

MIND THE GAP AN AUTHORITY IS CREATING. COUBERTIN AND THE OLYMPIC CONGRESS OF 1914

Mind the gap, creando una autoridad. Coubertin y el Congreso Olímpico de 1914

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Abstract

The Olympic Congress of 1914 took place in Paris immediately prior to World War I. It was to highlight Coubertin's standing in front of the President of France. While the formal celebrations were grandiose, the deliberations of the delegates about the future of the Games were a disaster for Coubertin, as he was utterly unprepared for these negotiations. He was confronted with the power of the newly founded international sports federations which wanted to have a decisive vote on their sports. Coubertin was even ready to resign on the question of women's participation in the Games. No complete Minutes of the Congress were ever published. Coubertin's description in his autobiography and the abridged version of the Proceedings after the Great War contain fakes which have not been questioned by the scholars of Olympic history because of the authority of Coubertin. Using newspaper records of the participants of various countries it is attempted to reconstruct what happened at the Congress.

Keywords: Pierre de Coubertin, Women's sports, Olympic Congress 1914, International sports federations.

Resumen

El Congreso Olímpico de 1914 se celebró en París inmediatamente antes de la Primera Guerra Mundial. Era para destacar la posición de Coubertin ante el Presidente de Francia. Aunque las celebraciones formales fueron grandiosas, las deliberaciones de los delegados sobre el futuro de los Juegos fueron un desastre para Coubertin, ya que no estaba preparado para estas negociaciones. Se enfrentó al poder de las recién creadas federaciones deportivas internacionales, que querían tener un voto decisivo sobre sus deportes. Coubertin estuvo incluso dispuesto a resignarse por la cuestión de la participación de las mujeres en los Juegos. Nunca se publicaron las actas completas del Congreso. La descripción de Coubertin en su autobiografía y la versión abreviada de las Actas después de la Gran Guerra contienen falsificaciones que no han sido cuestionadas por los estudiosos de la historia olímpica debido a la autoridad de Coubertin. Utilizando los registros de los periódicos de los participantes de varios países se intenta reconstruir lo que ocurrió en el Congreso.

Palabras clave: Pierre de Coubertin, Deporte femenino, Congreso Olímpico 1914, Federaciones deportivas internacionales.

From Donald Trump one could learn that Fake News, if spread by a person of authority, shared in the bubble of his/her followers, become truth. What has been analysed for our era of rapid electronic communication worked similarly in previous times. Pierre de Coubertin, the founder of the modern Olympics, is certainly the outmost authority on Olympism. Yet the Report he published about the Sixth Olympic Congress in Paris 1914 is a good example how difficult it can be to differentiate between news and fake news. I use here the term “fake news” in the sense of Gunnar Skirbekk: “Moreover the term ‘fake news’ seems to indicate not only that some claims are false (in some sense), but also that these truth-claims are made *deliberately and intentionally*.”¹ The IOC states on its website that the Congress helped in the clarification of the different roles of the IOC and the international sports federations, that it was the first technical congress, that the conditions for participation had been clarified.² This was certainly the case, but the details around such meagre description are worth to be investigated.

Although the history of the Olympic Games and the Olympic Congresses has been thoroughly researched, only limited aspects of the Congress have been dealt with, particularly the role of the sports federations and the selection of events. Coubertin has been almost entirely left out.³ It was taken for granted that his own description in his autobiography was correct. Is it next to blasphemy to question this form of structural amnesia? As late as 1977 the IOC published a distorted version of the proceedings of 1914.⁴

On June 13-14, 1914, the IOC met in Paris for its 17th Session combined with the celebration of the 20th anniversary of the IOC and the 6th Olympic Congress (“Unification of the Olympic Sport Programme and Conditions of Participation”, June 15-23). There was massive participation compared with other IOC meetings - 20 IOC-members and some 120 delegates representing 29 National Olympic committees (of a total of 32 that existed at the time).⁵

The participation rate was the highest up to that time. The newly founded *International Amateur Athletics Federation* (IAAF) held its first meeting shortly before in Lyons, France, and many IAAF delegates attended both proceedings. The participants were wined and dined on the 20th anniversary - mainly at the expense of Coubertin, who found only few sponsors to aid with financing the celebration.

