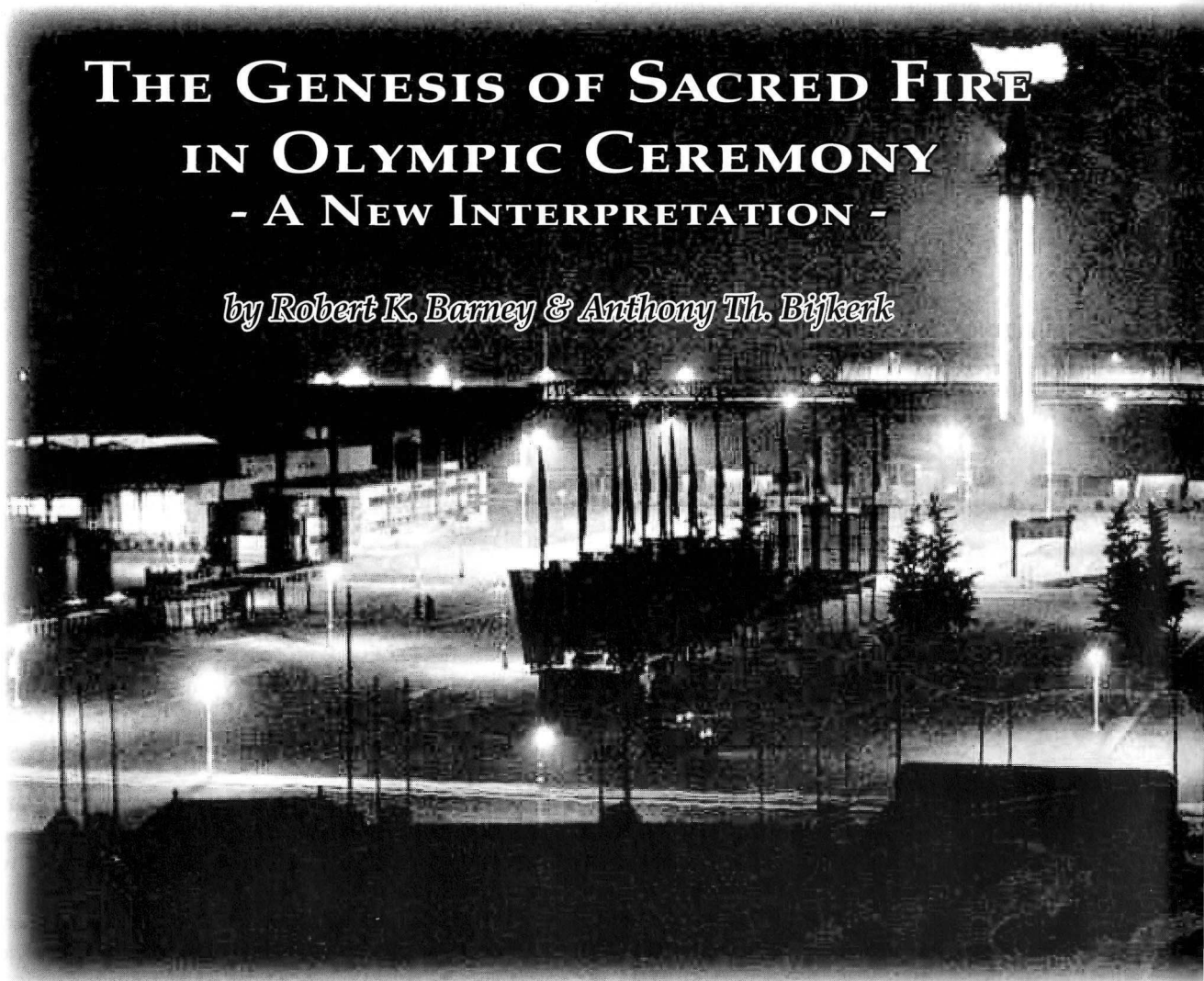


THE GENESIS OF SACRED FIRE IN OLYMPIC CEREMONY - A NEW INTERPRETATION -

by Robert K. Barney & Anthony Th. Bijkerk



Wils' Stadium,
Marathon Tower,
and Sacred Fire
Flame

In the striking world of contemporary sport, one can hardly argue against the fact that the Olympic Games present the most elaborate and glorious sport spectacle known to us in modern times, indeed, as the erudite Olympic anthropologist John MACALOON tells us, a spectacle par excellence.¹ Dwell for a moment on those things reflective of an Olympic festival experience: protracted rectangles of human action attendant to the Games - huge crowds streaming en masse towards stadium and event venues, hawkers of Olympic memorabilia, scalpers of Olympic events tickets, thousands of uniformed Olympic volunteers, masses of humanity clothed in costumes of every imaginable distinction, conversing in dozens of languages, all negotiating the environs of a city clothed in banners, pennants, and trappings of multiple hue and design. Watching all this on television nowadays from the near and far corners of the global village are almost four billion folks, nearly three quarters of the world's population.² Exciting? Absolutely, as anyone who has ever attended an Olympic Games, winter or summer, agrees - a once in lifetime experience!

A major part of the world's rapture with the Games is fascination with its celebratory rituals and institutions that normally unfold during the course of the great festival. A central component laden with pregnant on-site spectator and televi-

sion viewer expectation is the now universally-familiar Olympic protocol surrounding what the International Olympic Committee sometimes refers to as sacred fire. Indeed, of all the ceremonial rites surrounding an Olympic festival, the finale of the torch relay and subsequent lighting of the Olympic flame, consecrating all that subsequently unfolds over the course of the Games, are perhaps the epitome ritual events.³ Both episodes, the lighting of the flame and the preceding torch relay, are both now firmly institutionalized in Olympic Games protocol. The sacred fire, from its ignition in Olympia to its final resting place in the cauldron high above the Olympic stadium is, of course, a symbol that arouses an Olympian-like fervor for the Games and enlists an impressively-expanding world-wide television viewing audience for which even broadcast rights are now sold. Even many in the world who label themselves "Olympic cynics" are fascinated and "caught up" in the mystique of sacred fire events.⁴

Most Olympic historians and pundits today harbor the idea that sacred fire in Modern Olympic context sprang from the genius of Germany's Carl DIEM, whose idea it was to organize a torch relay that would bear a flame lit at Olympia, the site of the ancient Olympic Games, to the stadium-site in the modern global host city. Though much is known about him, a definitive biography of Carl



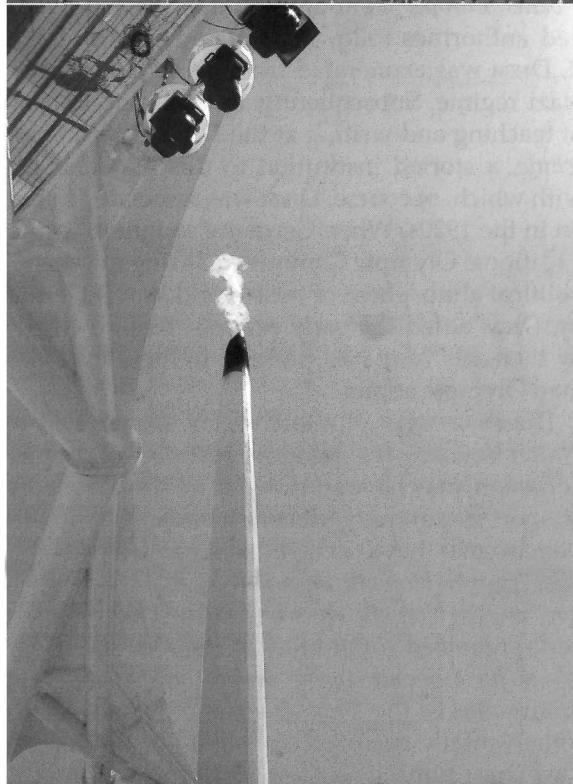
eventually became known as the *German National Sports University*, founded in Berlin in 1920 and re-established in Cologne following World War II. DIEM traveled widely, became a prolific lecturer and writer later in his life, and was often consulted on sport and Olympic matters, particularly in Europe. He served as Secretary General of the Organizing Committee for the Berlin Games, deservedly earning distinction for their intricate organization and flamboyant execution. Indeed, the Games, proved to be an event that demonstrated "the glory of a new Germany," a nation destined to lead, as DIEM himself put it, "a victory charge for



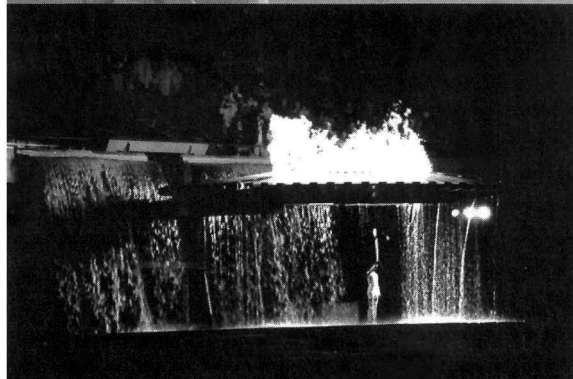
DIEM, athlete, educator, sport history scholar, and sport administrator during both Weimar Republic and Nazi regimes, has yet to be written.⁵ This is a pity, as Diem remains one of the most noted figures, if not the most noted figure, in German Olympic history. Born in 1882, he was an avid athlete as a young man. Denigrating the values of his country's powerful but archaic Turner Sport Movement, a "gymnastic-political" institution entrenched in the Fatherland for over a century, DIEM instead became a dedicated enthusiast and advocator of a German sporting movement parallel to those developing rapidly in fin de siècle Anglo-Saxon nations. DIEM'S formal education was limited to high school, and, even then, he did not finish. His "academic" life was interrupted when his father abandoned the DIEM family. A teenage Carl DIEM left school and subsequently worked as an apprentice, later a merchant, and, by 1906, an aspiring journalist. DIEM, a patriot of the first order, enlisted in the German army on 1 August 1914, the first day of The Great War. Ultimately, he served in Belgium and France until the armistice in 1918 brought the horrific conflict to an end. He was seriously wounded at St. Quentin, recovered, and fought courageously in the bitter battles of Champagne and the Argonne.⁶ Following the war, he pursued a career path in teaching and sport administration, rising rapidly to "prorektor" of what



Seoul Stadium
-1988



Sacred Fire
-Athens 2004



Sacred Fire
-Sydney 2000



Carl Diem
-ca. 1932

a better Europe."⁷ Though retained briefly by Allied authorities following the end of World War II, DIEM was exonerated from being a part of the Nazi regime. Subsequently he "retired" to a life of teaching and writing at the *Deutsche Sporthochschule*, a storied institution to this day, and one with which, of course, DIEM was associated in Berlin in the 1920s. When Germany sought to restore a National Olympic Committee during the chaotic political atmosphere of post-World War II Germany, DIEM aided the early process, though clearly, by then, his "day had passed" in high-level German Olympic affairs.

DIEM'S concept of a torch relay, we are told by Walter BORGERS, the definitive historian of the phenomenon, may have sprouted from his knowledge of sport in antiquity,⁸ where a somewhat similar exercise may have occurred at some festivals (but not at Olympia) in religious-ceremonial perspective, and by "on-site observation," in 1922, of a student-organized torch relay at the *Deutsche Hochschule für Leibesübungen*⁹ as part of the opening ceremonies of the *Deutsche Kampfspiele*, which, coincidentally, occurred on DIEM'S 40th birthday.¹⁰ Carl DIEM himself left few clues towards revealing what exactly brought him to his idea of constructing the now world-renowned torch relay. Given the lack of definitive written evidence, we challenge the conclusion of BORGERS. Rather than from those events described by BORGERS, we argue that a stronger and more precise interpretation is in order. Thus, we hypothesize that DIEM'S torch relay concept more likely evolved from events more contemporary with Germany's return to the Modern Olympic Movement in 1928 and Berlin's award, in May 1931, of the opportunity to host the Games of the XIth Olympiad.

Though the history of the torch relay is well known, far less is understood relative to the evolution of sacred fire in modern Olympic context. The question thus arises: where to begin - with DIEM'S torch relay, which is popularly held as the "genesis component" in the history of Olympic sacred fire; or with the stadium flame, a phenomenon far less perceived as the primary instrument in the history of Olympic fire than the torch? We select "the flame," or in this case, the first graphic appearance of an Olympic flame in a stadium context. There can be no other commencement point - all other Olympic sacred fire developments evolved from the flame's first appearance in 1928. This includes, we argue, DIEM'S inspiration for the torch relay, which, in effect, might be more appropriately called a "flame relay."¹¹

The progression of Olympic sacred fire rituals from flame to torch relay is a subject worthy of investigation, especially since the torch relay pioneer, Carl DIEM, remains glorified to this day, while the conceivers and practical innovators of sacred fire in Olympic context have passed through history's filter largely unnoticed. With that in mind, we place before you the names of two men from the Netherlands: Jan WILS, designer/architect of the 1928 Amsterdam Olympic stadium and conceiver of the original Olympic flame idea; and Johan WIENECKE, medallic artist and designer of the 1928 Olympic Games commemorative medal. As well, we bring to the reader's attention the special contribution made by the celebrated Greek archaeologist, Alexander PHILADELPHUS, author of the original idea to light Olympia's sacred fire from the rays of "a Greek sun at Olympia." Few who study and research Olympic history can confidently relate who even one of these three men was in the greater scheme of Olympic events, let alone all three. Yet each deserves a place directly beside Diem as members of a quartet of sacred fire founders. And finally, still another "ideas" individual played a role in the thought process leading to a concept of sacred fire in Olympic context. That person, it may surprise some to learn, was the grand renovateur himself, the Baron Pierre de COUBERTIN.

