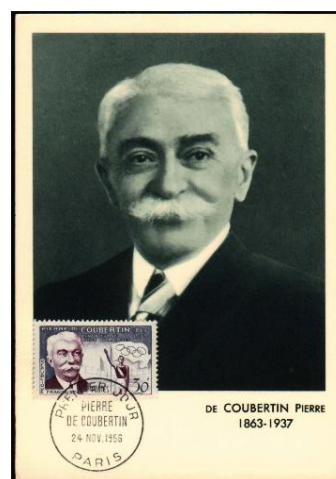




Introduction

In the late 1920's, the flame of the First World War (WW1) had been spread all over Europe. People were tortured by the machine guns and powerful canoes. Normal life was totally out of question. At this period, the only task of the people was to struggle to survive. Organizing an international sporting event was out of their imagination. As a result, the sixth Summer Olympic Games which were scheduled to be held in Berlin had to postponed.

As the powers and the defeated Germany signed the Treaty of Versailles in 1919, the flame of the WW1 was said to be put out. Peace was finally arrived. At the same time, the president of the International Olympic Committee(IOC), *Baron Pierre de Coubertin*(**Fig.1**) made use of this opportunity at once. He called the 18th Session of the IOC in Lausanne, Switzerland. During the meeting, future of the Olympic Games was discussed. In the 5th of April 1919, the IOC announced that the 7th Summer Olympic Games would be held in Antwerp one year later



Baron Pierre de Coubertin (**Fig.1**)

Commemorative Stamps

In conjunction with the Games, a set of three stamps were issued in 20th of May 1920.(Fig.2) The stamps depict different sports:

(Fig.2)



5c. (5c + 5c) A Discus Thrower



10c (10c + 5c) A Chariot



15c (15c + 5c) A runner

As the War was just finished, the economy was yet to recover. People were unemployed. Some even became paralyzed during the War. Those paralyzed people needed subsidies from the Government. Funds were urgently needed. As a result, for each of the values, a 5c-surcharge was added. Since the printing house in Belgium was destroyed during the War, the Belgium post authority had to entrust the American Bank Note Company of New York to print the stamps. According to the former research, the number of stamps issued was as followed :

Table 1: Number of stamps issued

Value	Quantity
5 c + 5c	774'524
10 c + 5c	1'462'393
15 c + 5c	1'076'655

(Sources : *Die Olympischen Spiele im Blickpunkt der Philatelie und ihren Randgebieten.*)

The Overprinted Issue

On one hand, the economy of Belgium was not yet on the right track. The 5c-surcharge on each of the values decreased the demand of these Olympic stamps. On the other hand, the government seemed to overestimated the buying power of her citizen. Only a small portion of the Olympic stamps was sold. As a result, the Belgium postal authority overprinted all the remain stock of the Olympic stamps into 20c-value.(The postal rate of a inland surface mail in Belgium.)(Fig.3) The overprinted issues included three parts:

(Fig.3)



1). " 20 c " new value



2). " X " cover the old values



3). " - " cover the surcharge wording

Machine Cancellation

At that time, the Belgium postal authority had used a special cancellation to promote the Games. All the local mails and the outgoing international mails would receive this cancellation. The cancellation consisted of two elements.(Fig.4) The circular date stamp is on the left, while the propaganda wordings are on the right.



(Fig.4)

1). Circular Date Stamp(CDS)

The CDS depicts the year, month, day and time of the cancellation. The month is in Roman numeral while the year and day are in Arabic numeral. Besides, the CDS also shows the location of the post office which canceled the mail.

2). Propaganda Wordings

The propaganda wordings are inscribed in a rectangular box with a dimension of 20mm times 50mm. The left hand side of the box reads " VIIIe / OLYMPIADE " , that is the 7th Olympic Games. The right hand side reads " Antwerp / August to September / 1920 ". These messages are in two languages :

i). Flemish

ANTWERPEN / AUGUSTUS - SEPTEMB.