The month of June 1914 marked the height of early twentieth century nationalism which led to the beginning of World War I. On June 28, the same day that many of the participants left for an excursion to Amiens, a Serbian assassin shot Archduke Franz Ferdinand, heir to the Austro-Hungarian throne, in Sarajevo. A month later the situation erupted into the First World War. It is not surprising that nationalism was also one of the key elements of the Olympic celebrations. Coubertin presented the newly created Olympic flag for the first time. As well, the Olympic oath entered the lexicon of Olympic dogma. Further, the question of an official Olympic scoring table, nation by nation, figured on the agenda.

Despite the large number of delegates and the importance of the decisions taken, the Official Report of the 1914 meetings was never published. A commission was appointed to assemble the official report in three languages (French, English, and German), the document to be presented at the sessions in Germany following the scheduled Berlin Olympic Games of 1916. Because of the Great War the commission never met. A short and distorted version of the proceedings was

¹ Gunnar Skirbekk, *Epistemic Challenges in a Modern World: From “fake news” and “post truth” to underlying epistemic challenges in science-based risk-societies* (Zürich: LIT, 2020), 6.

² <https://olympics.com/cio/congres-olympique-paris-1914>.

³ Karl Lennartz, “The Olympic Games and Politics, 1896 -1916,” in *Rethinking Matters Olympic: Investigations into the Socio-Cultural Study of the Modern Olympic Movement. Tenth International Symposium for Olympic Research*, ed. Robert K. Barney (London, Ont.: Western, 2010), 138-45. According to Lennartz no official minutes exists; Norbert Müller, “Coubertin and the Olympic Congresses. (Independent views)”, *Olympic Review* no. 167-168 (1981): 516-20; a more detailed reconstruction is in Arnd Krüger, “Forgotten Decisions: The IOC on the Eve of World War I”, *Olympika. The International Journal of Olympic Studies* 6 (1997): 85-98.

⁴ Pierre de Coubertin, “Olympic Memoirs. XV: the 20th anniversary of the Olympic Games (Paris 1914),” *Olympic Review* no. 121-122 (1977): 704-9.

⁵ IOC, ed., *The International Olympic Committee. One Hundred Years* (Lausanne: IOC, 1994). See also: Norbert Müller, *One Hundred Years of Olympic Congresses; 1894 - 1994* (Lausanne: IOC, 1994), 93-101.

published by Coubertin in a special brochure printed in November 1919.⁶ Had he published them in the *Revue Olympique*, the difference between fact and fiction would have been more obvious.

IOC members, International Sports Federation officials, and NOC delegates took part at the 1914 Congress. Why did Coubertin never try to publish the true proceedings of the sessions? What happened at the 1914 meetings? Were the decisions forgotten, or did Coubertin change IOC policy by himself during or after the War, thus nullifying many of the conclusions of Paris? Was the fake intentional or just erroneous by accident? I will not go into the details of the fourteen banquets held at the occasion, but they gave ample space for networking and for the development of an *esprit du corps* of Olympism. The following paper will instead try to reconstruct the decisions that were resolved in Paris and look for an explanation of the gap in the research about them. It will show how difficult it can be to reconstruct an event when the major source is fake. If the fake is produced by a person of trust, very often no attempt is even made to look deeper into the matter.

Reports

With the massive presence of newspaper journalists in attendance, a significant amount of information was published during and after the sessions. From a series of articles in the Australian sports journal *The Referee*, it becomes obvious that a French report existed which was translated into English.⁷ The German delegates also returned home with their own report - complete as far as deliberations on the Olympic Games of 1916 were concerned, as these were supposed to take place in Germany.⁸ Therefore, it would not have been all that difficult to publish something better than what Coubertin and the IOC eventually presented. So why present fake?

The IOC had already decided at its 14th session in Budapest in 1911 to organize the celebration of the twentieth anniversary in combination with the Sixth Olympic Congress in Paris. The Congress was partially designed to showcase Coubertin, who was still not fully recognised in his native France. The commission to prepare for Paris met for the first time in Basle (Switzerland) on March 28, 1912. Members of the preparatory commission were Coubertin, de Blonay (Switzerland), Courcy Laffan (Great Britain), von Venningen-Ullner (Germany), van Tuyll (Netherlands), and William Sloane (USA). The commission members made written proposals for the IOC session scheduled to take place at the Stockholm Olympics later that same year. In Stockholm the proposals were received by the IOC Session and dutifully approved.

In convening the Congress, the IOC encountered an unprecedented problem for which the selection of the preparatory commission proved to be utterly unsuitable: The National Olympic Committees (now 32) demanded a voice in the proceedings, and so did the international sports federations (now 10).⁹ The preparatory commission had very little to do with current problems faced by the organization and administration of modern competitive sports. It would have been suitable for most of the other Olympic Congresses which had featured philosophical or scientific questions of sports.

