too informing about Austria and the Olympic Winter games, medallists, and our country as host of Winter games in 1964 and 1976.

The yearly session of the AOA was organized in June this time at Velden/Carinthia, the olympic village in the bid for the Winter Games of 2006. As it is a bid of three regions the event gave opportunity to get to know the presumed sites of the sports events, for a discussion with the secretary generals (one of each region) of the bid company but also about the expectations of the AOA for educational incentives as a bid country. The fact that 70 and 50 years ago the three regions were in war with each other and hostility kept going on for many years makes this common effort for the Games a substantial contribution to peace. All involved people therefor hope that the motto of the games «senza confini» – without borders – will not only be true for the greatest sport event the Olympics but will also be a motto for the new neighborhood in the centre of Europe.

In the AOA-Session the candidates for the 38<sup>th</sup> IOA-Session for Young Participants presented short papers on olympic issues and they were prepared for their mission as «olympic ambassadors» for their country. The students of the last IOA-Session gave reports about their impressions and their gain in olympic experience.

Ever since the first IOA-Session in 1961 some 200 Austrian students, both male and female, have had olympic education from first hand. It is the hope of the AOA to keep this potential for the dissemination of olympism in our country alert and active.

*D<sup>r</sup> Hermann Andreacs*  
*Member of the CIPC Board*

## **FRENCH**

During this year, the French Committee Pierre de Coubertin has continued with its work and its reflection with is now profound and deeply committed.

In response to a great display of interest, we have twice repeated the breakfast-debate style of meetings so far this year. M<sup>r</sup> J. P. KARAQUILLO, professor in the faculty of law and of economic science in Limoges and director of the centre of law and sports economics and M<sup>r</sup> M. RIEU, professor of physiology in the faculty of medicine and President of the French Society of Sports Medicine have spoken on the following subjects: Economical dangers in sport, Improving results in sport. Is this the mission of a doctor? Two subjects in the spirit of our reflection, and in the worries of the moment which have managed to hold the attention of quite a large audience.

Other events of this kind are being prepared.

Various educational establishments in France bear the name of Pierre de Coubertin, they teach young people and have been contacted by the Committee with an aim to better implant the spirit and commitment of the humanist, Pierre de Coubertin, through his vision as a pedagogic scholar.

Within this framework an operation will soon get under way to erect busts of the reformer of Olympism in these establishments, or on the occasion of an official ceremony. The handing over of this memorial will be the highlight of one (or more) afternoons of reflection and activity on Coubertin and his work.

We also continue with the greatest possible regularity, the redaction and always well received internal bulletin «La Gazette Coubertinienne» (The Coubertinian Gazette).

At last we have set about what should be our strong point for next year, that is to say the celebration of the fiftieth anniversary of our committee. For this reason an important colloquial is planned and the central theme is almost certain to be: Sport, an education in Olympism - an education for life. But it is still too soon to speak with certainty.

*J.-C. L.*



## ITALY

The International Committee Pierre de Coubertin was founded in the month of July under the Presidency of Professor Igor Lanzoni. The other members are:

Vice-president:	Pino Tesini
General Secretary:	Daniela Battocchio
Treasurer:	Fabio Rinzivillo
Internationals Relations:	Dimitra Likogianni
Members:	Professor P. Ottonello Professor M. Millo Doctor D. Bonamigo Doctor Gueye Osseynou

## PEROU



## SENEGAL

The International Committee Pierre de Coubertin was born on 14<sup>th</sup> November 1988 under the Presidency of Abdoul Wahab Barka BA, director of the national Olympic Academy and President of the Senegalese Fencing Federation. The other members are:

1 <sup>st</sup> Vice-president:	Ibrahima Sall
2 <sup>nd</sup> Vice-president:	El Hadji Mouhamadou Lamine Goudiaby
General Secretary:	Alain Claude Monteiro
Treasurer:	Doudou Sene
Members:	Mamadou dieng Abdoul Aziz Ndiaye Lioune Diakhaté Mbaye

## **PUBLICATIONS AVAILABLE**

### **Coubertin et l'Olympisme, Questions pour l'avenir, Havre 1897-1997**

to order at our Secretariat

Price CHF 25.– or DM 34.– or FF 100.–

«**Pierre de Coubertin, sa vie par l'image**» par Geoffroy de Navacelle de Coubertin.  
(Pierre de Coubertin, his life through pictures)

First numbered edition, limited quantity. Album illustrated by photographs and documents. Price CHF. 30.–.

«**Actualité de Pierre de Coubertin**»

«**The relevance of Pierre de Coubertin today**»

Report of the Symposium held in March 1986 at the University of Lausanne.

CHF. 30.–.

### **Bibliographie des œuvres de Pierre de Coubertin (Bibliography / Bibliografia)**

Dr. Norbert Müller, in collaboration with M. Otto Schantz.

CHF 25.–.

### **La vie et l'œuvre de Pierre de Coubertin 1863-1937**

(The Life and Pedagogic Works of Pierre de Coubertin 1863-1937)

Prof. Yves - Pierre Boulongne, CHF. 30.–

### **Textes choisis de Pierre de Coubertin**

(Chosen Texts by Pierre de Coubertin)

French edition, original texts. Box containing 3 volumes: «Révélation», «Olympisme», «Pratique sportive» and the album Pierre de Coubertin, his life through pictures, nearly 300 pages. Numerous illustrations and reproductions of documents.

