

XX*

The Capitol in Rome

In Rome too, the chance lost in 1906 had to be made up for. Of the few wisps of cloud that had loomed on the horizon at Lausanne in 1921, none were left. I was therefore very keen for the 1923 Session to be particularly brilliant. Our colleagues, Colonel Montu and the Marchese di Guglielmi, spared no efforts in their determination to make a success of it and they succeeded magnificently. The Session held under the patronage of the King and Queen of Italy opened in the main hall of the Capitol on 7th April 1923, in the presence of the sovereign accompanied by the Presidents of the Chamber and the Senate, the Secretaries of State for Foreign Affairs and for Fine Arts, the Prefect of Rome and a great many guests. It was closed on 12th April. Members of the IOC took away with them a



1923 - Opening of the IOC Session.

vivid and lasting memory of the royal reception in the Quirinal, and the party given at the Palazzo Rospigliosi by the Marchese and Marchesa di Guglielmi, as well as of the dinner at Aventino by Col. Montu, during which guests were able to admire the wonderful spectacle of the ruins of the Palace of the Caesars lit up specially for the occasion. They visited the Vatican where, in the course of a long preliminary audience, their President received further assurances from Pope Pius XI of his friendly interest in Olympism. They were also entertained by the National Tourist Office and the Italian Olympic Committee. Finally, they enjoyed

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the satisfaction of having accomplished a considerable amount of work in the course of their numerous meetings.

Many details concerning the next Games were gone into, but the main questions dealt with were those concerning the German and Russian participation, "regional" Games, propaganda in South America, and finally the sports conquest of Africa. The German question should have been very simple to solve since, on the one hand, no break had ever occurred and, on the other hand, the German members of the IOC had disappeared. The Secretary General appointed for the organisation of the 6th Olympiad (Berlin 1916), who, in this capacity, had played an active role in the discussions of June 1914 in Paris, had been invited to go to Rome to reach an agreement with the IOC concerning the election of new members but, owing to a misunderstanding, he failed to appear and it was not until the following season that Secretary of State Lewald and Mr. O. Ruperti were elected. Our Bulgarian, Turkish and Hungarian colleagues had already taken their seats : they were Messrs. Stancioff, Selim Sirry Bey, Count Geza Andrassy and J. de Muzsa. There was still the Austrian vacancy to be filled, no candidate having been put forward. The IOC agreed this time to approve the solution that it had made the mistake of rejecting at Lausanne in 1921 and which was based on the twofold principle of the integral and permanent maintenance of universalism on the one hand, and on the other, of its having nothing to do with the sending out of invitations, this task being entirely up to the authorities of the country organising the Games.

After Germany, Russia. It was not without emotion that we heard our colleague Prince Leon Ouroussoff, a former diplomat, describe the lot of his compatriots divided into two groups which, with complete liberalism, he asked to be given equal rights to take part in the Games in Paris ; both the Soviet teams and the teams of the emigre sports clubs were to be admitted on the same footing. I always regretted the way in which his proposal was received and rejected for "administrative" reasons. Nobody realised better than I the practical difficulties involved nor the perhaps insoluble problems its application would raise, but I think that the IOC would have brought honour on itself had it given the proposal a different welcome and forwarded it at the right moment to the French Government, backed by encouraging comments.

The situation with regard to the Armenians, who also had a club of young emigres demanding admission, was quite different. For the time being, Armenia existed only as a hope and a memory in the hearts of its loyal subjects and it could hardly, like Bohemia or Finland before it, lay claim to a leading role in "sports geography". The other national questions were settled. For the second time the Irish Free State was represented at the Session. Its documents in Celtic accompanied by the English version had a delightfully archaic look. The creation of the Kingdom of Yugoslavia had *ipso facto* solved the Croatian question, and the American Government had very liberally agreed to the desire of the Philippines to be allowed to march in a group behind their own flag at the Olympic parade. On the eve of the Games in Paris, the IOC would number 62 members and 45 countries. The "small, older brother" of Lausanne would for the moment exceed in numbers the big, younger sister in Geneva.