The National Olympic Committees wanted to discuss team selection, number of athletes per team and sport. The international sports federations were responsible for the rules of international sports, and they saw the necessity to fit the Olympic Games into their established schedules of national and international sporting championships. They also wanted to determine which of their disciplines were included in the Olympic Games – and which not. In many cases they also needed to discuss which rules were to be applied.

⁶ Ibid., *One Hundred Years*, 98; Otto Meyer, *A travers les anneaux olympiques* (Geneva: Cailler, 1960), 74ff.

⁷ *The Referee*, September 2, 1914, 6. Translated into English by Gordon Inglis (present at the Congress).

⁸ For an overview see Karl Lennartz, *Die VI. Olympischen Spiele, Berlin 1916* (Cologne: Barz & Beiendorf, 1978). Karl Lennartz also put the 1916 Games into the context of the building of the Olympic Stadium and the German press reports, "Die Olympischen Spiele Berlin 1916," *Stadion* 6 (1980): 229-50. William G. Durick, "Berlin 1916," in *Historical Dictionary of the Modern Olympic Movement*, eds. John E. Findling and Kimberly D. Pelle (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood, 1996), 47-53 give a short English language overview based mainly on the *New York Times*.

⁹ Gymnastics (as of 1881), rowing (1892), ice hockey (1892), ice skating (1892), cycling (1900), soccer (1904), shooting (1907), swimming (1908), track and field (1912), fencing (1913).

On the 17th of June the twentieth anniversary of the IOC was formally celebrated. On this occasion the President of the French Republic, Raymond Poincaré, paid an official visit to the Congress. Speaking to Poincaré, IOC members, thirty-two ambassadors whose countries had National Olympic Committees, almost two thousand guests, and the world press, Coubertin expounded on his Olympic credo.¹⁰ The guests of honour included, among others, the former French President, Emile Loubert, and General Michel, the military governor of Paris. When Raymond Poincaré entered the Foyer of the Sorbonne, the 2,000 guests started to sing the *La Marseillaise*, thus emphasizing the national pathos of the events. Coubertin's lecture on "Sport and Modern Society" can certainly be seen as a triumph for his political and educational life work. Coubertin firmly believed that sport played a role in international politics, that the countries which are best in sports were also the strongest. Coubertin explained that the people were indeed learning the great lesson of sport, that hatred without a battle was not worthy of a man, and that injury without hitting back was not at all honourable for a man. Sporting pacifism did not at all avoid battle, but simply made it possible to collaborate during the intervals which was indispensable for progress.¹¹

Thus spoke Coubertin, who answered his country's call to arms three weeks later. Coubertin could never be called a pacifist¹², but he seldom explained so well that for him sport stood for virility and the readiness to fight for one's own right and honour and that of one's country. This explains why Coubertin did little to suppress the nationalism that surrounded the Olympic Games from the very beginning. In fact, Coubertin encouraged it, through symbols and actions.

It should not be overlooked, however, that the connection between war and sport was widespread at the time. Carl Diem, then the newly appointed Secretary General of the Olympic Organizing Committee for the Berlin Games of 1916 (born in 1882 he was young enough to be eventually in the same position again in 1936¹³) was just as enthusiastic for the Olympic idea and its fighting spirit as was Coubertin. Diem explained: "...what is taking place here on behalf of the Olympic Games is in the best interest of the army itself... We know that we are not as much accepted abroad as we deserve. The knowledge of the importance of German economic life and industry, and of Germany's military power, has not spread fast enough. The Games of 1916 will be and are supposed to be a medium to convince the people of our worldwide importance."¹⁴

In spite of his personal triumph in front of the President of the Republic, Coubertin - who was chairing the sessions - was quite incapable of handling the proceedings when he, harbouring his own agenda, was personally involved. There were also difficulties in that formal procedures in handling a democratic meeting were quite different in the different countries present. The generally well-informed Italian sports daily *La Gazzetta dello Sport* even reported that Coubertin was slightly ill.¹⁵ Although Coubertin could read and write English, his ability to handle a trilingual (French, English, and German) session was severely hampered. Coubertin claimed in his memoirs that he had no difficulty to "run the show."¹⁶ But in reality, the opposite was most often the case. In addition, Coubertin's usual support, Frantz Reichel, who could speak German, in addition to French and English, was not confirmed as a member of the steering committee - which had only

¹⁰ Extensively in *Le Figaro*, June 18, 1914, 4 (by Frantz Reichel).

