

The 'Olympic Day' celebration in Italy

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In the year preceding the Olympic Games in Rome, Italy celebrated her 'Olympic Day' in a style never equalled so far.

Ever since the end of 1958, the Italian Olympic Committee laid the foundations for an elaborate scheme of organizations, inviting all the Federations, Associations and Provincial Sports Clubs to co-operate in its realization. An instructional film: *Le Maillot Azur* was published by the Italian National Olympic Committee, illustrating the preparations of the Italian athletes for the Games and was shown everywhere. 120 copies of this film were distributed. 50,000 enlarged copies of a special mural poster were given country-wide distribution and was reproduced in 10,000 smaller size bills and 10,000 picture postcards. In addition to these, a special commemorative medal was struck and 35,000 copies of this medal made in silver and bronze were awarded to deserving athletes and eminent sports leaders. Numerous prizes consisting in sport, equipments were also distributed.

Apart from showing the film *Le Maillot d'Azur* and other instructional films, there were inaugurations of various sports installations and of Art Exhibitions. Shop-windows competitions deriving their inspiration from sport were also organized for the benefit of the public as well as literary and press competitions. While the Olympic Flame was kindled symbolically, torch bearers paraded by relays in the streets of the cities. Sports competitions were held everywhere in order to make the public realize their enormous value on an educational and physical health basis.

We must make a special mention of the opportunity offered to all Italian children to

take part in their first sport competition. All sport organizations co-operated in bringing out this gigantic realization, enabling more than 12,000 competitions to be held, bringing together hundred of thousands children won over to sport.

The culminating point of all these celebrations was staged in Rome on the famous place of the Capitole, on September 25th, in the presence of a representative audience of high government officials, of the two Diplomatic Corps, of sport and student associations and a large crowd. The Italian Metropolis was decorated just as it would have been for a National Fête. Distinguished members of the Government, senators and political authorities, mayors, professors, journalists, leading personalities in sport and athletes exposed the aims of this Olympic Day to the crowds.

The whole press as well as the Radio and Television services related the celebrations and most outstanding events, thus building up an efficacious propaganda in favour of Olympic ideals.

The Italian Olympic Committee is pleased to acknowledge the untiring efforts and precious collaboration of the Italian Ministry of Public education, including the Prefecture and the Police as well as all the military and religious circles upholding the cause of sport, the Municipal authorities and other youth organizations. Without a doubt, the celebration of the 'Olympic Day' has created in Italy a great impetus and outburst of enthusiasm for the cause of sport. It has given the proof that latent forces exist which, if suitably supported and directed, can give Italian sport a future full of promises.



The Mayor of the City of Rome (center) and the President of the Italian National Olympic Committee (right) giving an award to the most deserving athlete, on the occasion of the Olympic Day in Italy. September 1959.

The Olympic Day has been celebrated in Rome. Here is the sacred Fire at the 'Capitole'.

