

## Radio, television and the Olympic Games

The planning and organization of international radio and television broadcasts of important events such as the Olympic Games are extremely complicated tasks calling for great experience and specialised knowledge. The only organization capable of successfully undertaking such operations at the international level is the European Broadcasting Union (E.B.U.) with its system of television programme exchanges known as Eurovision. The O.I.R.T., the other European organization which carries out the Intervention exchanges, does not yet have the same facilities and was thus obliged to associate itself with the E.B.U. operations for the Tokyo Olympic Games. In North America, the problem was more straightforward since the continent is not split up into as many different countries, linguistic areas and television networks as they are in Europe. Sound radio and television reporting of the Olympic Games today play an outstanding role. Thanks to radio and television, a very large public may be reached rapidly. In addition to radio programmes, the public can now follow the events which interest it on television. It must be admitted that the press is no longer the only information medium as it was formerly, although organisers of events still tend to favour the representatives of the press and do not recognise the radio and television representatives to the same extent. The latter must, in effect, always be accompanied by teams of specialists and assistants and be armed with an imposing amount of technical equipment. This special situation — in particular with television — calls for a large deployment of installations and the presence of a large staff on the spot. In the case of the Tokyo Olympic Games, the European radio and television organizations alone had to send, or recruit on the spot, more than 300 people, while encountering great difficulties as far as accreditations and hotel reservations were concerned.

The Japanese bodies, and in particular N.H.K. — the principal sound broadcasting and television organization — and the telecommunications services, were faced with inevitable demands from the radio and television services, but completed their task to the general satisfaction of everyone. Goodwill apart, the operation was made possible thanks to the country's advanced technical standards and to the enormous sums invested in preparing the Olympic Games.

Most of the broadcasting organizations were faced with a new problem — how to retransmit as complete reportages as possible over very long distances as rapidly as possible. But thanks

to the time difference between Japan and Europe, it was even possible to gain a little time on the operation.

It was in March 1963 that the E.B.U. began to examine the facilities existing in Japan and to launch negotiations aimed at obtaining all the equipment and facilities necessary to the E.B.U. operation. In accordance with the basic plan, a team of experts consisting of about 30 people from the various European sound broadcasting and television organizations, recorded in Tokyo the programme transmitted by N.H.K. and sent it to Europe by air over the Polar route. This programme was awaited in Europe not only at the airport normally planned, but also at numerous possible aircraft diversion points. From these points, the programme was preferably despatched to Hamburg which was the main "injection point" of the European television network. An unexpected event — the launching of the "Syncom III" satellite — caused the whole of this operation, which had been minutely planned in advance, to be partly complemented and partly upset. Thanks to "Syncom III", the picture from Japan reached us more rapidly, after traversing the United States and Canada, and crossing the Atlantic either in a specially chartered aircraft or by means of another satellite. The time difference sometimes enabled pictures transmitted from Tokyo by means of the two satellites to reach Europe before the Japanese time at which the events were scheduled to take place. According to the contracts signed with the Organizing Committee and N.H.K., E.B.U. and O.I.R.T. member television organizations were authorised to transmit 25 hours of the "Polar" programme and 15 hours of the "Satellite" programme.

Considering the enormous expenditure imposed on broadcasters by the organization of the radio and television coverage of the Olympic Games and bearing in mind the equally exorbitant costs incurred by the international, or even worldwide, transmission of reportages, the question arises as to whether the cost of the operation, including the rights to be paid, might not one day become prohibitive. In order to cope with the too rapidly increasing logistic difficulties which have to be overcome when planning for the Olympic Games, and in order to meet those obligations arising from these difficulties, it is absolutely necessary to have more increasingly efficient and rapid coordination among all those dealing with the organization of the Olympic Games in every field.