¹¹ Pierre de Coubertin, "Le sport et la société moderne," in *La Revue Hebdomadaire* 24 (June 20, 1914): 376-86; reprinted Idem, *Textes Choisis*, vol. 1 (Zürich: Weidmann, 1986), 612-9. (My translation).

¹² Arnd Krüger, "Coubertin and the Olympic Games as Symbols of Peace," in *Sport and Politics*, ed. Gerald Redmond (Champaign, Ill.: Human Kinetics, 1986), 193-200. There is much literature which distorts this part of the Olympic spirit and puts it into line with a straight-forward pacifism, see Andreas Höfer, *Der Olympische Friede*, (St Augustin: Academia, 1994).

¹³ For the connections, see Arnd Krüger, *Die Olympischen Spiele 1936 und die Weltmeinung: Ihre außenpolitische Bedeutung unter besonderer Berücksichtigung der USA* (Berlin: Bartels & Wernitz, 1972).

¹⁴ Carl Diem, "Aufgaben für 1916," *Fußball und Leichtathletik* 14 (1913): 465ff. For more detail in other countries see my "'The Olympic Spirit of the Modern World has given us a Symbol of World War': Sport and National Representation at the Eve of World War I," in *Sport et relations internationales*, eds., Pierre Arnauld and André Wahl, (Metz: Université, 1994), 47-64.

¹⁵ *La Gazzetta dello Sport*, June 17, 1914, 7:l.

¹⁶ Pierre de Coubertin, *Olympische Erinnerungen* (Frankfurt: Limpert, 1959), 147ff.

one representative per country. This capable sports editor of *Le Figaro*¹⁷ and Secretary General of the French Sports Federation (U.S.F.S.A., an office in which Coubertin had preceded him) had helped Coubertin on other occasions, but in Paris his task was to report daily for his newspaper.

The Austrian Prince Otto von Windisch-Grätz, as Prince the highest-ranking nobleman in the IOC, chaired the opening session. Coubertin (as IOC President), Professor Salle Louis Liard (Vice-Rector of the Sorbonne), and Count Eugenio Brunetta d'Usseaux (IOC Secretary General), all spoke at the rostrum. Liard opened the proceedings on behalf of the Sorbonne and Windisch-Grätz, responded with thanks on behalf of the IOC. Everything was run smoothly in French.¹⁸

National Representation

At the sessions the following morning the delegates elected a board for the meetings consisting of Coubertin (chair), Counselor Hornine (Germany), Sir Claude MacDonald (England), Col. Thompson (USA) and Count Clary (France) as vice-chairs. Auckenthaler (Switzerland) and Anspach (Belgium) were elected as Secretaries. This ensured that all interested groups and language areas were represented, with the two secretaries being tri lingual.

Which were the major decisions of the Congress, which differed from those published? The time before the Great War was a period ardent nationalism, reflected in the Olympic Games, in part, by the IOCs official medal tables to demonstrate the superiority of certain nations over others. These were still officially published by the IOC. After all, that was one of the reasons why the Olympic Games were organized the way they were.¹⁹ At the meetings in Paris, the IOC maintained these official medal tables, and much discussion went into their proper quantification. Which sports should be included - to assure that the organizing nation did not manipulate the total amount of medals that could be won?

It even was decided that the points won by an athlete later declared ineligible because of a breach in amateur status should be taken away from the country that the athlete represented. It also was decided that Olympic Games should not last longer than three weeks to ensure that the events would not be stretched out endlessly like in the Games of 1900 and 1904.²⁰

After the Olympic Games of Stockholm, *The Times* had argued: "There is also the consideration that the national reputation is more deeply involved than perhaps we care to recognize in the demonstration of our ability to hold our own against other nations in the Olympic contests... Whether we took the results very seriously ourselves or not it was widely advertised in other countries as evidence of England's decadence."²¹

In many countries money was channelled towards programs aimed at doing better in the Olympic Games of 1916 in Berlin than in the previous Games. Coubertin was aware of this and approved of it. Published in most German newspapers was the fact that the German government paid for the preparation of their athletes. The Swedes had invented the state amateur. All of their male athletes were called in for "military exercise" for up to six months, doing nothing but to prepare for the Olympics. Many countries around the world were eager to have an American professional coach.²²

Martin Berner, a Berlin journalist who had made a fact-finding tour through the United States, was even more direct: "The Olympic Games are a war, a real war. You can be sure that many

¹⁷ He wrote the reports for *Le Figaro*, 14 June 1914, 4; June 15, 3; June 17, 4; June 18, 4; June 19, 4; June 21, 4; June 22, 6.