The Idea of Sacred Fire in Olympic Games

If, as MACALOON argues, the Olympic Games are "the closest approximation to a truly global ritual symbol system that humankind has yet generated"¹² then the Olympic flame and torch relay rituals stand as "pre-eminent rites within the pre-eminent symbols of world community" (although we should never underestimate *Nike* or *Coca-Cola* in this regard).¹³ Oddly enough, sacred fire ceremonial ritual symbols created in the first half-century of modern Olympic history, specifically, the Olympic flame and the torch relay, knew no parallels at the ancient Olympic Games at Olympia. Classical scholars of ancient Greek history are familiar with the red-figured 5th century B. C. vase painting scenes of naked runners handing torches to relay running col-

leagues. This episode in antiquity may have been associated with a relay running contest for boys and adults where team-members passed a lighted torch to each other in a race, the objective being to reach the sacred altar first and light the divine flame.¹⁴ In all probability the ancient "relay running" vase painting scenes, hundreds of which we have at our disposal to contemplate, are reflective of Athenian Panathenaic and other ancient Greek festival rituals. There is, however, no evidence to support the assumption made by some Greek Olympic historians and other romantically-inspired authors that the ancient Olympic Games in Olympia were the scene of an "Olympic Torch Run" or that the ancient Olympic precinct harbored a sacred altar from which an "Olympic flame" burned throughout the great festival proceedings.¹⁵ Nevertheless, in a notable recent publication, we hear a rhapsody in which J. LYNCH exclaims:

"During the quadrennial festival of Zeus when all of Greece gathered at the altis, competitors and spectators alike were drawn to the Olympic flame. It served as an unequivocal touchstone of their civilization's and their gods' permanence. It represented generation after generation of Greek youth in their athletic prime, an unbroken line stretching back into the mists of time to the semi-divine heroes from those who now stood before the flame drew their inspiration. Gallant champions came and went, city states rose and fell, and even the stoutest buildings crumbled to dust, but the flame burned on, providing hopes in times of hardship or hostilities that the spirit and ideals symbolized by the Olympics would never be extinguished".¹⁶

More authentic towards explaining sacred fire in ancient Greek contest, of course, is the Greek mythology that informs us that PROMETHEUS brought a spark of heavenly fire to earth as a symbol of reason and enlightenment, of freedom and creativity of progress underscored by the advancement of human-kind. And finally, MACALOON reflects on the context of "heavenly fire" in Modern Olympic Games ritual: "[...] the lighting of the sacred flame at Archaia Olympia and its relay to the 'New Olympia' are rites of separation from ordinary life, initiating a period of public liminality"¹⁷

Though fire in a sacred ritual context did not make its way into Olympic festival proceedings for more than three decades after the celebration in 1896 of the first modern Olympics, that first festival in Athens revealed to COUBERTIN the prospect of an association between flaming torches and the Games. Charalambos ANNINOS, in his eloquent first-hand account of a magnificent torch procession to close the end of the 7th day of the Games, relates: "At nine o'clock two bugle calls are heard [...] a procession commences (it literally stretches from Omonia Square up Stadiou Street to Syntagma Square) [...] ten thousand men [...] a fiery river of torches [...] a sight of magic phantasmagory [...] an illuminated flood of fire!"¹⁸ COUBERTIN witnessed all this, and more. We have no word from the Baron as to what impression it may have made on him, but some remnant memory of the event must have remained in his consciousness.

Sixteen years later, in his speech closing the Stockholm Games of the Vth Olympiad in 1912, COUBERTIN opened his remarks with the following:

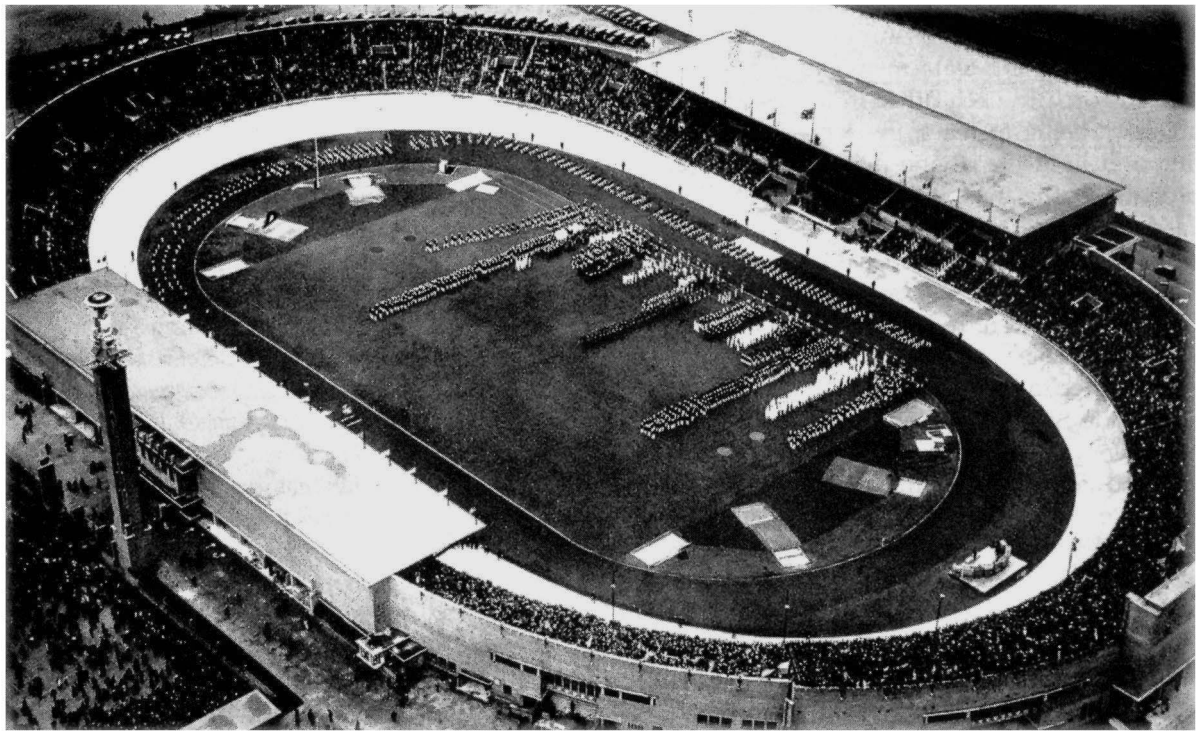
"And now, gentlemen, see how a great people [the Swedes] has, by our arrangement, received from your hands the Olympic flame and has undertaken to protect it and, if possible, enhance the radiance of the precious flame. A custom has been established that the last word spoken in the evening of the Olympic Games is to greet the dawn of the next Games."¹⁹

From this, one might grasp the concept of a flame lit to open Games and extinguished to close them, exactly the case in contemporary circumstance. But, of course, there was no Olympic flame in Stockholm. In fact, it took a further sixteen years of modern Olympic history for the Olympic Games to establish beyond simple words, a link with fire in sacred context. And, even then, the flame scene in the great Olympic stadium in Amsterdam in the summer of 1928 was without fanfare - no rite, no ritual, no ceremony.

A major thesis of this essay focuses on the prospect that the "on-site" memory of Olympic-associated events in Amsterdam in 1928 provided Carl DIEM'S "memory file" with its primary data towards eventually constructing the idea of an Olympic torch relay. After all, without a flame to light at the end of a torch relay, what reason could



Pierre de Coubertin
-ca. 1925



Opening Day
-Amsterdam
Stadium 1928

one argue for proposing a relay exercise at all? We do not denigrate the value of DIEM'S contribution to Olympic ritual. That contribution with regard to the torch relay has been deservedly recognized and celebrated. Not widely known, however, is the fact that the Olympic flame idea sprang from the mind of the Amsterdam stadium's designer, the celebrated Dutch architect Jan WILS, whose idea it was for an Olympic flame to rise from a cauldron located atop his stadium's "marathon tower."

On the afternoon of 28 July 1928, Carl DIEM, Chef de Mission of the first German Olympic team to participate in post-World War I Olympic Games, marched at the head of the German delegation into the Amsterdam Stadium for the opening ceremonies of the Games of the IXth Olympiad. The sight that greeted his gaze included some 35,000 spectators assembled in the stadium, an edifice dominated by WILS' marathon tower capped with cauldron. From the cauldron emerged history's first Olympic flame. No one person in the stadium that day of those who had previously attended an Olympic Games, including DIEM,²⁰ could have missed the significance of the altered atmosphere. Indeed, it was a landmark event, a "first" in modern Olympic history. In his final report following the conclusion of the Games, Frederick W. RUBIEN, Secretary of the American Olympic Committee, was moved to comment on the presence of sacred fire:

"[...] during the [Games] fire was lit in the marathon tower [...] to announce to all people of the world that peace, harmony and understanding must now reign, and thoughts of discord, discontent and misunderstanding must be put aside and that every one must concentrate on this as the attitude to be assumed."²¹

Jan Wils and the Olympic Flame Idea

The name Jan WILS is one of prominence in the history of Dutch architecture. WILS was well suited to execute the most important task in Amsterdam's preparation for the 1928 Olympic Games - designing and supervising the construction of the main stadium venue and its accompanying Olympic facility precinct. WILS was born in Alkmaar on 22 February 1891. His father owned and operated a construction contracting firm, exposing young WILS very early in his life to the intricacies of engineering and the building of various types of edifices. Almost from the start of his high school days in Alkmaar, he was convinced that his future lay in architecture. At the age of 18 he won his first competition in architecture. Following high school he studied architecture at the *Technical University* in Delft. His first professional experience was in the Municipal Planning Offices of the City of Alkmaar, where he worked for two years. Moving to The Hague, WILS secured a position as a draughtsman in the offices of the famous Dutch architect H. P. BERLAGE. There is little doubt that the influence of BERLAGE on WILS and his career was significant. In effect, BERLAGE was WILS' mentor, a fact that WILS himself proudly substantiated throughout his life.

In 1915, at age 25, WILS opened his own architecture firm in the city of Voorburg. WILS had little trouble in securing commissions, designing structures that ranged from villas for the rich to farmhouses for folks less wealthy. Shortly after opening his own business, WILS met Piet MONDRIAAN, the famous painter, as well as Vilmos HUSZAR and Theo van DOESBURG, co-founders of the periodical *De Stijl*, a journal that derived its name from the radically distinctive architectural movement of the 1920s.²² WILS was also an active author and



Jan Wils
-ca. 1928

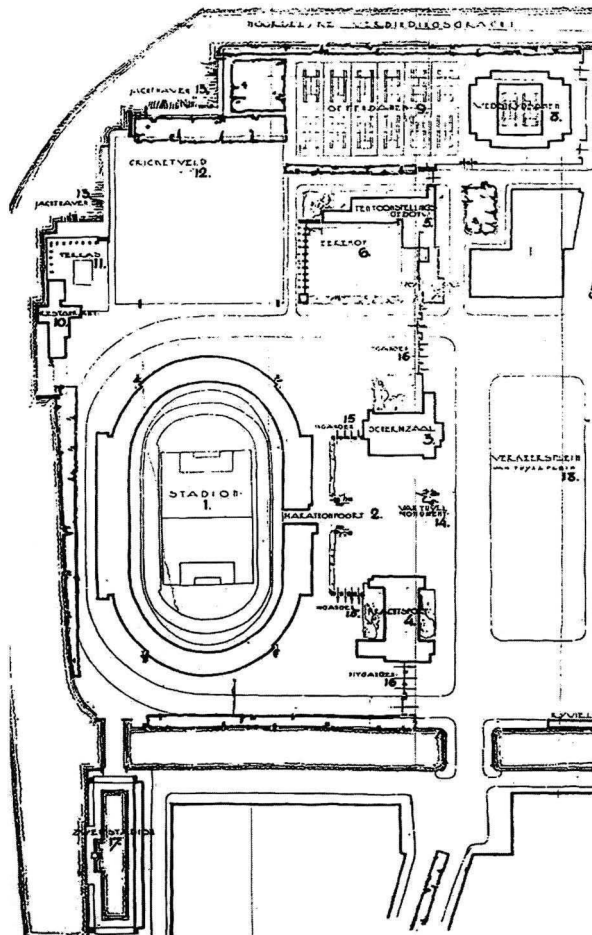
critic, writing in both *De Stijl* and *Wendingen*, the publication of the *Expressionist Amsterdam School*. Finally, WILS was a prominent member of The Hague's art circle.

Even though WILS left the *De Stijl* Movement in 1919, his most innovative works continued to be influenced by its principles. His complex of town houses built in Alkmaar in 1919, designed in accordance with *De Stijl* principles, a project that enlisted Vilmos HUSZAR as color consultant, constituted his first buildings to incorporate flat roofs. As WILS' stature in the profession of architecture grew, he was often referred to as "Frank Lloyd Wils," chiefly because his admiration for and sometimes imitation of the work and design style of Frank Lloyd WRIGHT, the world-famous American architect, was evident. Although, in fact, most of WILS' designs were too original to be judged "derivative," one of his earliest and most successful commissions, a housing development in Daal en Berg, built in The Hague in 1920, echoed designs by WRIGHT. In the early 1920s WILS' business experienced a quiescent period - commissions were scarce. Nevertheless, he developed several concepts during this period that would later buttress his eventual Olympic facility designs. Chief among them were designs featuring horizontal, flat roofed buildings with large steel-framed windows and detailed ornamentation. His later works, particularly those designed between 1925 and 1935 reflected the influence of functionalism. The eventual Amsterdam stadium design, with its heavy walled appearance, was an example, as were WILS' *Citroen Buildings* (built in Amsterdam in 1931 and 1959) and Cinema Theater (built in Amsterdam in 1935).

There was little activity in either building design or construction during World War II as the Netherlands suffered under German occupation. Most Dutch citizens struggled to survive, reduced to a daily food consumption of less than 1500 calories, in some cases as low as 900. Following the war, however, WILS became active in designing post-war construction projects, among the most prominent of which, were the Hotel *Bouwes* in Zandvoort (1952), and the *Chamber of Commerce* Building in The Hague (1956). Wils passed away in Voorburg on 11 February 1972.²³

Of inestimable importance to Jan WILS and his architectural designs for athletic facilities, was the fact that he himself was a keen athlete in his youth, particularly in the sports of yachting, fencing, rowing, and gymnastics. He remained an enthusiastic yachtsman for most of his life, not at all unusual for men and women of the sea-oriented Netherlands.