Of the host of projects produced right after the war and aimed at the creation of "regional" Games, there remained practically nothing. I was pleased because I

had seen no real future in the movement but had thought it best to leave it to wear itself out. Only the Far Eastern Games, now placed under our patronage, survived. They answered a real need. The only other plans I was interested in were those for the African Games, about which I shall speak in a moment, and the South American Games which Brazil had introduced by inaugurating them the previous year (1922) on the occasion of the centenary celebration of its independence. Not only had they been placed under the patronage of the IOC, but the Brazilian Government had sent me an invitation to come and preside over them. Circumstances unfortunately prevented me from leaving in time, but Count de Baillet-Latour was able to replace me. In the course of a journey through most of the South American continent, the delegate of the IOC had not only received the most flattering welcome for the work he represented but had used his time most profitably for the "Olympisation", to coin a neologism, of these new countries full of as yet unsatisfied sporting ambitions. He had been able, in the meantime, to smoothe out difficulties, put an end to conflicts and solve tricky questions. Whether the Games at Rio were to become a really stable regular institution or not, it was worthwhile seeing them renewed in the near future for the benefit of other cities further apart from each other-as a result of inadequate transport rather than actual distance-than was the case in Europe. We needed a choice of centres like Mexico, Havana, Santiago, Montevideo and Buenos Aires, where athletes from nearby countries would have an opportunity of competing against each other either in Central America or in South America. This would also be an excellent "Olympic kindergarten", according to the term used in Manila.

The Count de Baillet gave the IOC an account of his long voyage and all the work accomplished on its behalf ; his report was received with unanimous applause. Obligated to cut short his travels, he had not been able to come back via California and Japan where he was to have presided over the Far Eastern Games which were being held in Osaka. Los Angeles, where the stadium was almost completed, had looked forward eagerly to his visit in the hope of obtaining assurances from him regarding the 1932 Games since those of the 8th and 9th Olympiads had already been awarded. But I was determined, obdurate as I was, to renew the gesture made at Lausanne two years earlier and to commit the future even beyond the present horizons. In addition to the keenness and the enthusiasm of its advocate (our colleague W.M. Garland), Los Angeles held three powerful trumps. First of all, the state of progress of its Olympic preparations, which represented an invaluable pledge of success ; then its privileged situation, from the point of view of political and social events, far removed from the trouble that I felt brewing-I discussed the threat in this same year, 1923, in a series of articles published in a Swiss paper under the general title : "Where is Europe going ?". Finally, the time had really come to show some gratitude to the sporting youth of the United States for the efforts made since Athens and for its always brilliant and numerous participation in past Games. These three reasons decided members of the IOC to vote unanimously in favour of awarding the celebration of the 10th Olympiad to Los Angeles.

Our meetings were marked by many interesting discussions which I cannot go into here. Since the *Olympic Review* had ceased to be published, the minutes of the annual Session were generously published in full in a brochure at the

expense of our colleague Albert Glandaz, and consequently the text is available for all to see. The problem of "loss of earnings" gave rise to the first skirmishes, which were to be repeated and even become quite heated without ever degenerating into real clashes ; for it is worth mentioning, much to the credit of its members, that on no occasion since its creation had the IOC ever experienced any of those disputes that are quite pointless but nevertheless introduce a certain bitterness into the proceedings. I shall not go any further into this new aspect of the problem of amateurism. I have already discussed it at considerable length in an earlier chapter. "Loss of earnings" crystallised the fatal conflict between the modernist trends of progressive circles and the diehard conservatism of the old English idea of sport. No one was more attached to the doctrine of "pure" sport than the Reverend Laffan and yet this great Englishman, who possessed a profound sense of history, was himself looking on this occasion for ways of coming to terms with a social evolution that he clearly felt the futility of opposing simply with the ineffective, traditional *non possumus*.

It remains for me to speak of the "conquest of Africa" on which, on the threshold of my Olympic career, I had been so keen and which in fact raised one of the most topical aspects of the colonial question.