¹⁸ *La Gazzetta dello Sport*, June 17, 1914, 7:1.

¹⁹ Arnd Krüger, "'Buying victories is positively degrading': The European Origins of Government Pursuit of National Prestige through Sports," *International Journal of the History of Sport* 12 no. 2 (1995): 201-18.

²⁰ *La Gazzetta dello Sport*, June 24, 1914, 7:1.

²¹ *The Times*, Editorial, August 18, 1913, 7:4.

²² Arnd Krüger, "'We are sure to have found the true reasons for American superiority in sports': The reciprocal relationship between the United States and Germany in physical culture and sport," in *Turnen and Sport: Cross-Cultural Exchange*, ed. Roland Naul (New York: Waxmann, 1991), 51-82.

participants are willing to offer - without hesitation - several years of their life for a victory of the fatherland.... The Olympic idea of the modern era has given us a symbol of world war, which does not show its military character very openly, but - for those who can read sports statistics - it gives enough insight into world ranking.”²³

In Paris, Coubertin’s Olympic geography was compromised. After a long and very emotional debate, the Congress voted explicitly that neither Bohemia nor Finland would compete as separate teams in Berlin.²⁴ Although the Berlin Organizing Committee had invited all acknowledged National Olympic Committees, including Finland and Bohemia, the Russian government had already taken action to ensure the Finns would win their medals for Russia, and not for their dukedom and Austria demanded the same for the Czechs.²⁵

The Congress also defined the rules for a change in an athlete’s nationality, a question particularly important for countries with colonies (such as Great Britain) and with a strong immigration policy. It was Coubertin’s handy man Frantz Reichel who came up with the compromise formula that an athlete who had represented one country in the Olympic Games cannot represent in subsequent Olympic Games a different country - unless the National Olympic Committee of the first country no longer exists.²⁶

The Congress also voted to limit the number of competitors a country might enter per event. While the United States and Germany preferred very large amounts of athletes, the Congress voted on very specific limits, sport by sport, limiting the amount considerably.²⁷ The Congress also approved the French proposal that there should be no limits set for the number of events an athlete might participate in.²⁸

The final event of the IOC session was an excursion to Reims. There, the Marquess de Polignac, later to become IOC-member and member of its Executive Board, had created a *Collège d’Athlètes*, a boarding school in which French athletes were fed, trained and prepared to participate in the Olympic Games. The athletes who could stay in Reims on full room and board free of charge, received expert coaching from the renowned expert George Hébert²⁹ in perfect training conditions. The purpose was explicitly to demonstrate French superiority in the Games. As the French government had been reluctant to invest public money into the preparation of its athletes, de Polignac provided industrial sponsorship. He had married into the *Pommerey* Champagne business, a business which was the main sponsor of champagne of the Congress, for the Collège and, of course, also of the final IOC-Session in Reims.³⁰ Eventually, the Greek Basil Zacharoff, who lived most of the year in Paris and was owner of the newspaper *Excelsior*, also donated 500,000 French francs (100,000 \$US at the time) for the preparation of the French team, the exact amount the French Olympic Committee had asked from the government.³¹ It becomes obvious that Coubertin and the IOC neither disapproved of industrial sponsorship, nor of the paid preparation of athletes for the benefit of national representation.

²³ Martin Berner, “Der olympische Gedanke in der Welt,” *Fußball und Leichtathletik*, 14(1913): 495-6.

²⁴ *The Referee*, June 24, 1914, 6; *La Gazzetta dello Sport*, June 17, 1914, 7:1.

²⁵ *The Referee*, June 10, 1914, 6.

²⁶ *The Referee*, June 24, 1914, 6.

²⁷ *La Gazzetta dello Sport*, June 24, 1914, 7:1.

²⁸ *La Gazzetta dello Sport*, June 17, 1914, 7:1.

²⁹ For Herbert’s role as coach, see Arnd Krüger, “The History of Middle and Long Distance Running in the nineteenth and twentieth century,” in *La Comune Eredità dello Sport in Europa*, eds. Angela Teja and Arnd Krüger (Rome: CONI, 1997), 117-24.

³⁰ Pierre de Coubertin. “Les fêtes olympiques de Reims”, *Revue Olympique* 14, (1914): 110-1.

³¹ *Deutsche Turn-Zeitung* 59 (1914): 614; New York Times, April 25, 1914, 16:8.