WILS' first brush with "matters Olympic" occurred in 1923. His visits to some of the leading cities in Europe, where he studied modern forms of "city-building," including provision for sports facilities, led him to write a book. *Gebouwen en Terreinen voor Gymnastiek, Spel en Sport*, co-authored with P. W. SCHARROO, was greeted with critical acclaim and translated into German. Pierre de COUBERTIN wrote a "foreword" for the book, a passage of which expressed the thought that it was important that architects should "[...] occupy themselves with the construction and architecture for buildings and sites intended to be used for gymnastics, play and sports [...] not in order to create impractical plans for ugly looking buildings with overlarge fronts, but rather to give athletes the buildings and sites which they need and to take into consideration the three major conditions with which such building and sites must cope: a careful technical layout, low costs, and an aesthetic and neat finishing appearance."²⁴ Peter SCHARROO, WILS' co-author, was a distinguished member of the Netherlands Olympic Committee (NOC), a member of the International Olympic Committee from 1924 to 1957 (member of the IOC Executive board from 1946 to 1953), for many years President of the Dutch Athletic Federation, and finally, Colonel in the Corps of Royal Engineers. From the publication of this important book sprang WILS' first steps on a five-year journey into the realm of the Modern Olympic Games. Chiefly because of SCHARROO'S influence, WILS' name and architecture reputation were placed before the attention of the Dutch NOC, which subsequently appointed him to represent the Netherlands on the International Jury for Architecture in the Arts Competitions associated with the Games of the VIIIth Olympiad in Paris in 1924. Actually, WILS became somewhat of a fixture on the international juries judging the architecture competitions at Olympic Games held in Europe. Beyond Paris in 1924, he served in Berlin 1936 (where he chaired the jury council), and London 1948.²⁵



Original
Amsterdam
Stadium
Design
-1925

In June 1921 Amsterdam was awarded the Olympic Games scheduled to be celebrated in 1928. WILS was eventually considered as a candidate to steer the design of Olympic facilities. Through SCHARROO, George van ROSSEM, Secretary-General of the Organizing Committee for the Amsterdam Games, became acquainted with WILS and his architecture capabilities. Following discourse between WILS and NOC officials, WILS convinced the Dutch organizing committee of the necessary requirements for an Olympic stadium and other supporting facilities needed to carry out the Olympic Games. Consequently, he was given sole responsibility for designing the necessary venues. By 1926 WILS had completed some 1200 technical drawings on which building contractors might base their construction calculations.²⁶

WILS' initial design of the Amsterdam Olympic stadium, a plan that sprang from his original concepts graphically presented in *Gebouwen en Terreinen voor Gymnastiek, Spel en Sport*, was completed in September 1925. One of the central features of the design was the stadium's entrance, dominated by a so-called "Marathon Gate," arranged between two towers of modest dimensions. The design presented a problem to WILS. A request presented to him by the Dutch NOC called for erecting a monument of noteworthy size dedicated to the Netherlands' most storied early Olympic figure, IOC member F. W. C. H. "Frits" van TUIJLL van SEROOSKERKEN, the first Dutch member of the IOC and initiator of Amsterdam's bid to host the 1928 Games. The monument's site, just outside the sta-

dium, was planned for a location adjacent to and slightly to the right side of the stadium's main entrance. With the monument in part superimposed against the entrance, WILS thought the resulting perspective to be unpleasant. To put it bluntly, it was in the way of entry and egress foot-traffic. The *Van Tuijll monument* would have to be relocated.

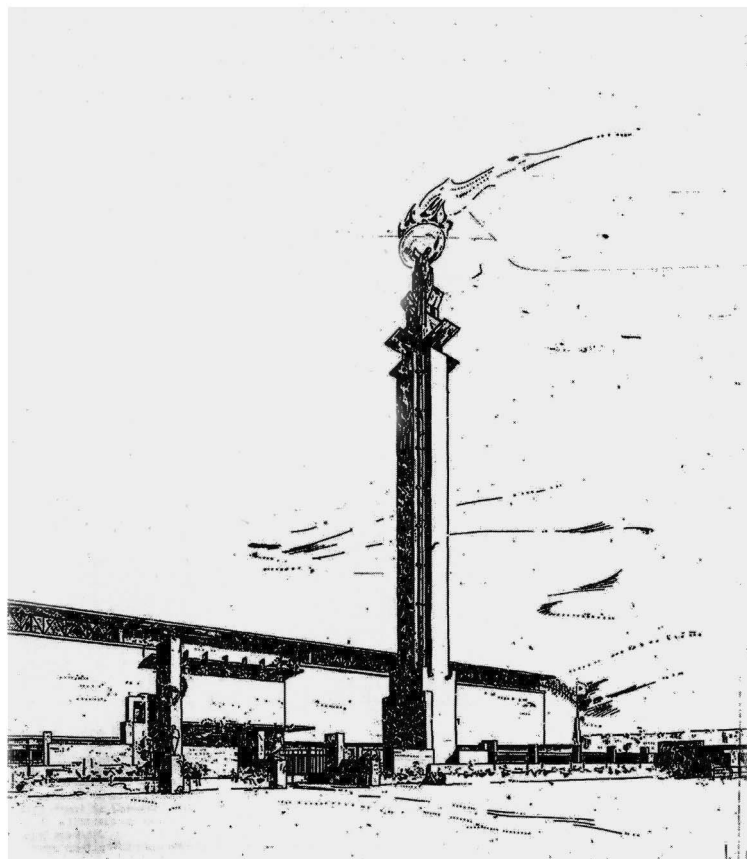
Several months later, as announced in the official NOC publication *De Olympiade* of 5 May 1926, Jan WILS presented a new plan, one featuring a modification that he hoped would solve the problem. The stadium's entrance was no longer dominated by his original plan's two modest twin towers. Rather, one great tower, a minaret-like concrete and brick structure, rose some 40 meters in height, featuring an imposing cauldron (3.5 meters in diameter) on its pinnacle, from which a searchlight lit up at night was designed to cast a giant beam heavenward into the darkness.²⁷ WILS' tower specifications featured an interior winding staircase that led from the base to the top. And the *Van Tuijll monument*? WILS moved it to a position out of the way of entrance and exit foot traffic, that is, well to the left of the "Marathon-Poort," as WILS termed the stadium's entrance.²⁸

In May 1926 the design of the Olympic stadium was approved by the City Council of Amsterdam. Immediately, the first steps were taken to invite tenders from building contractors. It was exactly at this point that Olympic history took a precise and noteworthy turn. On 30 June 1926 WILS returned to City Council and presented a slightly modified stadium tower design; one basic feature of his original plan had been altered. The large cauldron atop the tower no longer emitted a searchlight beam. Instead, a great flame, an Olympic flame, if you will, rose from the depths of the cauldron to cast its brilliance over the stadium. There is no doubt that the idea and the "new" sketch was the vision and work of WILS. He personally presided over even the smallest design and construction detail of the entire Olympic precinct. Indeed, his confirming signature appeared on the bottom right-hand margin of the new design.

Two vertical shafts of electric light were configured on each side of the tower itself, in such a way that the entire effect (tower and flame together) would appear at night as one continuous skyscraping pillar of light. Indeed, the finished result of this thinking was everything WILS had hoped it would be.²⁹

Wils' Stadium,
Marathon Tower,
and Sacred Fire
Flame





Jan Wils and Sacred Fire

But what of WILS and sacred fire? What was it about "light" and "fire" that captivated Jan WILS' imagination? There is nothing in WILS' "makeup" that tells us he harbored any knowledge of sport in ancient times, a legacy that may have led him to contemplate the place of "light" and "fire" in the ceremonial ritual of Greeks of yesteryear. Thus, we cannot, as in many cases, look to antiquity for sources of WILS' inspiration. We must, out of necessity, turn elsewhere. And so our attention is drawn to other components indelible in WILS' life that might have been of inspiration to him. Before turning to our major thesis in this regard, one important detail, largely overlooked in Olympic history, should be noted. Shortly following the 1921 award of the Games of the IXth Olympiad to Amsterdam, Dutch organizers weighed the formidable task of preparing for the great festival. In order to "inform" the IOC, the NOCs of "Olympic nations" world-wide, and interested "other parties" in the Netherlands and abroad on preparation matters as they unfolded, the *Netherlands Olympic Committee* began to publish a weekly "news-letter." Called *De Olympiade*, the first issue appeared in early July 1924, just three days before the Games of the VIIIth Olympiad opened in Paris. The second issue of *De Olympiade*, published on July 9th, featured two articles germane to our investigation. The first item of note appeared in the form of an article on "Sport and Architecture" by Jan WILS.³⁰ The second appeared in the form of an interview with Pierre de COUBERTIN, conducted by a popular Dutch journalist of the day, the cel-

ebrated Jan FEITH. FEITH'S quotation of a COUBERTIN statement during the interview, and his own comment on that statement are important to consider. Said the Baron near the end of the interview:

*"I [COUBERTIN] have talked with you about a symbolic Olympic torch, which will be handed over by the country where the games of an Olympiad were held, to the country where four years later the next games of an Olympiad will be organized. So, in this case France would be handing over the torch to The Netherlands, where in 1928 the IXth Olympiad will be held [...]"*³¹

FEITH, subsequently, closed his article with the statement:

*"An enthusiastic sportsman, who in all his plans for sport has been inspired by beauty; that has been the lifework of Baron Pierre de Coubertin. And that was also the core of the interview we had with him - ennoblement by sport, rapprochement of the sporting nations, sport and art, serving each other and with the symbol of the everlasting torch relay, the Olympic ideal taken by the one nation and handed over to the other."*³²

**Wils' Marathon
Tower Flame
Sketch -1926**

COUBERTIN, of course, never implemented his idea of an "Olympic torch" handed from country-to-country as each Olympic Games passed to the next. But, one must ponder that it was entirely possible, indeed probable, that both Jan WILS and Carl DIEM read the COUBERTIN/FEITH statements, WILS, because his own article abutted the FEITH interview with COUBERTIN; and DIEM, because the Dutch Olympic Games were the first for Germany since 1912 and Amsterdam "Olympic details" expressed in *De Olympiade* most certainly were followed closely by German sports officials.³³

But, it would take more than that probability to explain the possible inspirations present for shaping Jan WILS' historic Olympic stadium flame concept. More important than any other factor, we argue, is the fact that WILS was an active member of the *Order of Free Masons* for most of his adult life. He rose through the various degrees in the *Dutch Order of Free Masons*, a movement that, despite a clergy generally hostile to the institution, originated in the Netherlands as early as the first quarter of the 18th century. It flourished thereafter. More than any profession, Freemasonry appealed to the architect and the builder. Jan WILS was representative of both. One of the important and long-traditional aspects of Masonic life and celebration, to this day, is the use of light in ritualistic substance.

The word light has a number of meanings for Freemasons, which, when taken collectively, form a "network of meaning" expressing the breadth and depth of Freemason thinking.³⁴ When a new member becomes a Freemason he is "given the light" during the ceremony of initiation to the degree of Entered Apprentice. The three-branched



**Masonic Order
Candelabra and
Flame**

**Truth Frontis
Piece in Book of
Constitution (r)**

candelabra with flaming candles are fixtures in opening each lodge meeting, including Dutch freemason lodges.

To early Free Masons, light and darkness evoked "spirits of good" and "spirits of evil," light the benefactor, darkness the destroyer.³⁵ Indeed, a worship of light penetrated deeply into Masonic philosophy.

In Europe, at least, Free Masonry evolved from the "darkness" of medieval times into the "light" of the Age of Enlightenment. "Light

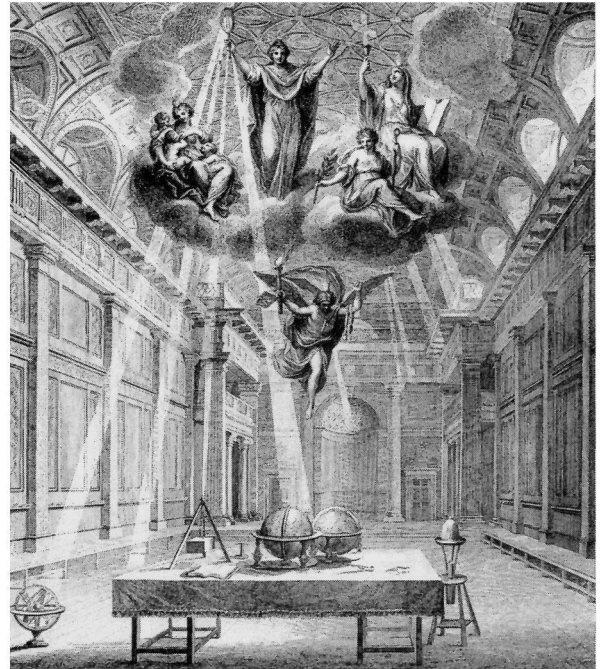
is everywhere the symbol of intelligence, information, knowledge, and truth as opposed to darkness which symbolizes ignorance and evil."³⁶ In Masonic ceremony, degree candidates are said to be brought from darkness to light. To prolong the point, light is "the source of goodness, darkness, which is the negation of light, was abhorred, hence arose the doctrine which prevailed among the ancients, that there were two antagonistic principles continually contending for the government of the world."³⁷ Further, a fundamental aspect of Free Masonry ritual is so-called "living fire," or "regenerative fire," as the sacred books sometimes referred to it, "a universal spirit permeating all nature, it is the essence and the vital spark of all that it animates, of all orders of beings, classes and races in which it is incarnated, and is profoundly modified by all through which it passes."³⁸

**de Heem's
Chalice with
Host**

For WILS, then, "regenerative fire" in Free Mason context, became his sacred fire in Olympic context. WILS would have been imbued with this and other fundamental ritual light symbols of Freemasonry as he made his way through the various degrees of the Order. When Jan WILS needed psychic stimulation for sacred fire in his Olympic stadium marathon tower design he had only to turn to his Freemasonry knowledge and experience. WILS' close association and harmony with light in Masonic ritual, we argue, fell on fertile ground and provided the final urge for his transfer of ideas from searchlight to cauldron flame atop his stadium marathon tower.

It will be remembered that WILS' original design called for a giant searchlight to cast its beam into the atmosphere above the stadium. Well known to Freemasons in the historical art and literature of the Order, of course, is the 1784 *Book of Constitutions*, the famous "frontispiece" of which

depicts Truth holding a mirror reflecting rays like searchlight beams that illuminate the interior of the Freemason Hall.³⁹



Did this well-known painting offer inspiration for WILS' original searchlight concept? We argue that it did. And, not to be lost in a scrutiny of the same scene, is the angelic, striding torchbearer carrying aloft a blazing torch (an Olympic torch?). Finally, in the transformation of WILS' thinking from searchlight beam to flaming cauldron, WILS might well have been inspired by the 1648 painting *Chalice with Host* painted by the celebrated 15th century Dutch artist Jan DAVIDS de HEEM, a work regularly appearing in Freemason literature to illustrate the commanding presence of light and fire in the metaphysics of Freemasonry.⁴⁰



Was WILS' stadium cauldron with flame, then, but a modern celebratory version of de HEEM'S *Chalice with Host*? We argue that it was. The connection between WILS' ideas pertinent to "light" and

"flame" and freemasonry ritual are too powerful to dismiss. In view of the fact, then, that the first appearance of sacred fire in Olympic context burned from Jan WILS' Olympic stadium marathon tower cauldron in 1928, and further, because there is most certainly no clue whatsoever that WILS was ever stimulated by any powerful imagery from the aura of antiquity, there is every bit as much credence to the possibility that Modern Olympic sacred fire evolves from Freemason imagery drawn from Medieval ritual rather than from anything related to antiquity that might have, as some have argued, stimulated DIEM before 1931.