II). French

ANVERS / AOÛT - SEPTEMBRE

According to the research done by Laurentz Jonker, these special cancellations can be classified into ten types in terms of the geographical locations :

Table II : The classification of the special machine cancellations

Region	Quantity
ANTWERP	2
BRUSSEL	4
GENT	2
CHARLEROY	1
LUIK	1

(Source: Die Olympischen Spiele im Blickpunkt der Philatelie und ihren Randgebieten)

Belgium is a bilingual country. Those people lived in the north speak Flemish. And, those who lived in the south speak French. As a result, the slogan machine cancellation was printed in two languages. In the northern region, such as Antwerp and Gent, the Flemish slogan is placed at the top.(Fig.5) Those French speaking cities in the south, such as Charleroy, Liege and the capital city - Brussels used the slogan which had the French slogan at the top.(Fig.6) Apart from the outgoing mail, the slogan cancellation was also used as arrival mark.(Fig.7)



(Fig.5)



(Fig.6)



(Fig.7)

Commemorative Postmark

There was a temporary post office inside the Olympic Stadium. A commemorative postmark was used. **(Fig.8)** This postmark reads "ANTWERPEN - ANVERS / VIIIE OLYMPIADE ". In other words, the Antwerp / the 7th Olympic Games.



(Fig.8)

The Games

The opening ceremony was scheduled at the 14th of August 1920. **(Fig.9)** The games lasted for 15 days. However, some of the events were started to compete from 20th of April of the same year. The Organization Committee of the Games had invited 37 countries to join this competition. Twenty nine of them accepted the invitations. At this Olympic Games, the five rings flag was hoisted for the first time inside the Olympic Stadium. **(Fig.10)** Since then, this customs has been using in the opening ceremony in all the summer and winter Olympic Games.



(Fig.9)



(Fig.10)



()



(Fig.12)

Since the War had just over, people did not expect too much on the result of the Games. However, there was a future athletic star who started his glorious Olympic career in the Antwerp games. He was Paavo Nurmi(**Fig.11**) from Finland. In the track events of this Games, he won the gold medals of 10,000m Race, Individual Cross Country Race* and Team Cross Country Race*. Besides, he also won a silver medal in the 5000m Race. Four years later, Nurmi prolonged his excellence performance in the Paris Olympic Games. At this Olympic Games, this 27 year old Finnish won the Individual Cross Race*, Team Cross Country Race*, 3000m Team Race*, 1500m Race and 5000m Race. He won the last two events in an hour interval. It showed the amazing and strength of this super human being - Paavo Nurmi. Then, in the 1928 Amsterdam Olympic Games, Nurmi earned one gold and two silver medals more for his Olympic medal collection. The gold medal was from the 10,000m Race, while the silver medals came from the 5000m Race and Steeplechase. So, in these three consecutive Olympic Games, Nurmi got nine gold medals and three silver medals. Paavo Nurmi had proved that he was one of the legendary sport stars in the last century. Due to the super social standing, Nurmi was appointed to ignite the Holy Fire in the opening ceremony in the 1952 Olympic Games held in Helsinki, Finland.(**Fig.12**)

The US Olympic Team got an outstanding result in this Games. The American earned 41 gold medals, 27 silver medals and 28 bronze medals. This was the third time that the US Team was ranked at the top of the medal winning table. The other two top ranking came from the 1896 Olympic Games held in Athens and the 1904 St. Louis Olympic Games. Besides, it is worthwhile mentioning that Japan sent her national team to join the Games for the first time.(**Fig.13**) They even got two silver medals. The top five ranking are as followed :



(Fig.13)

Table III: The Medal Winning Table of the 1920 Olympic Games.

Ranking	Country	Gold	Silver	Bronze	Total
1	USA	41	27	28	96
2	Sweden	19	20	24	63
3	Britain	15	15	13	43
4	Finland	15	10	9	34
5	Belgium	14	11	10	35

(Source : The Complete Book of the Olympics)

For a host country, Belgium was ranked as the fifth. Since Belgium was baptized by the WW1, this was already a remarkable result. Besides, this was the first Olympic Games since the War. The Organization Committee was succeed in bringing over 2500 athletes together. They competed with each other under a peace and fair environment. This played a critical role in continuing the modern Olympic Games in the future.

Remark:

* The Individual Cross Country, Team Cross Country and the 3000m Team Race were eliminated in the modern games.

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Antwerp 1920 Olympic Games, athletic festival held in Antwerp, Belg., that took place April 20th - Sept. 12, 1920. The Antwerp Games were the sixth occurrence of the modern Olympic Games. Read More on This Topic. The 1920 Olympics were awarded to Antwerp in hopes of bringing a spirit of renewal to Belgium, which had been devastated during the war. The defeated countries of World War Ist Germany, Austria, Hungary, Bulgaria, and Turkey were not. The 1920 Olympics were awarded to Antwerp in hopes of bringing a spirit of renewal to Belgium, which had been devastated during World War I. The defeated countriesst Germany, Austria, Hungary, Bulgaria, and Turkey were not invited. The new Soviet Union chose not to attend.