Women

It appears to me that the main reason why Coubertin resented the publication of an accurate Report was the question of the participation of women in the Games. The matter came up in the discussions relative to “points scored by countries.” This raised the question of the participation of women. The actual question put before the delegates was: “Ought women to be admitted taking part in the Olympic Games?” The matter was simple for Coubertin and the French: “It was not seemly for women to take part in open contests before the public.” The USA delegates were also against but gave no reason. They simply said that their country did not think women should be included, “because they might try to break records.”³²

But Coubertin had not considered the opposition of the delegates. Gordon Inglis (Australia) proposed and Cap. Wetherell (S. Africa) seconded, that women be permitted in lawn tennis, swimming, skating, and foils. For this they had the approval of all the British contingent present. They lobbied the German delegates, who agreed, if women’s gymnastics be included as a display - not for points. They also lobbied the Swedish delegates, who said that from practical experience they would not accept women’s fencing in public. So, foils were dropped. Coubertin had not expected the collection of so many opposing votes as he had discussed the matter only with the mighty James Sullivan of the AAU, who had agreed with him.³³

Inglis and Wetherell had formulated their proposal as an amendment to the original proposal made by Coubertin. The *Toronto Evening Telegram* ran the headline “Suffragettes in Sport: Women at Olympics.”³⁴ For all this, however, the vote really opened the door for women’s competition just a little bit.

But then the French brought up the question of women again, this time under the guise of nationalism and social Darwinism. If women were to participate, the French argued, should their medals have the same weight in the official medal table as the medals won by men. As swimming included five women’s events, tennis two and one mixed, skating one and one mixed, the problem was real. The ensuing debate was as passionate as the first time. But again, Coubertin lost, but this time the final vote was closer, 66-41.³⁵

Coubertin considered this a matter of such importance that he tried to raise the question a third time. He was willing to resign if he was outvoted and proposed in a fit of temper that the Australian Gordon Inglis should chair the meeting, and even the IOC itself, if the Congress so desired. But the conference would not follow him. It was explained to him that he should accept functional role differentiation. As IOC president he should accept the principles of majority rule; as President of the session, he should run the session according to the rules, while as President of the French Committee he might debate accordingly.

Rights of Sports Federations

The IOC lost some of its mandate rights to the international sports federations in 1914, which became responsible for the inclusion or non-inclusion of events on the sports program. Coubertin had pretty much lost sight of the purpose of the session and was thus told that he should not worry too much about women’s medals - as the federations would not include women’s events. This was, indeed, the case. Most federations did not want women events at that time. No singular sport federation jumped on the chance to include women when the events were discussed sport by sport.

³² *Sydney Morning Herald*, July 22, 1914, 11.

³³ For their otherwise difficult relationship see John A. Lucas, “Early Olympic Antagonists: Pierre de Coubertin vs. James E. Sullivan”, *Stadion* 3, (1977): 258-72.

³⁴ *Toronto Evening Telegram*, June 16, 1914, 14: 5.

³⁵ *La Gazzetta dello Sport*, June 17, 1914, p. 7: 1.

Coubertin was quite upset about the power of the federations which were about to spoil “his” Games. Was this why Coubertin referred to sport functionaries as the “leprosy” of sport?³⁶ Only over those sports that did not yet have an international federation, did the IOC maintain full control, and even in those cases, it passed control over to its own sub-committees (such as boxing) composed of members of the national Olympic committees interested in such a sport. This was to be discussed in detail in the following year.³⁷

There was, however, one major clash of interest between the international sports federations and the Berlin organizing committee. The German Turners extolled an exercise called *Turner Duo-Decathlon*, which included nine events of gymnastics with apparatus, as well as three track and field events. Turners also practised a Turner hexathlon, with four gymnastics and two track events. According to international rules, one international federation should be responsible for only one sport. The German Turner Federation (DT) was not part of the International Gymnastics Union, as the scope of Turnen in Germany was much larger, including as it did, mixed competitions in gymnastics and fencing, swimming, track and field, etc..