Johan Wienecke and the 1928 Olympic Games Commemoration Medal

Aside from Jan WILS' Olympic flame atop the Marathon Tower that Carl DIEM observed in the Amsterdam Olympic Stadium in the summer of 1928, the venerable German Olympic official's "memory file" received a second "data entry" for stimulus towards his eventual torch relay idea. Beyond doubt, DIEM, as the Chef de Mission of the German Olympic delegation, was presented with one of the Amsterdam Olympic Organizing Committee's commemorative participation medals, given to all athletes, team and event officials, and selected dignitaries.⁴¹ Germane to our argument, the Participation Commemorative Medal, designed by Johan WIENECKE, featured qualities that surely meshed with DIEM'S observation of the stadium's Olympic flame, ultimately to produce in his mind's-eye, the fundamental structure of his eventual torch relay concept - a cauldron flame, a torch flame to light it, an athlete to convey the torch, indeed, a triumphal moment of opening.

Johan WIENECKE not only designed and crafted celebratory medals, he was also awarded them for his work. WIENECKE was born in 1872 in Heiligenstadt, Germany of Dutch parents. Though thus far WIENECKE has escaped the notice of a biographer, there have been small synopses composed of his life.⁴² At 16 years of age he matriculated at the *Quellinusschool* in Amsterdam, studying there until 1891, after which time he studied at the *Academie voor beeldende kunsten* in both Antwerp and in Brussels. In late 1895 he left Belgium for Paris, where he studied for a period of five years at the *Academie Libre Julian, Ecole des Beaux-Arts*, and the *Academie Libre Cola Rossi*. In Paris, too, WIENECKE studied for a time with Auguste PATEY, chief designer at the Paris Mint and guru of the medallic art genre of his era.⁴³ In 1900 WIENECKE returned to the Netherlands and became a member of the design staff at the Royal Mint of Utrecht, where he rapidly rose in the ranks to become the mint's chief engraver. Although many of WIENECKE'S early medal designs reflected the influence of his French schooling, particularly in his emulation of Louis Oscar ROTY'S rectangular portraits, he soon developed a style characterized by "very delicate modeling and symmetrical complex composition," qualities that reflected a Dutch medallic tradition

dating to the 17th Century.⁴⁴ WIENECKE debuted his distinctive style in 1906 in a medal commissioned by the *Syndicate of Sugar Manufacturers* in Java. This effort was soon followed by his commemorative medals for the birth of Princess JULIANA (1909) and the *Anonymous Society of Blaauwhoedenveen* (1910). In the years following he designed many plaques and commemorative medals; they can be seen on the pages of various catalogs published to illustrate the history of medallic art in the Netherlands. Among his more notable design works was the "famous" Dutch five cents piece, which was an uncharacteristically square object, a design that endured on Dutch coinage until after World War II. Among other celebrated early design masterpiece works attributed to WIENECKE was a medallion of pure gold commissioned by Queen WILHELMINA for presentation to Tsar NICHOLAS of Russia. WIENECKE received many awards and distinctions during his career, among them a silver medal of distinction awarded at the *St. Louis Louisiana Purchase World's Fair Exposition* in 1904. In 1907 Queen WILHELMINA made him a Knight in the *Order of Oranje-Nassau*.



Johan Wienecke - ca 1930

We return to WIENECKE'S 1928 Olympic Games Commemorative Medal design. First, WIENECKE'S relationship with his superiors at the Royal Mint was at times testy. Though the Amsterdam Olympic Games Organizing Committee, in the end, awarded the contract for the production of the gold, silver, and bronze medals for the Olympic competitions to the Royal Mint, Johan WIENECKE was "passed over" for executing the design. Instead, the Italian artist Giuseppe CASSIOLI was commissioned.⁴⁵ The contract for the bronze commemoration medals, however, was won on a lower bid than that of the Royal Mint by the firm *Gerritsen & Van Kempen* in Zeist, which, in turn, commissioned WIENECKE to execute the design.⁴⁶

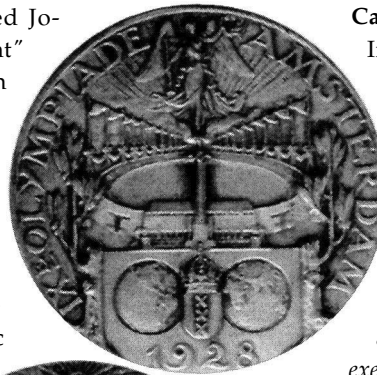
Consider, for a moment, the distinct properties representing the ideas featured on WIENECKE'S medal. On the "reverse" of the medal, one can behold a relief of what is undoubtedly WILS' stadium design, complete with marathon tower and Olympic flame. From the flame rises a winged goddess NIKE, who in turn raises in exultation symbolic trophies of ancient Greek sporting victory - olive wreath and palm frond. The "obverse" of the medal depicts two nude athletes, male and female, standing on a podium. Between them stands an altar, upon which a cauldron is arranged. From the cauldron rises sacred fire in the form of an Olympic flame. The two athletes jointly hold aloft a blazing "Olympic torch."⁴⁷ The "moment" is, of all things, triumphal. This particular "medal moment," is the first time in Olympic medal history that a torch theme appeared. Prior to 1928 the wreath was the most common medallic art theme.

What guides, then, might have inspired Johan WIENECKE to create a "torch moment" on the obverse of his commemoration medal design? There is little doubt that he must have surveyed the past history (graphic designs) of Olympic medals, 1896 to 1924. In none would he be led to consider a torch theme in his design. Prior to 1928 the torch was absent from Olympic medallic art; the dominant theme reflected on Olympic medals was the wreath, or victory garland. There is, however, one exception. Not really "Olympic" in context, the "obverse" of the 1900 Paris Exposition Commemoration Medal, given en masse to Exposition participants and dignitaries, reflected a nude youth representing the twentieth century taking a torch from a sleeping woman representing the nineteenth century. That design was the work of the celebrated and renowned Louis Oscar ROTY, contemporary and friend of Jules-Clement CHAPLAIN who Pierre de COUBERTIN commissioned to design the "first-ever" Olympic winner's medal, in effect, the one bestowed on Olympic champions in Athens 1896.⁴⁸ As noted earlier, Louis Oscar ROTY had a pronounced influence on the early work of Johan WIENECKE.

The triumphal sacred fire moment on the 1928 Commemoration Medal could not have escaped DIEM'S scrutiny. He could not have missed its symbolism - sacred fire in the context of stadium cauldron and flame, athletes triumphantly raising a blazing torch after having lit the cauldron flame. Most assuredly, nothing, neither DIEM'S knowledge of ancient Greek sport history, whatever it might have been at the time,⁴⁹ nor his witness of a student torch relay through the streets of Berlin in 1922, could have been more indelible than the Dutch stadium and medal scenarios towards helping him in the germination of his eventual torch relay idea.



Louis Oscar Roty's 1900 Paris Exposition Commemoration Medal



Carl Diem and His Torch Relay

In one of the most elaborate publications on the history of the Olympic Flame,⁵⁰ Conrado DURANTEZ dismisses the 1928 Olympic flame event as "assuredly local [...] without international cooperation or participation."⁵¹ Further, DURANTEZ perpetuates DIEM as the father of the "practical execution and aesthetic dimension of both lighting the Olympic flame and its conveyance . . . with admirable precision and perfection." Astoundingly not once in his long and romanticized treatment of the history of the Olympic flame (195 pages) does DURANTEZ note the names and contributions of the pioneers from whom DIEM most certainly drew for his conceptual design of sacred fire in Olympic Games.

The first concrete evidence of DIEM'S idea to create a torch relay is gleaned from the guestbook of his friend Walther F. KLEFFEL. We are told by Walter BORGERS that on 25 August 1931, just three months following the IOC's award to Berlin of the XIth Olympiad Games, discussion between the two old friends on the subject of a proposed torch relay prompted KLEFFEL to enter a notation next to DIEM'S signature: "On the birthday of a new plan [...] *Olympis Fackellauf*."⁵² The 1928 Amsterdam Olympics, of course, were still fresh in DIEM'S memory. Torch relay planning events occurred rapidly after that initial notation. Jan WILS' Olympic flame idea, without IOC sanction, was replicated in the huge Los Angeles Memorial Coliseum when the Games of the Xth Olympiad opened on 30 July 1932.⁵³ Carl DIEM was present there to witness the sacred fire a second time. In every subsequent Olympic Games, summer and winter, WILS' Olympic flame concept has been celebrated.⁵⁴

In the early summer of 1933, DIEM'S torch relay idea was laid before both the Baron Pierre de COUBERTIN and Count Henri BAILLET-LATOUR, at the time the immediate past and current presidents of the IOC, respectively. Each was receptive. In Athens in the late spring of 1934 the IOC met on a variety of Olympic matters, including arrangement for the 1936 Games scheduled for Berlin.⁵⁵ It was there in Athens that DIEM'S torch relay concept was introduced to the IOC assembly by Theodore LEWALD, the senior German IOC member. The idea was approved. DIEM immediately set to work on the particulars. Between translating his torch relay idea into practical logistics and his duties as Secretary General of the Berlin Organizing Committee, DIEM was indeed a busy man.

Alexander Philadelphus and the Lighting of Sacred Fire

Despite DIEM'S planning, there remained an important tactical consideration, one which DIEM himself had yet to consider - under what circumstance should the sacred fire be kindled at Olympia before being sent on its way to Berlin by a succession of torch runners? A simple lighting by "mechanical means" was far too mundane for such an historic event. To the rescue came a Greek idea. The subject of a torch relay certainly appealed to Greeks; knowledge of its impending possibility for the 1936 Games was known to many following the Athens IOC meetings in 1934, including Greek Olympic officials, classical historians, and archaeologists. One such archaeologist was Alexander PHILADELPHUS, distinguished writer on Ancient Greece,⁵⁶ noted excavator at Nicopolis, Corinth, Hermione, Mycenae, Athens and elsewhere, and director, at one time or another, of the *National Museum*, the *Acropolis Museum*, and the *Epidaurus Museum*. To the knowledge and wisdom of Alexander PHILADELPHUS must be attributed the idea for the solution to DIEM'S dilemma surrounding a "lighting the flame" ceremony.

Alexander PHILADELPHUS was born in 1866 of an old and distinguished Greek family of education and intellectual interests. With a gift for and interest in graphic arts, PHILADELPHUS attended the *Academy of Fine Arts* in Munich. Eventually, he returned to Greece and earned a degree in archaeology from the University of Athens. He then undertook further studies at the Universities of Rome and Paris. His career of over fifty years in archaeology gained him international distinction and acclaim. Besides being named to the Greek distinctions Knight of the *Royal Order of the Savior* and Knight Commander of the *Royal Order of George I*, several nations bestowed awards on him for his achievements (Bulgaria, Romania, France, The Netherlands, and Spain).⁵⁷

Eleven days prior to the opening of the Berlin Games, the Greek newspaper *I Proia* of 19 July 1936 reported on an *Athens Rotary Club* luncheon



Alexander Philadelphus
-ca. 1920

meeting at the *Semiramis Hotel* in suburban Kifisia, held the previous day (July 18). It was a gala event, attended by Greek Rotarians, "ladies of distinction," government officials, press representatives, and Greek intellectuals, including PHILADELPHUS. From *I Proia*, we learn that the head of the Athens Press Agency, Vassilios VEKIARELLIS, rose in the gathering to relate to all in attendance, "the world-wide interest brought about by the travel [to Berlin] of the Olympic Flame from the sun at Olympia," and further, to honor the man behind the idea of the flame's historic ignition ritual.⁵⁸ VEKIARELLIS proceeded to relate the pertinent circumstances surrounding the PHILADELPHUS vision. The previous year (1935), the *Athens Rotary Club* had entertained a German Rotarian visitor, "former Minister Rile," a member of the Berlin Games Organizing Committee.⁵⁹ During the German's visit, PHILADELPHUS, a Rotarian member, indeed a former Athens Rotarian president, met with RILE over lunch and proposed that the torch relay flame should not be lit by "mechanical means," but rather from the rays of the sun, "from Apollo, the God of light himself" According to ancient texts, argued PHILADELPHUS, the "communal flame" that burned at ancient Olympia, if ever extinguished, must be created anew, not by introducing flame transported from elsewhere, but by conveying rays of the sun through a concave reflector "in the shape of an isosceles triangle whose rim converged towards the center."⁶⁰ The reflection produced rarefied air beneath the concave surface, which in turn ignited the tinder placed there.⁶¹ When RILE returned to Germany and presented PHILADELPHUS' idea to "Chancellor Hitler," it was "gladly accepted."⁶² RILE telegraphed the good news to the *Athens Rotary Club*.⁶³ The torch relay flame-lighting ceremony occurred at precisely 12:00 noon on 20 July 1936 with much of the pomp and circumstance that one sees surrounding the event in



The Original Torch Lighting at Olympia

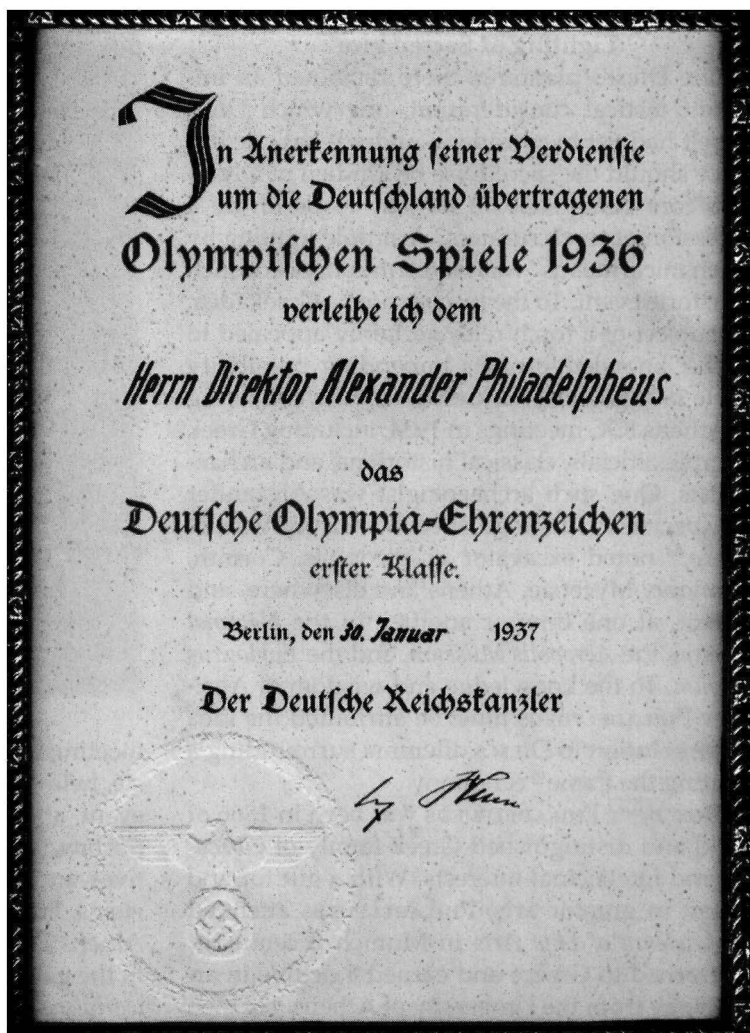
contemporary times, including, of course, the climactic ignition along the lines of the PHILADELPHUS idea. Following the ceremonial lighting, the flame commenced its journey to Berlin. And so it came to be, Olympiad after Olympiad - Greek "actor maidens" clad in chitons, igniting sacred fire and launching a series of relay participants bearing torches along a pathway extending from the sacred precinct of Olympia to the Olympic stadium in the host city

