

Paying tribute in memory of Prof. Dr. Norbert Müller

Speech by Prof. Dr. Stephan Wassong, President, International Pierre de Coubertin Committee

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Dear Friends,

We, the members of the International Pierre de Coubertin Committee, know very well Norbert's academic achievements and views.

Norbert Müller was instrumental in making the major contribution to **Olympic Education** thus strengthening the role of the Olympic Movement and of the IOC as guardians of Coubertin's legacy. Through his teaching and publications, Norbert **unveiled** Coubertin to people of all cultures and continents.

Through his passion for the values of the Olympic Movement, through his teaching and academic research, Norbert achieved to break the ice and discover the person of Pierre de Coubertin to the world.

Norbert followed Coubertin's motto *Voir Loin – Parler Franc – Agir Ferme* (See Afar – Speak Frankly – Act Firmly). It became his personal motto and he applied it in all areas of his life. This is admirable as we all know how difficult it is to really apply these values. The motto is engraved on the reverse of the Coubertin medal done by the well-known artist, Karl Heinz Oswald.

Norbert's **passion and fascination** for the Olympic Movement were known and appreciated by many and these qualities will remain in our memory of Norbert. Many of his students have followed his steps and some of them are here with us today. He has guided us in a unique way, taught us to think critically, to observe academic freedom and independence, and to go the extra mile in achieving our goals. As to the latter, he taught us to strive in reaching the best individual result possible, to strive for personal excellence, one of the main messages of the Olympic Movement.

In relation to the IOC, Norbert was a long-standing member of the IOC Commission for the International Olympic Academy and Olympic Education, then of the Olympic Education Commission, and of the Commission for Culture and Olympic Heritage.

Norbert held prominent posts and chaired in many prestigious institutions, including the International Pierre de Coubertin Committee. He was a member of working groups of the International Olympic Committee and the International Olympic Academy, just to name some. What we learned from Norbert was that it is not the position that makes the person; it is the person that makes the position.

In relation to the International Olympic Academy, Norbert was instrumental in coining its unique profile and atmosphere. His PhD thesis was devoted to the foundation and development of the IOA.

Norbert was a scientific director of Baron Pierre de Coubertin's Writings published in several languages as we all know. Together with Professor Otto Schantz he authored the three volumes of *Textes Choisis, Pierre de Coubertin* which are fundamental for a correct understanding of Coubertin as an educator, historian and academic. His book on the history of Olympic Congresses is a standard literature for all students and professors teaching in the fields of Olympic Studies.

His research and teaching expertise were paramount and highly acknowledged at national and international level. Numerous distinguished awards are the evidence: the Olympic order was bestowed to him in 1997; he was conferred Knighthood of the French Legion of Honor, the honor to receive the Federal Cross of Merit, First Class of the Federal Republic of Germany. Most recently he was honored with the Life Time Award of the International Society of Olympic Historians. As to the latter he received this award at the Coubertin Foundation. On this occasion Norbert delivered a speech on the evolution of research done so far on Olympism and Coubertin. We all listened passionately and were fascinated by his extensive knowledge.

In reference to the German Sports University Cologne, Norbert has collaborated with my past and present colleagues since 1975. He was the instigator of the creation of the Master of Arts in Olympic Studies Programme that took off in 2010. Preparation and the setting up of this programme further strengthened our mutual friendship. It was Norbert's idea to offer a new educational horizon by establishing the M.A. Olympic Studies, designed as a part-time programme to foster the educational policy of life-long learning. I will never forget the moment when he presented this crucial idea to me for the first time. It was in 2007 at the main train station in Mainz. He was strongly convinced that this idea had a remarkable future and entrusted me to set up the Master Programme. I was stunned by his idea while standing on a cold and windy platform. This was Norbert.

Dear friends,

Please allow me some personal remarks. Norbert was the mentor of my PhD thesis and of the professorship habilitation procedure. Then we became colleagues and, more importantly, we became friends, very close friends. He gave me guidance and taught me not only to talk about values but also to apply them. This is what he taught me and all those persons who had the chance to know him. We should pass this value on to our social, private and academic environments.

Norbert thank you very much.

I will miss you.