

ABOUT THE OLYMPIC GAMES IN 1952

Report of M. Erik von Frenckell, President of the organising committee of the 1952 Games at Helsinki, presented at the Rome session in 1949

Mr. President, Gentlemen.

On behalf of the organising committee for the XVth Olympic Games in Helsinki 1952 I have the honour and pleasure to present a scheme of our proposed (plan) for the 1952 Games and to tell you, at the same time, something of what the organising committee has hitherto done.

Immediately when the I. O. C. congress in Stockholm in 1947 had granted the Finns the organisation of the Games, an organising committee was founded. The first meeting was held in September 1947. The committee consists of eleven members representing the City of Helsinki, which is responsible for the main organisation, the Government giving the City all possible support, and further all national sports federations. Therefore, it is no exaggeration to say that the population of Finland is represented to 100 percent in the organising committee. As testimony I may mention that up to now Government, Parliament and City as well as private enterprises have given all support we have asked for.

The preliminary organisation work has been greatly facilitated through the experience Finnish sportsmen gained already during the preparations made in 1938-39 for the Games which were to be held in Helsinki in 1940. Therefore, as far as the main organisation is concerned, we have reason to feel optimistic.

May I at first draw your attention to Helsinki's qualifications as olympic venue from a geographical point of view. The map of Helsinki shows you how concentrated the Games will be. All events will take place within an area with about 6 kilometres radius from the Railway Station, which means from the middle of the city.

The Stadium built in 1937 and completed in 1939 is now being rebuilt to hold about 70 000 spectators. The renovation work will be finished by January 1st 1950.

Next to the Stadium to the West there are seven football grounds, where 15 000 gymnasts at the same time gave a show two years ago. The stands are for about 30 000 spectators.

Opposite the Stadium, 100 metres to the East is the new Swimming Stadium. The measures of the main swimming pool are : length 50 metres, width 20 metres and depth 2 metres. The water is warmed to 22 degr. Celcius. A little apart lies the Diving Pool with a jumping tower of international dimensions, depth of water 6 metres. The machinery for the pool was ordered already in 1938 from England and will be complete this year. The stands accommodate about 5000 spectators.

About 150 metres to the South from the Stadium is the Exhibition Hall, where the Boxing, Gymnastics Wrestling and weight lifting will take place, partly in the Main Hall, partly in a new Hall, which is planned to be built and ready for use already for the 400 years anniversary of the city of Helsinki to be celebrated in 1950. During the Games 8 to 10000 spectators will be accommodated in the Main Hall and about 2500 in the New Hall.

About 300 metres to the North from the Stadium the Equestrian Stadium is situated. All jumps and

dressage tests will take place here. The stands are built to seat about 2000 spectators and in addition about 3000 persons can easily follow the contests from the nearby hills. In case of rain the jumps and dressage tests will be arranged inside the Equestrian Hall. Dimensions : length 100 and width 62 metres. Stands for over 2000 persons. Stalls for about 200 horses were built already for the 1940 Games.

The cross-country is projected with starting and finishing points opposite the Equestrian Hall. The Prix de Nations will, according to the rules, take place on the closing day at the Stadium.

About 2 kilometres : from the Stadium to the North-East is the Velodrome built in 1939 to seat about 8000-10 000 spectators. The Velodrome is situated opposite the Olympic village, also built in 1939 and holding 3000 athletes. The new Olympic village to be built for the 1952 Games will hold 4000 competitors. The training grounds for the athletes are to be found between the Olympic village and the Velodrome and the size of these is one square kilometre.

6 kilometres from the centre of the city is the Rifle Range built in 1937 when Finland arranged the World Championships in shooting. The stands are still in good condition.

The Canoeing Stadium is situated at 2 kilometres distance to the West from the Stadium. 6000 spectators will have the opportunity to follow the canoeing contests.

The Rowing competitions will be arranged 2 kilometres further on from the Canoeing Stadium in a bay which is protected against waves by small wooded islands.

The Fencing contests will take place about 6 kilometres from the centre in a Tennis Hall built for four centre courts with seats for about 1000 spectators.

The Yachting Course will be immediately outside the harbour. No special arrangements for these contests will be necessary, since three or four yachting contests are arranged on this course every year.

Gentlemen ! I hope I am not taking too much of your valuable time in telling you all this. My wish has only been to show you that we in Finland are prepared for arranging the sports events in a satisfactory way. — Apart from the international referees which will be placed to our disposal by the international federations, we have a big staff of people trained since many years in different sports. Two big Swiss Watch Companies have offered us their services for the electrical timekeeping. During the two years left before the Games the organising committee will, of course, arrange sufficient training possibilities not only for timekeepers, but for all staff to be at the athletes' disposal during the Games.

Then a few words about the number of attending athletes: During the last three Olympic Games in Los Angeles, Berlin and London the figures are : 1393, 4069 and 4146 respectively. If, as we all do hope, world peace de facto reigns in 1952, at least five nations, which were not represented in London

will attend in Helsinki, namely Russia, Germany, Japan, Roumania and Bulgaria. Apart from these ten countries being represented for the first time in London only with small teams, will no doubt send much bigger ones to Finland. Some pessimists predict that the number of attending athletes in 1952 will rise to nearly 8000. This figure seems to be too big. We should not like to receive more than 6000 or perhaps 7000 with officials, athletes, leaders, trainers etc.