There remains a footnote to the Alexander PHILADELPHUS saga. Following the Berlin Games, a grateful German government awarded PHILADELPHUS the *Deutsche Olympia Ehrenzeichen* (German Olympic Order). Bestowed on individuals who made contributions to what the Reich considered to be the huge success of the Games, the Order was granted in three classes - first, second, and third rank. Alexander PHILADELPHUS' German Olympic Order, signed by the Fuhrer himself, was of first class merit.⁶⁴ The distinction carried with it the award of a handsomely crafted medal of distinct quality, the most prominent

Philadelphus' German Olympic Order Certificate

Philadelphus' German Olympic Order Medal - First Class

features of which were the Olympic five ring logo, the German eagle, and the familiar Nazi swastika symbol.⁶⁵ There is some question surrounding the actual presentation to PHILADELPHUS of the Ehrenzeichen medal. In September 1936, hardly three weeks after the conclusion of the Berlin Olympic festival, PHILADELPHUS was visited in his office at the National Museum (he was Director of the Museum at the time)⁶⁶ by a delegation of German dignitaries. They included Joseph and Magda GOEBBELS, who need no identification, and Theodore KORDT, Consul General (Geschäftstrager) in the Athenian German Embassy.⁶⁷ Above the GOEBBELS entry - "Dr. Goebbels, und Magda Goebbels" - in PHILADELPHUS' guestbook appeared (in GOEBBELS' handwriting) the short notation: "*nach einer grossen Stunde*" ("on the occasion of a great event").⁶⁸ Was this visit the occasion of the medal presentation? We think it undoubtedly was.⁶⁹ PHILADELPHUS' recognized contribution, the rank of the delegation, and the timing of these events, do not seem inconsequential. Ironically, PHILADELPHUS had little time to savor the distinction. In a little over two years time he was led to digest the devastating events of Germany's Blitzkrieg into Poland, and eventually, into



most countries of Europe, including the Balkans and Greece itself. By 1939 PHILADELPHUS was led to exclaim:

*"Alas, the ever burning Flame of the Olympic Games shone but for a few days before the wondering eyes of the civilized world. What a dream that was! Praise piled upon German and Hitler assumed vivine proportions in the International Press. The dream though was short-lived! Only a few years had passed since those glorious days that lifted Germany to the heavens, when Hitler, who had bathed in the eternal Olympic light, felt the instincts of his barbarian ancestors stirring deep inside him. He instantly dropped the Olympic torch, grasped a brand carved from the Black Forest instead, and lit it from the blood-stained altar of Votan and Ertha, the pagan Gods of the Huns. In a mad frenzy he rushes forward threatening to reduce the world to ashes."*⁷⁰

Conclusion

If, in effect, the first written inkling we have of Carl DIEM'S plan for the transfer of sacred fire from Olympia to Berlin via a torch relay lies buried in the notation of his visit to Walther KLEFFEL in late

August 1931, then we must, out of necessity, work backwards historically from that event. Surely, the idea could not have occurred to him by way of a so-called immaculate conception. No, DIEM had to be struck by events experienced prior to the KLEFFEL record. Thus, we have for our cerebral contemplation, in order of their occurrence:

- (1) the 1922 torch relay run "staged by students of the *Deutsche Hochschule für Leibesübungen*, which, as BORGERS tells us, commemorated DIEM'S "40th birthday and simultaneously the beginning of the *Deutsche Kampfspiele*;"
- (2) Pierre de COUBERTIN'S statement in 1924 of "passing an Olympic torch" from host city to host city, and Jan WILS' allusion to COUBERTIN'S idea as "a torch relay"
- (3) Jan WILS' 1928 Amsterdam "landmark" Olympic stadium flame, which, of course, Carl DIEM observed on site;
- (4) Johann WIENECKE'S 1928 Amsterdam Olympic Games commemorative medal, which, as Chef de Mission of the German team, DIEM most assuredly received; and
- (5) the award of the 1936 Games to Berlin by the IOC in the spring of 1931.

It would logically seem, then, that the concept of mounting a torch relay would never have occurred to DIEM if Berlin had not been awarded the Games of the XIth Olympiad. The award stimulated his conceptual juices, so to speak. Just as important to DIEM was the fact that WILS' Olympic flame pro-

vided him with a fundamental *raison d'être* for his torch relay concept. We argue that it is entirely unlikely that DIEM would ever have harbored his idea for the torch relay without a necessary and fitting climax to occur, the lighting of sacred fire. Bearing the flame along its journey, of course, a succession of torches. And so there they were, squarely in the center of his mind's eye. What could be more vision-inducing - WILS' Olympic stadium with marathon tower and flame, and WIENECKE'S commemorative medal with two athletic figures holding aloft between them a blazing torch? "I will light my flame at Olympia," DIEM reflected, "and my athletes will bear that flame to Berlin, where the sacred fire will burn resplendently in the stadium, sanctifying the glorious occasion of the Reich's celebration of the XIth Olympiad Games." DIEM, of course, never put that thought into words, but that which one leaves unsaid but nevertheless thinks is the grist by which much of history is interpreted. We argue that the final form of DIEM'S sacred fire torch relay was in large measure a product of his "Olympian muses," those being, Jan WILS, Johannes WIENECKE, Alexander PHILADELPHUS, and, yes, even Pierre de COUBERTIN himself. Finally, and with particular respect to the 1928 Amsterdam festival, DIEM'S last "live" Olympic Games experience before the formalization of his torch relay idea, a final notation is in order. Carl DIEM appeared before Queen WILHELMINA at the closing ceremonies on the evening of August 12th to collect the Olympic medals won by German athletes no longer resident in the Olympic precinct. Illuminated against the night



**Carl Diem
accepts German
awards from
Queen
Wilhelmina
at 1928 Closing
Ceremonies**



sky in brilliant perspective presided a new and glorious symbol, Olympic sacred fire. Immediately prior to the final closing celebratory rituals - a trumpet fanfare, lowering the Olympic flag to the accompaniment of a five-gun salute, and a cantata sung by a massed choir - IOC President Count Henri de BAILLET-LATOUR enunciated a message of farewell. The record indicates that BAILLET-LATOUR'S proclamation was not missed DIEM. In effect, it provided a punctuation mark data entry to his 1928 memory bank experience:



IOC President
Count Henri de
Baillet-Latour
-ca. 1928

"An nom du Comité International Olympique après avoir offert à Sa Majesté la Reine et au peuple hollandaise, aux autorités de la ville d'Amsterdam et aux organisateurs des Jeux le tribut de notre profonde gratitude, nous proclamons la clôture des concours de la IXe Olympiade et, selon la tradition, nous convions la jeunesse de tous les pays à s'assembler dans quatre ans à Los Angeles pour célébrer avec nous les Jeux de la Xe Olympiade. Puissent-ils se dérouler dans

l'allégresse et la concorde et puisse de la sorte le flambeau Olympique poursuivre sa course à travers les âges pour le bien d'une humanité toujours plus ardente, plus courageuse et plus pure [...]"⁷¹

Endnotes

- ¹ MACALOON, John J., "Olympic Games and the Theory of Spectacle in Modern Societies," in: MACALOON, John J. (ed.) *Rite, Drama, Festival: Rehearsals Toward a Theory of Cultural Performance*, Philadelphia 1984, p. 252.
- ² This figure, at least as announced by Jacques Rogge, IOC President, is reported in 'Athens Smashes World TV Records,' <sportbusiness.com>, 16 November 2004.
- ³ According to Henri POURET, former Laureate of the *French Academy*, Pierre de COUBERTIN, one year before his death in 1937, sent a message to the athletes participating at the Berlin Games: "[...] And you, Athletes, remember the flame which lit by the rays of the sun has come

from Olympia in order to light and warn our epoch [...] Keep the sacred flame burning." See Henry POURET, "The Olympic Flame," in: *Proceedings of the Fifteenth Session of the International Olympic Academy*, Athens 1976, p. 123. Indeed, POURET claims, that the flame, at least to COUBERTIN, represented the union of the ancient sanctuary of Olympia with the host city of the Games "[...] it was the link between the Ancients and the Moderns and the Youth of the world."

⁴ Pertinent to the Summer Games in 2004, more Olympic torchbearers took part in the process of relaying the flame from Olympia, on an "around-the-world" journey through all five of the "Olympic ring" continents, eventually to arrive in Athens, than the number of athletes who actually competed in the sports events of the Games (about 11,000 torchbearers vs. approximately 10,500 athletes). For more on this, see ABRAHAMSON, Alan, "Allure of the Flame: Appeal of Olympic relay, arriving today in L. A., is linked to 'spirit of humanity,'" in: *Los Angeles Times* (16 June 2004).

⁵ According to Karl LENNARTZ, Head of the *Carl and Liselott Diem-Archives at the German Sport university Cologne*, some 90,000 letters; 18,000 pages of DIEM'S diaries; several thousand pages of minutes of meetings of sport, Olympic, and university organizations; and 3,000 manuscripts of DIEM'S published and unpublished material are but part of this important research repository. There is little doubt that there is most probably more primary research material on Carl DIEM than any other sport figure of which we are aware. Despite this, a definitive biography has never been written, mainly, according to LENNARTZ, because the mass of material is simply too overwhelming.

⁶ See DANIELS, George C., *The Olympic Century: V and VI Olympiads, Stockholm - The Inter-Allied Games*, Vol. 6, Los Angeles 2000, p. 99.

⁷ The phrase and feeling were enunciated by DIEM shortly following Germany's Blitzkrieg into France in the spring of 1940. See DIEM, Carl, "The Battle Charge Through France," in: *Reichssportsblatt* [Official sports organ of the Nazi Party], June 1940. Reprinted in Volume 1 of DIEM'S three volume *Olympische Flamme*, Berlin 1942, pp. 127-129, as cited by MANDELL, Richard D., "Carl Diem on Sport and War," in: *Canadian Journal of History of Sport and Physical Education* 5 (May 1974)1, p. 13.

⁸ DIEM'S breadth of knowledge of sport in antiquity is unclear before the late summer of 1931, the first date of written evidence surrounding his torch relay idea. According to BORGERS, DIEM'S knowledge was buttressed greatly later, after Berlin was awarded the Games of the 11th Olympiad, by the work of the noted archaeologist, Alfred SCHIFF, a Jew who rapidly fell out of favor when the National Socialists came to power. DIEM employed Schiff after 1933 "to do smaller jobs for the Organizing Committee [...] until August 1936." In fact, BORGERS notes that SCHIFF, in preparing material for large exhibitions, amassed volumes of written material pertinent to sport in antiquity, in which "vague" records of ancient torch relays appeared. See BORGERS, Walter, *Olympic Torch Relays: 1936-1994*, Kassel 1996, pp. 20-22. DIEM eventually wrote one of the first and most authoritative world histories of sport. Even today, that mammoth work remains a classic. See DIEM, Carl, *Weltgeschichte des Sports und der Leibeserziehung*, Stuttgart 1960. It contains 1216 pages. Plate #133 (Fackel Staffellauf) of DIEM'S book displays one of the more familiar vase painting scenes of naked Greek runners of antiquity passing the torch (p. 167). As well, DIEM'S book also displays a group of youthful runners seemingly being counseled by an official who is himself holding a torch aloft (plate #133, p. 168). But, this evidence of DIEM'S knowledge of sport in antiquity comes well after the earliest evidence of his torch relay idea.

⁹ Literally, German National Sports Institute.
¹⁰ The *Deutsche Kampfspiele*, so-called "German National Games," were designed to fill the void caused by Germany's temporary disqualification from Olym-

pic Games participation following its defeat in World War I. Excluded from the Antwerp Games in 1920 and those in Paris in 1924, Germany returned to Olympic participation in 1928 at the Games of the 9th Olympiad in Amsterdam. BORGERS tells us that the opening ceremonies of the Kampfspiele included a torch relay. See BORGERS, p. 16.

¹¹ The idea that the relay might be better called a "flame relay" is not ours. It is advanced by Athanassios KRITSINELIS, current director of matters concerning the technical lighting of the Olympic flame in Olympia at the start of its journey to the host city. KRITSINELIS presents an exemplary historical examination of the ceremony surrounding the Olympic flame's lighting in Olympia. His argument, passionately rendered, is that if the Modern Olympic Movement is to remain "true to history and respectful of tradition and truth," then the name of the exercise should be changed to "flame relay," because, in fact, it is "the flame that is carried from torch to torch" to the final lighting of the stadium cauldron flame. KRITSINELIS interprets the torch as simply a conveyance prop in the prime scenario of the entire exercise. See KRITSINELIS, Athanassios, "Lighting Ceremony of the Olympic Flame: Technical Specifications of the Olympic Torch Relay," in: *Proceedings of the Thirty-Sixth Session of the International Olympic Academy*, Athens 1998, p. 149.

¹² MACALOON, John J., "La Pitada Olympica: Puerto Rico, International Sport, and the Constitution of Politics," in: BRUNER E. (ed.), *Text, Play, and Story: The Construction and Reconstruction of Self and Society*, Washington, D.C. 1984, pp. 315-316.

¹³ SEGRAVE, Jeffrey O./BARNEY, Robert K., "From Ritual Invention to Ritual Entrepreneurship," in: *Stadion. International Journal of the History of Sport* 29(2003), p. 326.

