

Early Coubertin - Internationalism, Democracy and Peace



It was ten years after the Congress of Le Havre that Coubertin published his evaluation in the magazine *L'Education Physique*. Later the article became chapter 14 of his autobiographical *21 Years Sports Campaign*. The effect of sport on physical and character education were starting points of his English inspired movement, but both were not his urgent problem in 1897. Coubertin rather felt the need to stop any discussion about the international character of the olympic decisions within the IOC. Vikelas wanted a change after the first games in favour of international, although Greek, monarchial festivals. Behind Coubertin's avoiding strategy in Le Havre there was a fundamental political mission for peace education. Firstly: national sports as element of international games in any metropolis can be compared with civilised nations as prerequisites of international peace--this was his global view. Secondly: free citizens in a democratic government can be seen as athletes reaching out for gold in a fair struggle of sport--this was his ideal national view. Olympic sport could be a symbol and an emotional experience for these far reaching views.

What was Coubertin's olympic situation before and after Le Havre?

The decade after „Le Havre“ sees the IOC losing the control over the international Games. As a result, Coubertin's campaign book shows the turn from a French to an international movement. But the first Games had ended with a Greek law of olympic nationalisation and the 1906 Games seemed to fulfil that claim. The two republican World's Fairs, with endless and trivial sports programs, failed to present any unity of time, space and spirit. In writing down his Le Havre notes in 1907 he seemed to have totally lost the true international demand on the games - and the situation in 1897 had not been any better.

What interest did Coubertin show as a public writer in 1897?

A third of his articles in 1897 are written in English and published in American magazines. Even most of his French articles deal with the States or explain French politics to American readers. His Notes of a Parisian about French Royalists and Republicans show his sympathy for the American democracy, the Third French Republic and President

Carnot. His early English educational model is overlaid by the American model of both republican behaviour and democratic education. Coubertin's writings were peace efforts in the medium of universal history, which the contemporary Universal Peace Congresses proposed to teach instead of national war tales. For the adolescents of both sides of the ocean, mutual knowledge, understanding and respect are to be promoted. Therefore Couberin donated a Carnot Medal at the Universities of Berkeley and Palo Alto [San Francisco] and Tulane [New Orleans] for the students' annual debate on contemporary French politics.

What could The Olympic Games do in this context?

International Games could be full of emotional respect to others and other countries. The olympic contribution to peace is this emotional fire and glory. The adolescents should go through these feelings, just before they leave their universities and take over the leadership in their countries. At the end of his life, Coubertin calls the young adult „the spring of man“ renewing the world in an eternal rhythm of generations. But apart from strong olympic feelings they would need the intellectual view of universal history. The Olympics are symbol and myth of the rebirth of the world, they are not the rebirth itself. They stand for something else. That is why the athletes are not the central subjects of the Games, they stand for the ever needed renewing of civilised countries. Coubertin's religio athletae means religion of peace, which gives an orientation to athletes and true nationalism. That orientation towards democratic civilisation and peace between nations, from the heritage of the French revolution and the American constitution, are missions of the contemporary peace movement.

<p align="center">What were Coubertin's connections to the „friends of peace“?</p> <p align="center">1901 First Nobel Peace Prize HENRY DUNANT and FREDÉRIC PASSY</p>	
PASSY	COUBERTIN
<p>1888 Passy, Simon, Pratt: IPU</p> <p>1889 Paris World's Fair: IPU, UPC Coubertin reviews UPC v. Suttner: Lay down your arms</p> <p>1890 UPC London (Passy, Pratt): demilitarisation of physical education and of history in schools and Universities</p> <p>1891 UPC Rome: international annual students conferences on Peace in capital cities: contests in writing, art and sports (Pratt, Passy, Bonghi)</p>	<p>1888 Comité Jules Simon</p> <p>1889 Paris World's Fair: IPEC (Simon, Coubertin, Sloane, Balck, Kemény, Zubiaur)</p> <p>1890 WF Review: Exposition Athlétique US model for clean sport and republican education: Sloane, Roosevelt</p> <p>1891 YMCA-speech: Democratic and international tendency of „athletisme“ > Peace role of concours international de Sports Athlétique (no olympic term yet!)</p>

1894 IOC Congress/honor. Members: Passy, Pratt, Simon, Bonghi, v.Suttner

IPU	Interliamentary Union (Peace movement of national parliamentarians)
IPC	Universal Peace Congress (general civic peace movement)
IPEC	International Physical Education Congress of Coubertin
WF	World Fair
YMCA	Young Mens Christian Association (Parts)

Sloane and Roosevelt stand for the American educational model of amateur sport. In 1890, after Coubertin's visit to the US, Sloane writes about students' sports as an „*invaluable experience, which sense of responsibility to the public alone can give*“, in order to „*cultivate the sense of conduct in a most important class of young men*“. *Roosevelt* adds: „*Goodness and strength must go hand in hand if the Republic is to be preserved*“.

Conclusion

The modern Games begin with the spirit of republican nation building and internationalism. The nucleus for individual character education and international peace education is a rational mutual respect, reached through universal history and educational games.

The International Comité Pierre de Coubertin could deserve further merits in publishing relevant political writings of Coubertin, especially his orientation to America, to present not only the physical educator and the olympic organiser, but also the international political educator, the crucial background for the Games' demand for peace.