The speech addressed to King Victor Emmanuel at the inaugural meeting of the IOC Session in the Capitol included this passage : "And perhaps it may appear premature to introduce the principle of sports competitions into a continent that is behind the times and among peoples still without elementary culture-and particularly presumptuous to expect this expansion to lead to a speeding up of the march of civilisation in these countries. Let us think however, for a moment, of what is troubling the African soul. Untapped forces-individual laziness and a sort of collective need for action-a thousand resentments, and a thousand jealousies of the white man and yet, at the same time, the wish to imitate him and thus share his privileges-the conflict between wishing to submit to discipline and to escape from it-and, in the midst of an innocent gentleness that is not without its charm, the sudden outburst of ancestral violence... these are just some of the features of these races to which the younger generation, which has in fact derived great benefit from sport, is turning its attention. Sport has hardened them. It has given them a healthy taste for muscular relaxation and a little of that reasonable fatalism possessed by energetic beings, once their efforts have been accomplished. But while sport builds up, it also calms down. Provided it remains accessory and does not become a goal in itself, it helps create order and clarify thought. Let us not hesitate therefore to help Africa join in. Delegates of the competent authorities have come here to discuss the matter with us..."

In fact, in addition to the Session of the IOC, there were meetings of a consultative commission which comprised, together with a representative of the Italian Minister for the Colonies, delegates from Algeria, Morocco, the Regency of Tunis and Colonel Sée, bearing a special message from Marshal Lyautey, at that time Resident General. Our Portuguese colleague, Count Penha-Garcia, had been delegated to represent his country. I shall not go into details concerning the discussions, but I will say right away, once and for all, what became of the project, so as not to have to return to it later : what became of it for the moment at least, for I am quite sure the plan will be taken up again. It comprised the

holding of “African Games” every other year, with a very simple programme to start with and which, naturally, would have been almost exclusively regional in character. I would like to have seen these Games reserved for the natives alone. It was preferred however to include competitions for colonials who had been in the country for at least two years. Admittedly, this point of view was quite understandable, but it complicated the proceedings at the start. The cities recognised capable of holding the first Games were Tunis, Rabat, Casablanca and Dakar for French Africa, Tripoli, Benghazi and Asmara for the Italian possessions, Libreville in the Belgian Congo, Luanda and Sumac for Portuguese Africa, Cape Town and Nairobi for South Africa. The mistake I made was to consider (and to reveal this idea to the IOC) the possibility of a more solemn, more magnificent inauguration to be held in Algiers in 1925. To start with, this decision was greeted favourably in Algeria and Mr. Th. Steeg, who was Governor General at the time, also showed his interest. But it very soon met with opposition which was all the more formidable as it lacked both direction and a centre. Those against it tried above all to waste time, to blunt good intentions. It was a question of perhaps personal but at any rate administrative rivalries. Eventually the inauguration had to be postponed till 1929 and Alexandria was substituted for Algiers. The preparations at the time were considerable ; a very fine stadium was built. Our colleague in Egypt, A.C. Bolanaki, threw himself into this scheme with a keenness and a generosity made even more effective by his competence which was recognised by all... At the *last moment*, an English political manoeuvre, in which France joined, rendered ineffective all the work done and King Fouad was left to inaugurate the fine stadium at Alexandria discreetly and on a purely local scale. I am unable to explain this rather annoying matter since, when it broke out, I had already ceased to be President of the IOC. But at the back of it all, there was the basic conflict, the struggle of the colonial spirit against the tendency to emancipate the natives, a tendency full of perils as far as the general staffs of the mother country were concerned. The arguments used would not have been without value... earlier on ; but they belonged to a past that was completely dead. It was a long time since they were applicable. The *Olympic Review* had dealt with the fine subject of “The role of sport in colonisation” in the number for January 1912. Twenty years later, I thought that opinion had evolved sufficiently to allow the idea to be put into effect ! It appeared that the time was not yet ripe. It must be getting nearer now and I remain convinced that before long, in spite of everything, sport will be organised throughout Africa but perhaps less well than if Europe had been clever enough to take over the running of the movement at the right moment.

At any rate there still remained the “African medal” placed annually at the disposal of heads of posts and missions... for the encouragement of sport. It would do for the moment—for want of anything better. It shows a black throwing a javelin and, on the other side, legible through some bamboo, a Latin inscription, since Africa is polyglot, for the colonials as well as for the natives : *Athletae proprium est se ipsum noscere, ducere et vincere*. To know, to govern and to master oneself—the eternal beauty of sport—is the fundamental aspiration of the true sportsman and the prerequisite for his success.

(to be continued)