It is not in our opinion to-day possible to carry through the idea of baron de Coubertin, that all athletes should be brought together in an olympic village. With all extra buildings, stores, dining rooms, kitchens etc. the organisers would have to build not a village, but a city where the possibilities to make good friends of all the assembled athletes — the main purpose of baron de Coubertin's idea — would be very small. We therefore have in mind to house yachtsmen, horsemen, fencers, shooters and maybe footballers separately at places, where they can be offered better training facilities. The Olympic Village will thus be erected to house mainly the track- and field athletes. A special village for the women athletes will also be built : this is projected to house about 6 to 800. — By these arrangements, we dare say, the wishes of baron de Coubertin have still been observed, although we have had to make alterations, because of the enormous crowd of competitors which is expected and which baron de Coubertin hardly could foresee.

We also expect a great number of journalists. In order to give all active newspapermen the best possible facilities we have the intention to house them in two big student houses, each room being for one or two persons. In every room loudspeakers, telephones etc. are available and in the houses are also two big central dining rooms, two gymnastic halls, librairies, sitting rooms, restaurants and bars and naturally also « saunas », that is the real Finnish bath with hot air, to refresh tired journalists.

The Food situation in Finland is not bad. Since one year the rationing has been gradually abolished and we hope that within another year there will be no more rationing in Finland, except, I am sorry to say, restrictions on houses.

And now to a very important question : the housing of visitors and tourists. May I at first tell you that members of the I. O. C. and their families will be housed in a new-built big hotel, which will be ready in the spring 1952. The site for this hotel was sold by the city to the hotel company, the plans are just being drawn and the building work will start this summer. — For the members of the international sports federations one or two big hotels will be reserved. So far so good, and as far as athletes, journalists, I. O. C.-members and members of sports federations are concerned there should be no reason for remarks. — The number of hotel rooms in Helsinki is not very imposing. Anyway some ordinary hotels will be built in the meantime before 1952. If, as we hope, the world situation has developed in a favourable way during these three years some tourist liners will probably attend, but unfortunately each of them stop here 2 to 3 days only. In 1939 35 tourist steamers with a passenger number of 17 000 had ordered anchor and harbour places in Helsinki. The city of Helsinki has granted 300 mill. Fmks (equal to 2,2 mill. dollars) for this years building programme.

Accommodation in private families will be possible after three years. In 1939 before the war we had arrangements with about 20 000 private beds in Helsinki, nearly corresponding to boarding houses. For young people, especially from Scandinavia

and Finland we will arrange for simple housings in schools and official buildings, and at least 20000 young persons can be housed at these places. In 1939 boyscout organisations had asked for sites to pitch tents on, which would have held about 7000 persons. — It is anyhow, gentlemen, too early to state any definite numbers until the last year before the Games.

We plan to sell 50 % of the entrance tickets abroad and preliminary discussions are being carried on with local travel bureaus regarding the possibilities to sell the entrance tickets as well as travelling and housing tickets all together in order to secure that everyone who gets entrance tickets to the Games can be sure to get the travelling and housing tickets as well. — Due to the uncertain quotations of currencies in different countries the sale will not start until the autumn 1951.

In the end of March the organising committee had the honour and pleasure to receive the president of the I. O. C., Mr. Edström, and the chancellor Mr. Otto Mayer. We did our best to give them an idea of our plans and they were also offered the opportunity to inspect all our sports grounds. I suppose that Mr. Edström kindly will give a short report of his visit.

In London the I. O. C. congress several times expressed the wish that the olympic programme should not be enlarged. On the contrary some necessary reductions were recommended. Having thoroughly discussed this question with all Finnish sports associations, the organising committee finally decided to propose that the London programme should be used as basis when the programme for the 1952 Games is being drawn up. Therefore we have refused to accept over ten proposals to include sports which were not represented in London last summer. However, we are of course prepared to carefully note and discuss any alternative proposal of the I. O. C. or international sports federations.

Now these questions have been discussed in Lausanne. We propose that the three principles should be adopted to-day by the I. O. C. :

- a) To admit as basis the programme of the London Games.
- b) Not to admit any new sport.
- c) To admit a general reduction in some sports after understanding with the respective federations.

We do hope that our programme will be accepted not because it represents the wishes of Finland's organising committee, but because the programme, in a way, originally has been suggested by the London organising committee.

Mr. President, Gentlemen ! After the excellently organised Games in London last summer it will be a difficult task for a small country like Finland to satisfy everybody's wishes, all the more as the wishes expressed might be quite contrary to each other. Therefore we do hope that the congress would draw up a clear line, which we are prepared to strictly follow.

The enthusiasm of the Finnish people is not to be mistaken. If the XVth Olympic Games won't be a success this won't be due to lack of interest but the reason will rather lie in circumstances beyond the control of a small country.