CHF. 80.–.

### **Brochures:**

**Pierre de Coubertin and the Arts**

**Pierre de Coubertin and History**

**Pierre de Coubertin, the Unknown**

French / English / Spanish editions.

## **Pour un humanisme du Sport**

(For Humanism in Sport)

under the direction of Prof. Yves Boulongne, on the occasion of the Centenary Congress.

Published by the FOSNC, Paris.

## **Le Livre du Centenaire**

(The Centenary Book)

Published by the I.O.C.

Volume 1 is already out and deals with:

1. Vikelas - Coubertin (1894-1925) by Prof. Yves-Pierre Boulongne
2. Baillet - Latour (1925-1942) by Dr Karl Lennartz

## **APPEAL**

*The reader will note the unequal importance of the above news and above all the absence of news coming from many countries where we are present and where there are certainly interesting events. It is for this reason that we launch an urgent appeal to all members that they furnish for the edition of this «Information Letter» these items worth bringing to the attention of our readers when they pertain to an action or an event related to Pierre de Coubertin and to his work.*

**Friends of the Olympic Movement, create National Pierre de Coubertin Committees.**

We are at your disposal to send you our brochure «Instructions and suggestions for the creation of a National Pierre de Coubertin Committee».

## **BUREAU DU CIPC**

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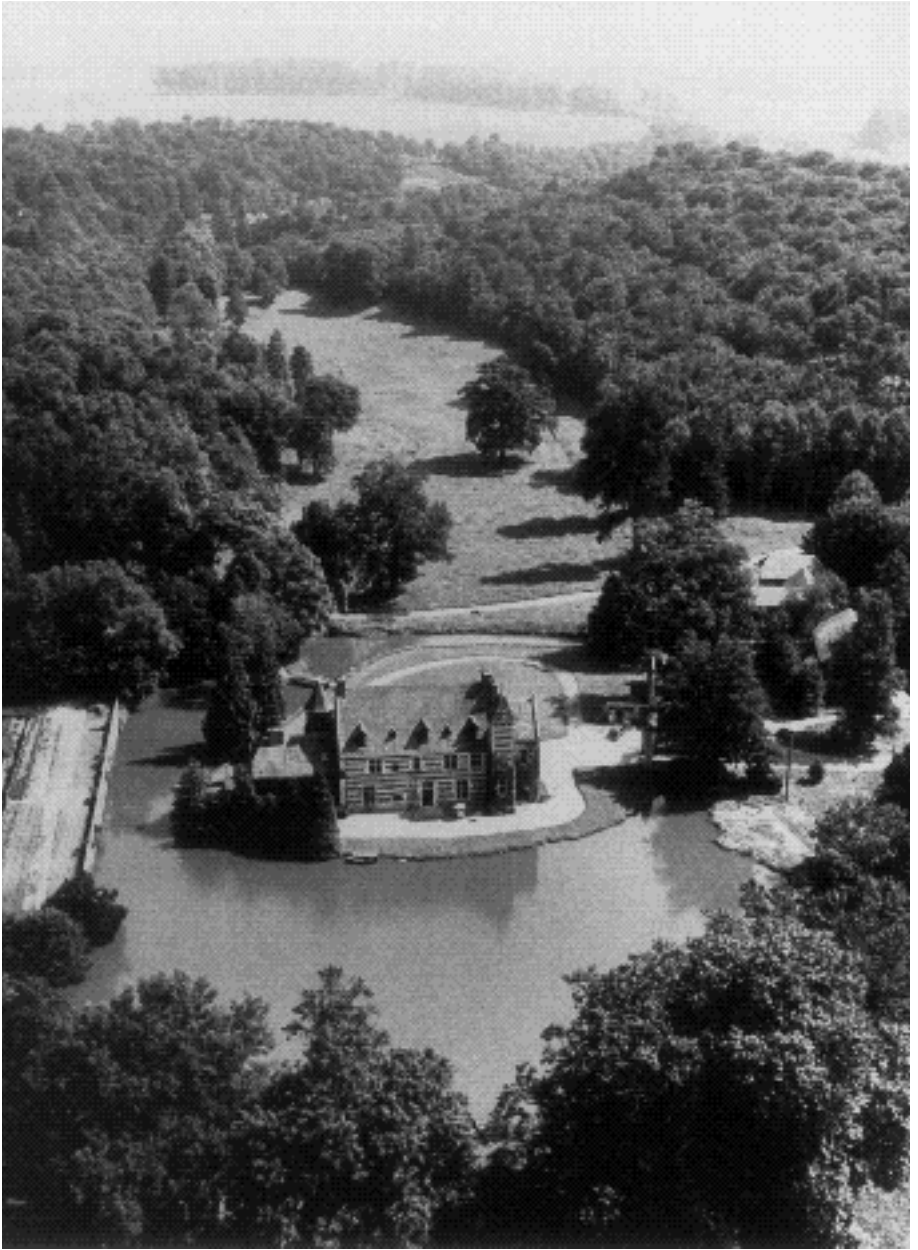
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*The castle of Mirville in Normandy, domain of the family's Coubertin.*

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