¹⁴ PHILOSTRATUS (translated and annotated by Rachael ROBINSON) refers to the origin of the stade race in the ancient Olympic Games: "The one stade race was invented thus: when the people of Elis were making the appointed sacrifice the offering was laid upon the sacred altar but fire was not for the moment applied to it. Runners were lined up a stated way from the altar and a priest, torch in hand, took his stand in front of it as umpire; the one who ran to the altar first lighted the fire, and departed as an Olympic victor." See ROBINSON, R., *Sources for the History of Greek Athletics*, Cincinnati 1955, p. 214. No doubt, torch races in antiquity may have evolved from such stade race incidents, but not at Olympia where there were never any of record.

¹⁵ It would appear that some Greek historians (and followers of their mould from other parts of the world), have romantically transmogrified the fire that burned in the *prytaneion* (see endnote #16) or on the altars where sacrificial offerings were dedicated, towards becoming, instead, a fancified ancient Olympic flame, prompting us to "hearken back," falsely, to Olympia for *sacred fire* models to apply in modern context. For a recent example of this: "[...] the allegorical aspect of the ancient Olympic torch run was pictured as a race of life [...]" (underline ours), see TZACHRISTA, Vassiliki, "The Olympic Torch Run," in: KOULOURI, Christina (ed.), *Archives and History of the Hellenic Olympic Committee* Athens 2002, p. 106.

¹¹ LYNCH, J., *The Ancient Olympiads & Bridges to the Modern Era*, (The Olympic Century Series; Vol. 1), Los Angeles 2000, p. 58. LYNCH seems oblivious of the fact that at Olympia no "Olympic flame," per se, burned. What definitely did burn at Olympia was a flame similar to those that burned in most villages, towns, and cities in Greece, an "eternal flame" on a hearth dedicated to HESTIA. The hearth was housed in a public building called a *prytaneion*, a sort of "town hall" which served as a meeting place, library, public dining hall, and archival record storage facility. The practice of the "eternal flame" may extend back to prehistoric times when communal groups maintained one fire that was never extinguished, a fire from which individual house-

hold hearths might be kindled. For more on this, see CAMP, John M., *The Archaeology of Athens*, New Haven 2001, p. 27. We are grateful to Classics Professor Nigel CROWTHER of the University of Western Ontario for bringing this source to our attention.

See MACALOON, *Rite, Drama, Festival*, p. 252.

¹⁸ See COUBERTIN, P. de/ PHILEMON, T./POLITIS, N./ANNINOS, C., *The Olympic Games of 1896*, Athens 1896, p. 149-150. This volume stands as the Official Report of the Modern Era's first Olympic Games.

¹⁹ In its original French: "Et maintenant, Messieurs, voici qu'un grand peuple a, par notre entremise, recu de vos mains le flambeau des Olympiades et s'est engage par la a en preserver et, si possible, a en aviver la flamme precieuse. Une coutume s'est etablie que la derniere parole dite au soir des Jeux Olympiques fut pour saluer l'aurore de Jeux suivants [...]" As cited by MALLON, Bill/WIDLUND, Ture, *The 1912 Olympic Games*, Jefferson, North Carolina 2002, p.25. Underlines and parentheses ours.

²⁰ DIEM first attended Olympic Games in Stockholm in 1912. But, in fact, as a journalist, he also was present at the so-called Intercalary Games in Athens in 1906. By the eve of World War I DIEM'S stock in German sports matters had advanced to the point where he was named "Generalsekretar" of Berlin's Olympic Games planned for 1916. For a condensed, "time line" treatment of DIEM'S career, appointments, and accomplishments, see LENNARTZ, Karl/ BUSCHMANN, Jurgen/WINTER, Michael (eds.), "Leben und Werk Carl Diems," in: *40 Jahre Carl und Liselott Diem-Archiv*, Koln 2004, pp. 8-10.

²¹ See RUBIEN, Frederick W., "Ninth Olympiad: Report of the Secretary" in: *American Olympic Committee Report: Ninth Olympic Games, Amsterdam, Holland, 1928*, p. 29. RUBIEN, of course, like many, demonstrated some confusion between the terms "Olympic Games" and "Olympiad." He was incorrect in naming the Dutch Games the "Ninth Olympic Games;" they were, instead, the "Eighth" in the sequence of Modern Olympic Games celebrated since the first rendition in 1896. The 1928 Games, however, are correctly called the Games of the Ninth Olympiad. Cause for this confusion rests in the fact that the Games of the Sixth Olympiad scheduled for Berlin in 1916 were cancelled due to the global events surrounding World War I.

²² One of the goals of the *Stijl* movement was to establish a working collaboration between painters and architects, a collaboration that Wils himself consistently put into practice. For example, van Doesburg acted as color consultant for Wils in his design of De Lange House built in Alkmaar in 1917, and his Hotel De Dubbele Sleutel built in 1918. See *The Grove Dictionary of Art*: <www.groveart.com>.

²³ For biographical information on the life and career of Jan Wils, see *De Olympiade* (Newsletter of the Dutch Organizing Committee for the 1928 Olympic Games), No. 33, February 1926 (in English); *De Olympiade*, No. 45, May 1926 (in Dutch); and *The Grove Dictionary of Art*: < www.groveart.com>.

²⁴ See "Foreword," in: SCHARROO, P. W./WILS, Jan, *Gebouwen en Terreinen voor Gymnastiek, Spel en Sport: Handleiding voor den Bouw, den Aanleg en de inrichting*, Amsterdam 1925.

²⁵ For confirmation of WILS' membership on Olympic Games International Juries for Architecture, see Richard STANTON'S admirable study of the history of Olympic art contests: *The Forgotten Olympic Art Competitions*, Victoria, British Columbia 2000, p. 83 (Paris), p. 176 (Berlin), p. 198 (London). See also, KRAMER, Bernhard, *Die Olympischen Kunstwettbewerb - Von 1912 bis 1948 - Ergebnisse einer Spurensuche*, Weimar, Germany 2004, p. 103 (1924), p. 171 (1936), p. 200 (1948).

²⁶ See addendum to the Official Magazine *De Olympiade*, Number 33, February 10, 1926 with an article in four languages on "The Architect of the New Stadium at Amsterdam, Jan Wils."

²⁷ WILS' marathon tower design, the "essence-symbol" of the 1928 Amsterdam Olympic stadium, very quickly was replicated in design plans for other European sta-

diums built in Montevideo (1930), Florence (1932), Turin (1933), Bordeaux (1938), and La Coruna (1944). See TUMMERS, T./SORGEDRAGER, B., *Het Olympische Stadion*, Amsterdam 2000, p. 29.

When the landmark 1928 Amsterdam Olympic stadium was renovated in the 1990s, the *Van Tuijll Monument* was relocated to a position directly in front of the tower. On WILS' original design (September 1925) the terminology "Marathon-Poort" for the stadium's entrance obviously extended from the fact that in the crowning event of the Games, the marathon athletes exited the stadium at that point, and later, entered through the gate into the stadium to begin the final phase of the race to the finish line.

In effect, during the proceedings of the Amsterdam Games, the flame, except for special occasions (closing ceremonies and photographic purposes), burned in the stadium only during the daytime when the opening ceremonies and athletic events were occurring. Each morning and evening (except for those "special occasions" noted above), two Amsterdam "city energy department" employees mounted the Marathon tower's internal staircases to ignite and extinguish Olympic history's first sacred fire.

WILS, Jan, "Sport en de Bouwkunst" [Sport and Architecture], in: *De Olympiade* (July 9, 1924)2, p. 3

Ibid., FEITH, Jan, "Een Onderhoud met Baron De Coubertin" [A Conversation with Baron De Coubertin], p. 2. Parentheses and underlines ours.

Ibid. p. 2. underlines ours.

The question of Germany's return to the Modern Olympic Movement after World War I was first raised at the IOC Session held in Rome in 1923. The decision taken at that time was that Germany "May not participate 1924; No IOC member to be elected yet; Matter to be discussed 1925." See "Minutes of the 21st IOC Session, Rome, 7-12 April 1923" - Volume I, edited and annotated by Wolf LYBERG, Lausanne undated, p. 112. Germany gained "defacto" readmission to the Olympic Movement with the cooption of Theodor LEWALD to the IOC in 1925. See "Minutes of the 23rd IOC Session, Prague, 26-28 May 1925" - Volume I, edited and annotated by Wolf LYBERG, Lausanne undated, p. 123.

See BERESNIAK, Daniel, *Symbols of Freemasonry*, New York 2000, p. 40.

See REBOLD, Emmanuel, *A General History of Free Masonry in Europe*, Cincinnati 1868, p. 28. For a brief evolutionary history of Free Masonry in the Netherlands, see pp. 123-128.

COIL, Henry Wilson, *Coil's Masonic Encyclopedia*, New York 1961, p. 375.

MACKEY, Albert G., *Encyclopedia of Freemasonry*, Chicago 1909, p. 594.

Ibid., pp. 31-32.

This well known "Allegorical Plate," drawn by G. B. CIPRIANI and P. SANDBY and engraved by F. BARTOLOZZI, can be seen in MCNULTY, W. Kirk, *Freemasonry: A Journey Through Ritual and Symbol*, London 1991, p. 46.

Ibid., p. 43. Despite the prominence given to de HEEM'S 1648 *Chalice with Host* in Freemason halls and ritual, de HEEM himself appears to have had no direct connection with Freemasonry belief or practice.

According to the best sources, a total of 5,139 participation/commemoration medals in bronze were given "to people who were entitled to receive one according to IOC protocol (athletes and team officials)." In addition, 762 commemoration medals were bestowed on individuals who rendered special services to the Organizing Committee. For this information, see BOEGHEIM, L. M. J., "Olympiade Medailles Amsterdam 1928," in: *Muntkoerier* (August 1997)8, pp. 4-7; and VOUTE, J. R., "Nogmaals de IXe Olympiade, Amsterdam 1928," in: *Muntkoerier* (December 1997)12, pp. 16. According to a conflicting statement (GREENSFELDER, Jim/VORONTSOV, Oleg/LALLY, Jim, *Olympic Medals: A Reference Guide, 1896-1998*, Cincinnati, Ohio 1998, pp. 43-44, citing GADOURY, Victor, *Olympic Coins and Medals*, Monaco 1996, a total of 6,678 Commemorative Medals

were struck in "Gilt Bronze, Silver, and Bronze" and presented to "Athletes, Dignitaries, and Officials." A strong analysis of the questionability of the GADOURY source is offered by BIJKERK, Anthony, "The Commemorative Medal From Amsterdam, 1928," in: *Journal of Olympic History* 9(Spring 2001)2, pp. 24-25, and "The 1928 Commemorative Medal - Again," in: *Journal of Olympic History* 10(May 2002)2, pp. 35-37.

For two examples, see THIEME, U./BECKER, F., *Allgemeines Lexikon der Bildende Kunst von der Antike bis zur Gegenwart*, Vol. 35, Leipzig 1950, p. 535; and SCHEEN, Pieter A., *Lexikon Beeldende Kunstenaars, 1750-1950*, The Hague 1970, p. 595. See also, LENNARTZ, Karl/BORGERS, Walter/HOFER, Andreas, *Olympische Siege: Medaillen - Diplome - Ehrungen*, Berlin 2000, p. 194.

See van ALFEN, Peter G., *A Simple Souvenir: Coins and Medals of the Olympic Games*, New York 2004, p. 103.

Ibid.

CASSIOLI'S Olympic medals commissioned for the 1928 Games mark an anomaly in his career. His work normally concentrated on painting and sculpting religious subjects commissioned by churches throughout Italy. Nevertheless, following the use of his medal designs for the 1928 Games, CASSIOLI entered them in an IOC-sponsored competition to find a suitable design for the winner's medal of the Summer Games. CASSIOLI won the competition and his 1928 design was in constant use for seven decades. In 1972 the IOC allowed the "reverse" of the medal to be changed for the first time since 1928. The "obverse" of the 1928 medal saw no significant change until 2004. See van ALFEN, p. 102.

For more on this, see VOUTE, p. 16.

Although other publications dealing with Olympic medals have pictured WIENECKE'S 1928 medal, our interest was first aroused over the striking symbolism of the 1928 Participation Commemoration Medal, with respect to what must have been fundamental in DIEM'S inspirational torch relay creation, in Peter G. van ALFEN'S, *A Simple Souvenir: Coins and Medals of the Olympic Games*, p. 22. Of note, is the fact no medallic artists repeated WIENECKE'S torch theme on Olympic medals until 1952, when the Greek medallic artist, V. FALIREUS, created the "obverse" of the gold, silver, and bronze winner's medals for the Oslo Olympic Winter Games, a design that featured a large flaming torch. See GREENSFELDER/VORONTSOV/LALLY, pp. 69-71. For the Summer Games some six months later, Finland's Kauko RASANEN designed a male and a female athlete brandishing torches on the "reverse" of his Helsinki Olympic Games Commemoration Medal. See van ALFEN, p. 127.

Aside from his winner's silver medal theme, CHAPLAIN'S design was duplicated on the copper medal given to the second-place finisher in each event. See GREENSFELDER/VORONTSOV/LALLY, *Olympic Medals: A Reference Guide*, p. 6.

DIEM'S knowledge of sport in ancient Greece, most of it gleaned from the exhaustive research and writing of the German archeologist Alfred SCHIFF, led him, in time, to write much on the subject. One of his treatises was a romanticized treatment of ALEXANDER the Great, "blue eyed [...] and the product of the vitality of still undepleted primitive stock." Of DIEM'S extant sources for his short Alexander work (*Alexander Der Grosse: als Sportsmann*, Frankfurt am Main 1957), ARRIAN'S history (*Anabasis of Alexander*) was certainly the most powerful. In dissecting ARRIAN, DIEM could not have missed the prominence of torch relay races in the spectrum of activities organized by ALEXANDER to celebrate noted victories, or as part of rest and relaxation entertainment. The torch relay race was a recurring theme in Alexandrian celebrations. For more on this, see ADAMS, Winthrop Lindsay, "Alexander the Great, the Olympics and the Greek AGONA," Paper presented at the 32nd Annual Convention of the North American Society for Sport History, Pacific Grove, California, May 2004; and his "Other People's Games: The Olympics, Macedonia, and Greek Athletics," in: *Journal of Sport History*



Jan Wils accepts his awards from Queen Wilhelmina at the Closing Ceremonies

30(Summer 2003)2, pp. 205-217. DIEM'S assessment of ALEXANDER as a sportsman is obviously a romantic vision. For a challenge to DIEM'S view of ALEXANDER, see WEILER, Ingomar, "War Alexander der Grosse wirklich ein Sportmann?" in: THALLER, Franz/RECLA, Heinz (eds.), *Signale Der Zeit: Festschrift für Prof. Dr. Josef Recla*, Stuttgart 1975, pp. 271-279. DIEM'S preoccupation with research and writing on antiquity matters appear to have evolved well after the late 1920s/early 1930s, the time of the genesis of his torch relay idea. Therefore, we might assign less influence from antiquity for DIEM'S idea, and more from events contemporary to the evolution of his concept, namely the investigated 1928 Amsterdam arguments.