To have an opportunity to influence the Olympic program and thus achieve more medals had been one of the fine points that were discussed between the German Organizing Committee and the German government, which as we have seen, wanted as many medals as possible for its Olympic investment. The German Turners prevailed on the issue. Their point table was adopted, not the international one. Then, too, they were allowed to organize mixed competition. The IOC also accepted *Schlagball* (throwing a ball, a little smaller and lighter than a baseball for distance), *Faustball* (a ball game like volleyball, with a somewhat larger field hitting the ball with the fist), *Schleuderball* (hurling a ball with a leather string attached for distance), and *Korbball* (rules similar to basketball, but with no board and so few rebounds).³⁸

The question of Turner rules and the impact that they would have on German Olympic results had been one of the points raised by von Stein, the responsible civil servant in the Imperial Ministry of the Interior, when he was writing confidentially to get the support of the German Emperor: “Germany has not had a position in these international championships which it should have, considering the ability of its youth... We should do better as the *Deutsche Turnerschaft* has not taken part yet... As organizers we have the possibility to influence the rules according to German practice.”³⁹

On the other hand, the *International Cycling Federation* was sufficiently strong to exclude the German and Austrian game of bicycle polo, which the organizers tried to include into the Games. Just as in Stockholm, where every team had to use the Swedish army regulation rifle to participate in the shooting events, for the Berlin Games, the German rifle was to be used. This rule was considered a gross advantage for the host nation and was supposed to be cancelled in Olympics of 1920 when competitors were permitted to bring their own rifles.⁴⁰

Overall, the international federations insisted that their rules be followed. Similarly, too, that their judges be accepted as head judges. The IAAF decided, e.g., that for walking, the Australian rules be accepted as the international ones, and that the Australian Richard Coombes be invited by the Berlin organizers as head judge for the walking events.⁴¹ This may just have been another ploy to assure that IAAF board members had their way paid to the Games by the Olympic Organizing

³⁶ Yves-Pierre Boulogne, *La vie et l'oeuvre pédagogique de Pierre de Coubertin* (Ottawa: Leméac, 1975), 168.

³⁷ Proposed by France, seconded by England, to have such meetings in 1915. See *Sydney Morning Herald*, July 22, 1914, p. 11. The IOC Congress 1921 in Lausanne tackled these questions in great detail, see Pierre de Coubertin, “Olympic Memoirs. XVIII: the 1921 manoeuvre”. *Olympic Review* 125-126 (1978), 181-6.

³⁸ Karl Lennartz, *Die VI. Olympischen Spiele Berlin 1916* (Köln: Barz & Beienburg, 1978), 110.

³⁹ Denkschrift des Herrn Reichskanzlers an den Deutschen Kaiser, June 2, 1913, Bundesarchiv, Potsdam, 07.01. Reichskanzlers, Nationalfeste, pp. 24a (now on microfilm 1355).

⁴⁰ *Referee*, Sept. 2, 1914, p. 6.

⁴¹ *Referee*, July 15, 1914.

Committee, but it ensured that in sports which were difficult to judge, the best people would have been available in Berlin.

Again, it is doubtful whether Coubertin was aware of the implications for “his” Olympics as a result of legislation concerning the international sports federations. Twenty years prior he had warned the sports world of German *Turnen*, that the German gymnastics movement had its roots in warfare.⁴² But in Paris he seemed to be happy that the Berlin committee had a well-prepared plan in place for all the events, a plan which was only moderately changed at the IOC session.

In terms of amateur rules, the international federations also gained in strength. If an athlete was declared a professional in one sport, he was declared a professional for all sports. A reinstated amateur was not permitted at the Olympic Games, a fact that was particularly embarrassing for countries with a flourishing professional sport scene.⁴³ As this was a time when it was still possible for top athletes to be active on a high international level in more than one sport, it strengthened the power of the federations at the expense of the individual athlete.⁴⁴

Eventually, Coubertin refrained from pressing the point of women’s participation any further and let the French arguments be made mainly by M. Rosseau, his vice-president. The British proposal carried the day. Eventually, only four countries were against women’s medals, namely France, the USA, Turkey, and Japan.

Winter Games

It seems to have been forgotten by historians that the Olympic Winter Games were to be started on the *Feldberg* in the *Black Forest* in February 1916. As there were difficulties between the Winter Sports Federations and the IOC, the IOC stipulated that in each event six nations had to be represented in order to make the event an Olympic competition, and that any nation may not enter more than eight competitors per event.⁴⁵ Neither Coubertin nor the traditionalists approved of Winter Games. To them, Winter Games were obviously an invented tradition, having nothing to do with the classical Greek example.⁴⁶ But the Winter Games were good business from the beginning, a point which neither Coubertin nor the rest of the IOC could eventually ignore.⁴⁷

Conclusion

The IOC Session and Congress of 1914 took place at a turning point in the history of the Olympic Games. Coubertin, who went to war just as eagerly as the rest of his generation, came back a different person. When he went, he was the rich host of the IOC, paying for most of the proceedings and festivals out of his own pocket. When the war was over, his investment in high yielding Czarist bonds proved to be disastrous for his financial condition. After the Russian Revolution the Communist government did not honour the debts of the Czarist government. Coubertin was bankrupt for all practical purposes and had to live on a meagre pocket money allowance his wife provided. The “Artisan of French Energy” about whom his friend Ernest Seilière had written,⁴⁸ had to move to permanently to Lausanne because the city offered free housing while

⁴² Pierre de Coubertin, “Le rétablissement des Jeux Olympiques”, *La Revue de Paris*, 15 June 1894, 170-84.