⁵⁰ DURANTEZ, Conrado, *The Olympic Flame: The Great Olympic Symbol*, Lausanne 1988.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, p. 15.

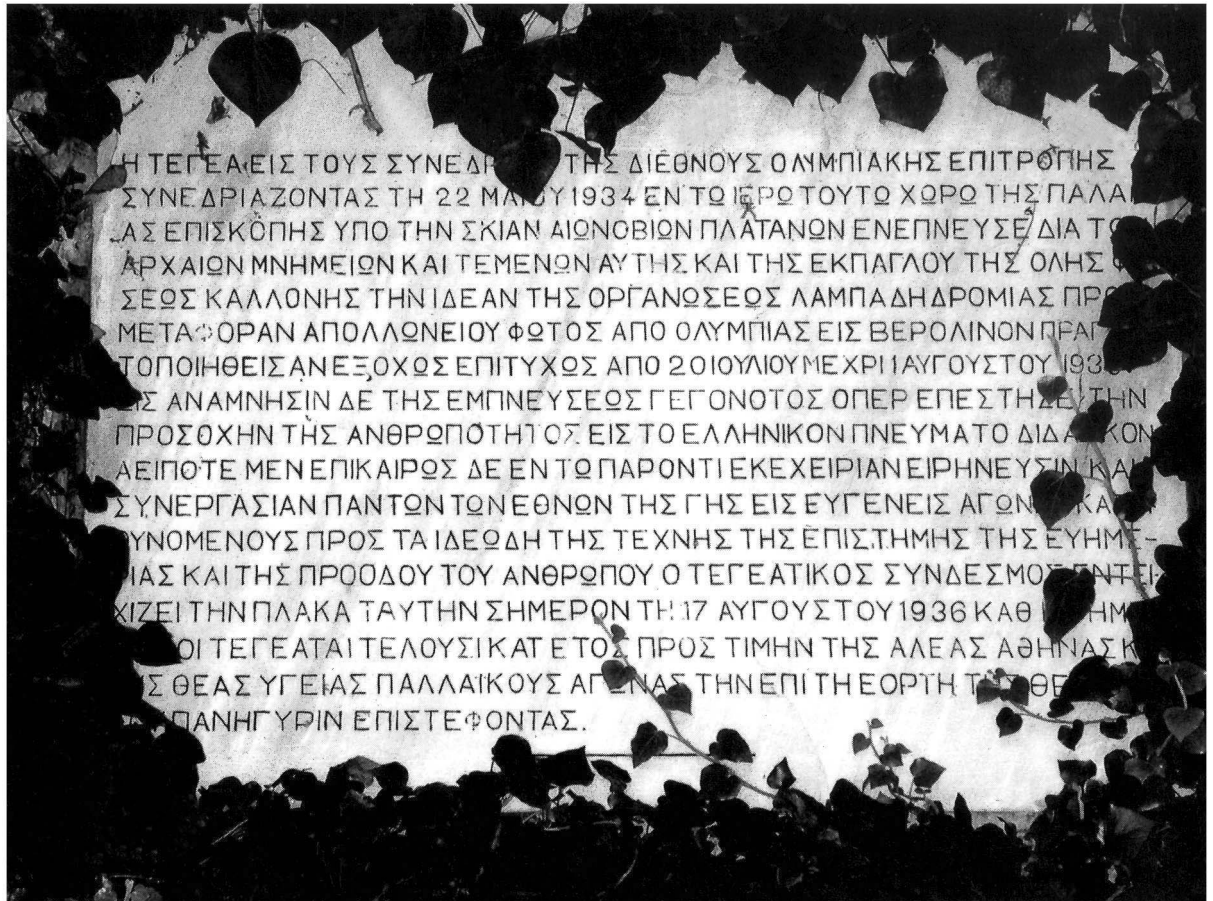
⁵² *Walther Kleffel's Guestbook*, August 25, 1931, Carl Diem Archives, Cologne. As cited by BORGERS, p. 16. Beyond the notation in KLEFFEL'S *Guestbook*, DIEM'S earliest written recognition of *sacred fire* in Olympic context appears in a collection of his writings assembled and published by the *Carl Diem Institute* in Koln - *Carl Diem, The Olympic Idea: Discourses and Essays*, Stuttgart 1970, p. 8. In DIEM'S essay, "Die Olympischen Spiele in Altertum und Gegenwart", *Discourse* 1933, pp.13-16, we find: "In classical times the Olympic victors had the right to kindle the fire on the altars, in order that it might burn until the next Games - a fine symbol of youthful strength enduring until it is kindled anew in future contests." Here, DIEM is obviously romanticizing; he cites no sources for this pronouncement and, indeed, there is no concrete evidence that this act took place. DIEM continues, "The modern contest ends with the announcement of the city chosen for the next Games, and an invitation to join them in celebration. As the wording runs "May they take place in gladness and harmony, and the Olympic flame thus shine through all coming generations for the well-being of an ever more highly aspiring, bolder and purer humanity." Underline ours. DIEM'S phrase: "As the wording runs," refers to the closing ceremony of the Los Angeles Games in 1932, an event at which he was present. After 1933

DIEM often refers to *Olympic fire* in his writings.

⁵³ Zack FARMER, Secretary of the Organizing Committee for the 1932 Olympic Games, was present in Amsterdam for the duration of the 1928 festival. The idea for replication of *sacred fire* in Los Angeles obviously sprang from Farmer's flame-viewing experience in WILS' stadium, and, as well, from the presence of George van ROSSEM on the Los Angeles Organizing Committee as a special advisor. Indeed, the Los Angeles Games Official Programs note the presence of the flame on two occasions: the Opening Ceremonies - "A fanfare of trumpets from the peristyle was followed by a salute often guns, and the Olympic torch flamed high from the peristyle;" and the Closing Ceremonies, as Van ROSSEM presented the Olympic flag to Mayor John C. PORTER for four years of safekeeping—"Amsterdam greets Los Angeles and expresses its great admiration for the splendid way in which that city has carried on the flaming torch of Olympism." For the Opening Ceremonies statement, see "Program of Sunday, July 31, 1932," in: *Complete Collection of the 39 Official Programs: Games of the Xth Olympiad. Los Angeles, U.S.A. 1932*, Los Angeles 1933, p. 3. For the Closing Ceremonies statement, see "Program of Sunday, August 14, 1932 (*Ibid.*, p. 31). For more on the Los Angeles "flame episode," see BARNEY, Robert K., "Resistance, Persistence, Providence: The 1932 Los Angeles Games in Perspective," in: *Research Quarterly for Exercise and Sport* 67(June 1996)2, pp. 148-160.

⁵⁴ There is one exception pertinent to the Olympic Winter Games after 1932. No *sacred fire* burned at St. Moritz in 1948 at the first post-World War II Olympic winter festival.

⁵⁵ See "Minutes of the 33rd IOC Session, Athens, 17-19 May 1934" - *Volume I*, edited and annotated by Wolf LYBERG, Lausanne undated, p. 181. During the IOC Session (17-19 May 1934) official approval from the IOC for the torch relay exercise occurred on 18 May 1934. Germany's senior IOC member Theodor LEWALD presented the concept. DIEM attended the Session. According to the memory of Ioannis (John) KETSEAS, Secretary General of the *Hellenic Olympic Committee*, an interesting footnote to the Athens torch relay de-

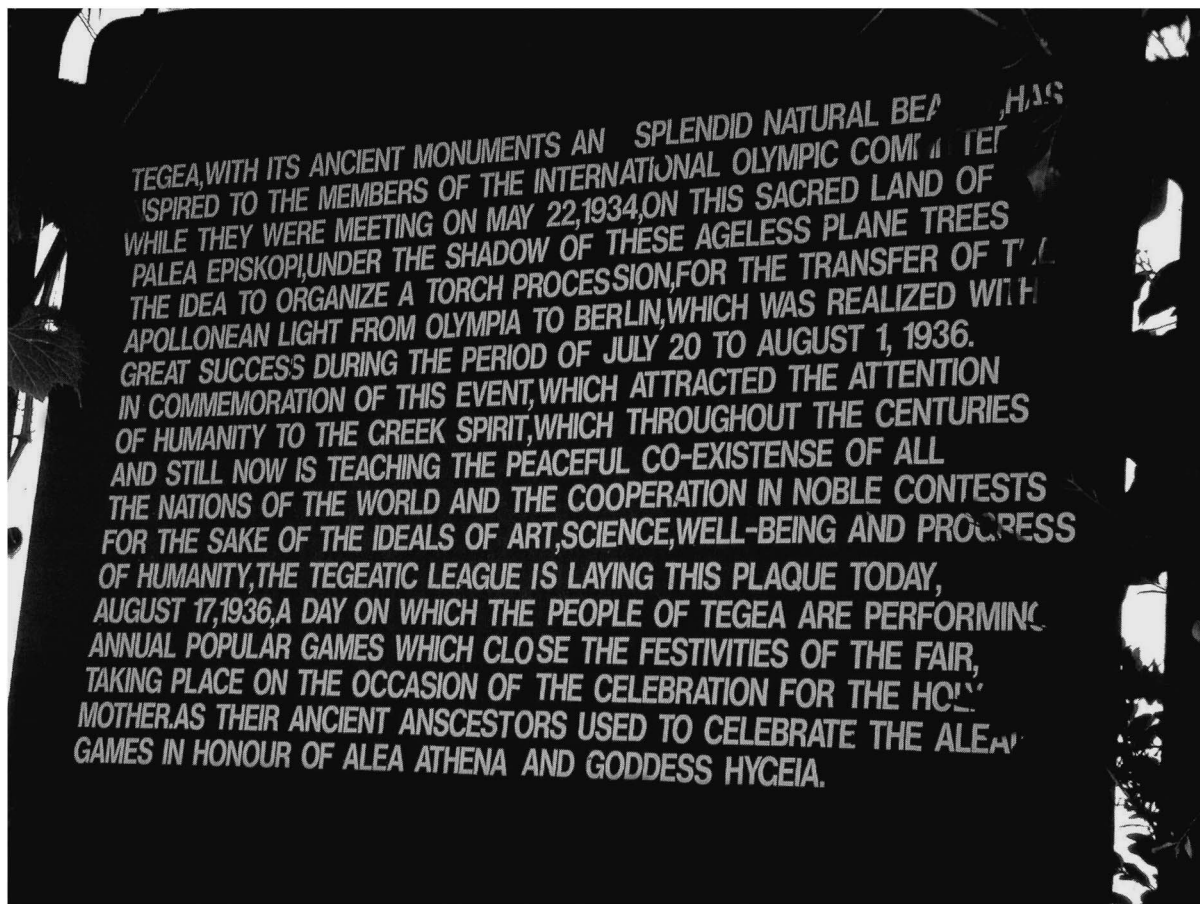


The Tegea
Plaque -
Message in
Greek

liberations in Athens occurred directly following the 1934 Session as IOC members, invited by the mayor of Olympia and the Hellenic Olympic Committee, journeyed from Athens to Olympia on 20-21 May 1934. "As far as I remember," reminisced KETSEAS, he, DIEM, and LEWALD discussed torch relay organizational matters "over lunch in Tegea on 22 May 1934, before reaching Olympia." See POURET, Henri, "The Olympic Flame," in: *Proceedings of the Eighteenth Session of the International Olympic Academy*, Athens 1976, pp. 120-121. KETSEAS related that the torch relay idea was unanimously adopted at meetings in Olympia the next day, 23 May 1934. The IOC minutes, however, beyond any doubt, establish 18 May as the IOC approval date. One must exhibit some caution in assessing the recollections of John KETSEAS. For instance, in opposition to what KETSEAS has left us, consider the ruminations of Athanasios KRITSINELIS. KRITSINELIS relates that the mayor of Tripolis, one Th. PETRINOS, "gave a dinner" (lunch?) on 22 May 1934 in honour of the IOC officials, "on their way back" from Olympia (to Athens), at "Episkop of Tegea, a beautiful park, 8 km outside Tripolis." There, reported KRITSINELIS, several officials gave toasts, among them PETRINOS, IOC members BAILLET-LATOUR, Jigoro KANO, Peter SCHAROO, Sigfrid EDSTROM, and "the Englishman Lord Ampthill." According to KRITSINELIS, the most lasting impressions rendered were from speeches by German IOC members, the Duke of Magdeburg and Karl RITTER von HALT. The "Duke of Magdeburg," of course, is Adolf FRIEDRICH, Duke of MECKLENBURG-SCHWERIN, a German IOC member from 1926 to 1956. Adolf FRIEDRICH's oration words are germane here: "Gentlemen. One hundred years ago, a member of my [sic] family came to Greece and died fighting for its freedom. I, who have come here one hundred years later, after getting to know the place and its people can truly say that any sacrifice would be justified for such a nation. Participants. A thought has just come to my mind, and I swear before you that I shall implement it before the beginning of the next 11th Olympiad to be celebrated, in 1936, in my hometown, Berlin. I want to organize a grandiose relay race between adjacent states during which athletes from these countries will carry to our

stadium the Olympic light from the sanctuary of Olympia. It is only right that Greece should once again bring the light to the West." Apparently, more personalities than simply Carl DIEM sought credit for association with the torch relay idea. See KRITSINELIS, Athanasios, "Lighting Ceremony of the Olympic Flame: Technical Specifications of the Olympic Torch Relay," in: *Proceedings of the Thirty-Sixth Session of the International Olympic Academy*, Athens 1998, pp. 149-150. KRITSINELIS' sources for his pronouncements were the archival records of Professor PERISTERAKIS of the *University of Athens*, supervisor of the technical arrangements for kindling the first flame at Olympia in July 1936. PERISTERAKIS served in that position until 1980, at which time KRITSINELIS became his successor, responsible for the technical portion of the flame lighting ceremony. Which account is correct? We believe the KRITSINELIS account because: (1) the dates noted in his account, citing PERISTERAKIS' records, coincide best with "history," (2) his account has no "self serving tone," as does KETSEAS', and (3) his elaboration is documented by stronger source material. It becomes obvious that the Tegea event in May 1934 provided the impetus for local Greeks to establish a handsome marble plaque some two years later, inscribed with the message that the entire torch relay idea was fomented then and there, on 22 May 1934, in Tegea. One can now see the weakness of the KETSEAS argument, that the discussions overheard by Greeks at Tegea occurred on the way to Olympia. It would hardly have taken the IOC/Hellenic Olympic Committee party some two and a half days to journey from Athens to Tegea (May 20, 21, and 22). Then, too, the whole Greek idea of the torch relay concept having originated in this way, of course, is simply not so, commemorative plaque or no commemorative plaque. Carl Diem himself viewed the plaque in late 1936 when he was in Greece shortly after the Berlin Games closed. Needless to say, he was "amused." The commemorative plaque can be viewed in Tegea to this day.

PHILADELPHUS' most noted literary work is his *Monuments of Athens: Classical, Roman, Byzantine and Modern*, a volume that has passed through eleven editions to



The Tegea
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date - we refer to the 11th Edition (Athens, 1995). The original edition was published in Athens in 1924 in Greek and subsequently in both English and Greek.

The exact distinctions were: *Knight Commander of the Bulgarian Order of Saint Alexander*; *Knight Commander of the Rumanian Crown*; *Officer of the Trench Order of the Legion of Honor*; *Officer of the Dutch Order of Oranje-Nassau* (not to be confused with the one-step lower rank *Knight of the Order of Oranje-Nassau* conferred on WIENECKE); and *Knight of the Spanish Order of Fealty*. See 'Alexander Philadelphus,' in: *Monuments of Athens*, pp. 11-12. PHILADELPHUS, like Jan WILS, was a life-long Freemason, rising to the highest level of distinction in the Order, that of "illustrious Brother."

See, *I Proia* (19 July 1936). The term "gala" alludes to the presence at the luncheon of several honored guests and noted Greek officials, among them, Ippokratris KARAVIAS, President of the *Parnassos Association of Letters*; General STRIBER, Aide-de-Camp to the Greek King; former Greek ministers, KOFINAS, LIVATHINOPOULOS, and TRIKOUPIIS (who needs no introduction to historians of the 1896 Games in Greece); the Athenian sculptor, DIMITRIADIS; Judge of the Court of Appeals, KARENTZIS; senior officers of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, including VALTIS, OIKONOMOU, BOURAS, and NEOPHYTOS, as well as P. PAPADAKIS, the Ministry's Director of Press Relations. We are indebted to Alexander PHILADELPHUS of Athens, Greece, grandson of the noted archaeologist, for an English translation of the *I Proia* article. Brackets ours.

Ibid., *I Proia*, 19 July 1936. The *I Proia* article was originally cited by Eleftherios C. SKIADAS in *The Olympic Flame: The Torch of the Centuries*, Athens undated, p. 35. One must be careful in reading SKIADAS. Though documented, there are many mistakes (e.g. the flame first appeared at the Stockholm Games in 1928, p. 36) and the chronology of the narrative, at least in its English translation, is often garbled and at odds with either earlier statements or history itself. To be fair to SKIADAS and his work, our at times "skeptical" impression may be rooted in the effort of Magdalene SOTIRIANOS-FORFOLIS, who translated SKIADAS' Greek text into English.

Here, PHILADELPHUS is well aware of the text on NUMA in *Plutarch's Lives* - "[...] for to Numa is ascribed the consecration of the Vestal virgins, and in general the worship and care of the perpetual fire entrusted to their charge. It was either because he thought the nature of fire pure and uncorrupted, and therefore entrusted it to chaste and undefiled persons, or because he thought of it as unfruitful and barren, and therefore associated with virginity. Since wherever in Greece a perpetual fire is kept, as at Delphi and Athens, it is committed to the charge, not of virgins, but of widows past the age of marriage. And if by any chance it goes out, as at Athens during the tyranny of Aristion the sacred lamp is said to have been extinguished, and at Delphi when the temple was burned by the Medes, and as during the Mithridatic and Roman civil wars the altar was demolished and the fire extinguished, then they say it must not be kindled again from other fire, but made fresh and new, by lighting a pure and unpolluted flame from the rays of the sun. And this they usually effect by means of metallic mirrors, the concavity of which is made to follow the sides of an isosceles rectangular triangle, and which converge from their circumference to a single point at the center. When, therefore, these are placed opposite the sun, so that's its rays, as they fall upon them from all sides, are collected and concentrated at the center, the air itself is rarefied there, and very light and dry substances placed there quickly blaze up from its resistance, the sun's rays now acquiring the substance and force of fire [...]" See "Life of Numa," IX. 3-6.

Ibid., p. 34.

SKIADAS unfolds an assertion made by Ioannis KETSEAS that it was he (Ketseas) who conveyed the idea to Carl DIEM of the sun's rays lighting the flame. See SKIADAS, p. 36. Walter BORGERS, in commenting on this matter, accepts KETSEAS' assertion. See BORGERS, p. 20. In both cases (SKIADAS and BORGERS) their source is Henri POURET. See POURET's, "The Olympic Flame," in: *Proceedings of the Fifteenth Session of the International Olympic Academy -1975*, Athens 1976, pp. 119-124. POURET (who incorrectly identifies KETSEAS as an IOC member from Greece) cites a KETSEAS letter written on 24 January 1962 to the editor of the *IOC Official Bulletin* in which KETSEAS commented on the history of the Olympic

flame - material from KETSEAS' letter was published in the IOC's *Official Bulletin* in the February (No. 77) and May (No. 78) 1962 editions. The germane quotation in the KETSEAS letter reads as follows: "I would like to mention a characteristic fact. The way in which the Olympic flame would be lit was arranged later, when I wrote to my friend Dr. Diem telling him that while reading Plutarch's *Lives* (Life of Numas [sic] Pompilius) I had found a description of the way in which the Ancient Greeks relit the sacred flame (if it was extinguished accidentally) by presenting a piece of wood to the focus of a concave mirror exposed to the rays of the sun. We naturally adopted this antique procedure and it is in this way that the sacred flame is lit in Olympia on the eve of the International Olympic Games." As cited by POURET, p. 122. Exactly when, if indeed at all, did KETSEAS contact DIEM with his suggestion? The *Official Bulletin* editor, seeking further input, immediately sent copies of the KETSEAS letter to both Carl DIEM and Karl RITTER von HALT (one of Germany's two "holdover" IOC members from the pre-Second World War period) for their recall of what KETSEAS had described. Each, of course, were there; and though each concurred with certain points that KETSEAS addressed, neither were able to confirm the Tegea event as described by KETSEAS and, moreover, were completely silent in corroborating KETSEAS' argument that it was he who had first raised the idea on how to kindle the flame. We are convinced that the primary evidence supports PHILADELPHUS, not KETSEAS. After all, when the entire episode is unraveled, we are left solely with KETSEAS' proclamation that the idea was his alone, no-one else's. PHILADELPHUS, of course, was awarded the German Olympic Order shortly after the Olympics closed in Berlin, an award given to individuals who made substantial contributions "to the success" of the 1936 Games. The "conferral visit" of Joseph GOEBBELS and his wife, along with a high diplomatic official from the German embassy in Athens, cements the importance of the PHILADELPHUS award. Keep in mind that PHILADELPHUS was never involved in any other way with the organization of the Berlin Games. Consequently, there was no other reason for which the Order should have been awarded to him. KETSEAS, on the other hand, received no such distinction. PHILADELPHUS, as the bonafide originator of the flame ignition idea, might be shocked nowadays to learn that his idea is the subject of world-wide television coverage, including the sale of rights to broadcast the colorful flame lighting pageant.

⁶³ See SKIADAS, citing *I Proia*, p. 35.

⁶⁴ We are grateful to Alexander PHILADELPHUS for access to his family's archives and the accommodation of our interest in his grandfather's career. Our visit to him took place on 16 August 2004 during the time of the Athens Olympic Games. The elegant contemporary PHILADELPHUS apartment, located opposite the official residence of Greece's President, and next to the Prime Minister's office (adjacent to the *National Botanical Gardens* behind the Parliament Buildings), is resplendent with priceless distinctive art and artifacts of three generations of Greek "thinkers and doers." The framed *Deutsche Olympia Ehrenzeichen* diploma awarded PHILADELPHUS adorns the wall of a small study. In the PHILADELPHUS archive, too, is an accompanying letter of salutation and grateful appreciation addressed to "Herrn Direktor Alexander Philadelphus" (sent by L. Meissner, *Der Staatssekretar und Chef der Präsidiakanzlei*). Both the letter and the Order are dated 30 January 1937. It is known that many individuals received the *Ehrenzeichen*, some of whom received them for political reasons rather than meritorious contributions to the German Olympic effort. The PHILADELPHUS Order cannot be classified as one of that ilk.

⁶⁵ The physical character of the two awards (*Ehrenzeichen* and medal) can be seen in LENNARTZ/BORGERS/HOFER, p. 245.

⁶⁶ Today, the celebrated *National Archaeological Museum*.

⁶⁷ Rapidly following his diplomatic service in Greece, Theodore KORDT, a trained lawyer and career diplomat

since 1923, was posted to London in 1938, serving there until 1940 as *Charge d' affaires* in the German embassy (as the French translate *Geschäftstrager*). KORDT'S *Charge d' affaires* rank in London was identical to his stature in Athens. KORDT played an important role in the very first of several attempts to oust HITLER from power. Amazingly escaping implication in a 1938-1939 affair which, at one extreme, planned for the assassination of HITLER, and at the other, attempted to cajole Great Britain to take a hard stand against the Fuhrer's expansionist aims, KORDT survived in his London diplomatic post until the commencement of World War II when the German Foreign Service, in general, lost much in the way of importance and influence. During most of the war, KORDT was assigned to foreign diplomatic affairs in Bern, Switzerland. In post-war Germany, KORDT served as the Federal Republic of Germany's Ambassador to Greece from 1953 to 1958. For Theodore KORDT'S activities in "anti-Hitler" activities, see ROTHFELS; Hans, "The German Resistance in its International Aspects," in: *International Affairs* 34(October 1958)4, pp. 477-489; and BENZ, Wolfgang/PEHLE, Walther H. (eds.), *Encyclopedia of German Resistance to the Nazi Movement*, translated from its original German by Lance W. GARNER, New York 1997, pp. 157-160.

⁶⁸ The German delegation's visit to PHILADELPHUS' office took place on 23 September 1936. We know from the diary of Joseph GOEBBELS that he toured Greece, including Athens, with his wife Magda, in September/October 1936. Carl DIEM also visited Greece at approximately the same time (9 September to 19 October 1936). The two men (GOEBBELS and DIEM) did not meet. DIEM was preoccupied by affairs associated with the renewal of German excavations at Olympia, an initiative that began on 15 October. See *Carl Diem Tagebucher*, Vol. 10, pp. 10-11, and *Joseph Goebbels Tagebucher, 1924 - 1945*, in: *Carl and Liselott Diem Archives, German Sport University Cologne*. We are grateful to Karl LENNARTZ at the *German Sport University Cologne* for bringing our attention to the information contained in the DIEM and GOEBBELS diaries.

⁶⁹ Indeed, the grandson of Alexander PHILADELPHUS remembers his mother, upon displaying the medal to him when he was a child, remarking that Joseph GOEBBELS himself had "presented it" (email communication to the authors from Alexander PHILADELPHUS, 17 November 2004). We are again indebted to Karl LENNARTZ, who kindly related to us that his interpretation of GOEBBELS' activity in Athens in September 1936 was probably for the purpose of presenting "the Berlin Olympic Order to some personalities." Personal communication, Karl Lennartz to the authors, 27 September 2004.

⁷⁰ Most probably composed near the end of 1939 or early in 1940, the passage is part of an unpublished manuscript written by Alexander PHILADELPHUS entitled "The Olympic Torch and Hitler's Incendiary Brand." Resident in the private archives of the surviving PHILADELPHUS family in Athens, we are once again grateful to PHILADELPHUS' grandson Alexander for making the manuscript's presence known and available for our inspection. For the entire PHILADELPHUS statement in this regard, the reader might refer to SKIADAS, Eleftherios, *The Olympic Flame*, pp. 68-69.

⁷¹ To wit (the highlighted passage): "May they [the Olympic Games] continue to unfold with joy and peace, and may this kind of Olympic torch pursue its way through the ages for the good of humanity, always more passionate, more courageous, more pure." See *The Ninth Olympiad - Amsterdam 1928 - Official Report*, Amsterdam 1930, p. 914. The page notation, 914, is not a typographical error. The report, two full years in the making, is massive, particularly with respect to former Olympic Games reports or the publications that "posed" for them. There can be no doubt about the fact that Diem understood BAILLET-LATOUR'S French. He was facile in several languages, most especially French, having attended a French Huguenot high school established in Berlin in the 17th century, an institution at which all

the 'lessons' were taught in French. There in Berlin, DIEM also learned English, Latin, and Classical Greek. We are indebted to Karl LENNARTZ for information on DIEM'S early education. Of interest here, too, is the fact that although at least one contemporary author states that BAILLET-LATOUR'S enunciation was "flashed" on the Amsterdam stadium Scoreboard (see PETTY, Gayle Bodin, *Journey of the Olympic Flame: Igniting the Olympic Spirit*, Irvine, California 2002, p. 18), it was not—his words were instead broadcast over the stadium's loud-speaker system. Dutch Olympic authorities in 1928 did not have the technology to execute what now occurs instantaneously. In effect, the Amsterdam stadium Scoreboard was operated manually by a team of naval seamen, commanded by an officer (see *The Ninth Olympiad-Amsterdam 1928 -Official Report*, p. 132). But, most importantly to this discussion is the proof that DIEM heard and understood BAILLET-LATOUR'S commanding message. In what appears to be the single best work on

DIEM'S career, his own autobiographical treatise (*Ein Leben für den Sport*), he writes at some length on the various "saga chapters" of his life. In the discussion of his visit to the Los Angeles Games in the summer of 1932, DIEM speaks about the continuity between the original modern Olympic Games in 1896, and those occurring in Los Angeles, and hence, in 1936 in Berlin. To demonstrate the point, he states: "*May the Olympic Torch pursue its way through the ages. Darüber wehten die drei Fahnen von Deutschland, Amerika, und Griechenland im Winde.*" DIEM'S statement, "*May the Olympic Torch pursue its way through the ages*" (in English, in an otherwise completely German text), of course, is taken verbatim from BAILLET-LATOUR'S words (noted above). See DIEM, Carl, "Kapitel III - Olympiareise nach Los Angeles 1932," in: *Ein Leben für den Sport*, Ratingen/Kastellaun/Dusseldorf undated, pp. 124-125.