⁴³ This was later used as justification for the denial of the Olympic gold medals in the 1912 decathlon and pentathlon of Jim Thorpe, see Kate Buford, *Native American Son: The Life and Sporting Legend of Jim Thorpe* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2010).

⁴⁴ *Gazzetta dello Sport*, June 17, 1914, p. 7:1.

⁴⁵ *Deutsche Turn-Zeitung* 59 (1914): 528.

⁴⁶ Arnd Krüger, “The History of the Olympic Winter Games: The Invention of a Tradition”, in *Winter Games - Warm Traditions*, eds. Matti Goksör, Gert von der Lippe, Kristen Mo (Oslo: Norsk Idrettshistorisk Vörening, 1996), 101-22. Of course, much of the modern Olympics is also very far from the ancient Games, but when inventing traditions, a certain recognisability must be kept in mind. See *The Invention of Tradition*, eds. Eric Hobsbawn and Stuart Ranger (Cambridge: CUP, 1983).

⁴⁷ For Coubertin’s view of the connection between sport beauty and money, see my “‘The masses are much more sensitive to the perfection of the whole than to any separate details’: The Influence of John Ruskin’s Political Economy on Pierre de Coubertin”, in *Olympika* 5 (1996): 25-44.

⁴⁸ Ernest Seilière, *Un Artisan d’ énergie française: Pierre de Coubertin* (Paris: H. Didier, 1917).

in Paris he could no longer afford to live. The status of Switzerland also guaranteed the neutrality of the IOC, thus safeguarding the Olympic Movement to some extent against the nationalism Coubertin himself had been so much a part of.⁴⁹ The IOC subsequently abolished the official national point tables and gave way in many instances to the organizing committees and the international sports federations. The IOC also allowed the Olympic Games to come under the influence of state governments, as well as private sponsorship in an infant form of what we observe only too well today.⁵⁰

The IOC Congress of 1914 tried to solve the problems of the future of the IOC. By the time the proceedings were partially published, it became obvious that the IOC itself was in the process of change, that the Congress of 1914 had been the last attempt to look at the future through the eyes of European nobility. During the Great War the lights went out in Europe. The result was a less splendid and much more democratic Europe, in civil life as in sports. The face of the IOC changed too, following the war the amount of nobility in the IOC drastically declined, reflecting the dramatic changes in early 20th Century Europe.⁵¹

The role of Coubertin as Chair of the meetings showed that he had difficulties adjusting to democratic procedures. The Anglo-Saxons with their democratic practices gave him a thorough lesson of which the publication of a full Report would have painfully reminded him. Historians of Olympism have followed Coubertin and did not go into detail in looking what took place. Such a gap in the historiography can best be explained as structural amnesia.⁵²

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⁴⁹ Marie-Thérèse Eyquem, *Pierre de Coubertin: L'épopée olympique* (Paris: Calmann-Lévy, 1966).

⁵⁰ Many of the decisions of the IOC were discussed and voted on for a second time at the 7th Olympic Congress ("The Role of the International Federations") in Lausanne, June 2-7, 1921. Here Sigfrid Edström, IAAF President, was already presiding and Coubertin maintained his influence in the commission headed by Frantz Reichel on the organization of Olympic Games.

⁵¹ Arnd Krüger, "Neo-Olympismus zwischen Nationalismus und Internationalismus," in *Geschichte der Leibesübungen*, ed. Horst Ueberhorst, vol. 3/1 (Berlin: Bartels & Wernitz, 1980), 522-568.

⁵² Gadi Algazi, "Forget Memory: Some Critical Remarks on Memory, Forgetting and History", in: *Damnatio in Memoriae: Deformation und Gegenkonstruktionen von Geschichte*, Sebastian Scholz, Gerald Schwedler and Kai-Michael Sprenger, (Köln: Böhlau, 2014), 25-34.

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