



Mrs. Zanchi with President Edström at Mon-Repos.

## A Departure at the IOC

President Sigfrid Edström used to say : "Those who perform the work must also be honoured." This generous thought was quoted by the woman to whom we are bidding goodbye today, as often as she quoted its author whom she admired so much. And if we, in our turn, quote it today, and devote our editorial to her, it is to render homage to Mrs. Zanchi who, on 30th September this year, retired from the olympic secretariat.

Mrs. Zanchi has just left the post she occupied officially since 1946 and in actual fact since the late 20's. Baron de Coubertin, whom she knew, had given up the presidency of the I.O.C. barely three years earlier when, as a young woman, Mrs. Zanchi was taken on by Colonel Berdez, the olympic secretary at that time, to assist him a few hours a week.

A marriage, two sons, and even active participation in a feminist movement could not tear Mrs. Zanchi away from the Olympic Movement, and when the Second World War broke out and Colonel Berdez died soon after, Mrs. Zanchi was left to hold the fort in Lausanne and carry on an olympic activity that was obviously greatly reduced but whose survival became all the more important as the whole planet became engulfed in the flames and smoke of war. Sigfrid Edström meanwhile temporarily took over the presidency left vacant by the death of Count Baillet-Latour, in 1942.

At the end of the war, it was decided to find an olympic secretary in Lausanne. The appointment was given to Chancellor Otto Mayer, and Mrs. Zanchi was officially made secretary of the I.O.C. by Mr. Edström, whose position as president had been confirmed by the 39th session in 1946.

Thus started a cooperation which surmounted all difficulties even under the most precarious conditions. For the olympic secretariat — and this resignation is an opportunity for us to mention it — had to operate without money and without premises until just over two years ago. Now while necessity is the mother of invention, it nevertheless represents an obstacle and curtails action. Those who are taking over under conditions that are of course not yet perfect but nevertheless considerably easier will not forget it.

Mrs. Zanchi has left the I.O.C. A page has been turned on a period of faithful cooperation, but the memory will live on of this outspoken, intelligent woman who, year after year, looked after the minutes, the archives and the meager olympic finances, while assisting the chancellor ; although she usually remained in the background her incisive judgement never failed to prove effective.

For her devotion to the olympic cause as well as for having, in time of need, taken over the reins of the secretariat of Mon-Repos, the I.O.C. wishes to express to Mrs. Zanchi its deepest gratitude.

*M.M.*

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# THE ASIAN GAMES

## A short history

### The beginnings

The 13th February, 1949, may be said to be the date on which the Asian Games Federation took its birth. It was on that date that representatives of a number of Asian countries met at Patiala House, New Delhi, to sign its Constitution.

But dates, in history, have a nominal significance only. Behind the date of the formation of an organization, and preceding it there is a long period of gestation and it is really difficult to say when the real birth began.

The Asian Games Federation is no exception to this.

Not to go too far back, the actual inspiration for the Federation, may be traced in part to the Far-Eastern Games which used to be held periodically between Japan, China, Siam, Malaya and the Philippines, in the first three decades of the century. (India too, took part in these in 1928.) But after 1934, these games came to an end.

A second source, undoubtedly was the International Olympic Games, in which the Asian countries were taking increasing interest.

Still another source of inspiration was provided by the First Western Asiatic Games (for countries East of Suez and West of Singapore) which were held in New Delhi, in March 1934.

But the idea of bringing together the youth of *all* Asia on the field of Sport, lay dormant till March 1947, when the Asian Relations Conference called by Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, in New Delhi, provided an opportunity for bringing the project of an Asian Games to the notice of the countries gathered there.

Mr. G. D. Sondhi, member of the International Olympic Committee since 1932, who had attended all the Olympic Games since 1924, and had also initiated and executed the plan to hold the First Western Asiatic Games of 1934, and who happened to be then in New Delhi, found this to be a suitable opportunity to contact some of the assembled representatives of Asian countries, and to place before them the idea of an Asiatic Games and their organization.

Not all the Asian representatives contacted showed appreciation of the idea, nor could those who approved of it, commit their countries to the project.

Still some hope was kindled.

Yet, in July 1947, for reasons undisclosed, the Council of the Indian Olympic Association who was to bear the ultimate responsibility of sponsoring the Games, though it declared itself in favour of the idea, did not want it to be pursued further.

Meeting with this obstruction, Mr. Sondhi modified his scheme of a multi-events games into one of an Asian track and field championship, for which the consent of the Indian Olympic Association was not necessary. An organizing committee was set up and early in July 1948 invitations were issued to Asian countries to send their teams to New Delhi in February 1949.

At the Games of the XIVth Olympiad in London, in August 1948, there were thirteen Asian countries participating : Afghanistan, Burma, Ceylon, China, Korea, India, Iraq, Iran, Lebanon, Pakistan, the Philippines, Singapore and Syria. Mr. Sondhi took advantage of this opportunity to invite the chief managers of the Asian teams to join in consultation on the 8th August.

Two proposals were presented by Mr. Sondhi.

1. To hold an Asian Athletic (track and field) Championships in New Delhi, in February 1949, and
2. To set up an Asian Games Federation, on the model of the International Olympic Committee, to hold Asian Games, every four years, in between the Olympic Games.

The second proposal was strongly backed by Mr. Vargas, member of the International Olympic Committee since 1936, who had had a similar project in mind, and was enthusiastically accepted and it was agreed to hold a multi-events Games, in New Delhi, in 1950.

The first proposal, of a track and field Championships, was also accepted, but with a modification. The 1949 Athletic Championships were to be made " Invitation " ones, and not to be one of a series, as the track and field events were to be included in the Asian Games programme of 1950.

But the occasion of this meeting was to be utilized to finalize the Constitution of the Asian Organization.

A sub-committee consisting of Messrs. Gunsun Hoh (China), K. C. Synn (Korea), Candido Bartoleme or Jorge B. Vargas (the Philippines) and G. D. Sondhi (India), drafted a constitution of what was then named the Asian Amateur Athletic Federation, to be presented at the meeting in New Delhi, in February 1949. It also drew up a list of events to be included in the programme of the Federation's Games.

On his return to China, Mr. Hoh who had been appointed provisional Secretary circularised the Constitution and programme as drafted by the sub-committee.

#### **Founding the Federation.**

In pursuance of the London decision to hold the Invitation Asian Track and Field Championships in New Delhi, in February 1949, an Organising Committee was set up with H. H. Yadavindra Singh as President, and Mr. Sondhi as Secretary, to make all the necessary arrangements and invitations to participate in the Championships were issued to the Asian countries.

But on account of the generally unsettled conditions, and the difficulty of financing their teams soon after the London Games, some countries asked for the postponement of the Championships and of their being merged in the bigger Asian Games to be held in 1950.

The Organising Committee regretfully agreed to these proposals, and cancelled the Invitation Track and Field Championships. Yet in pursuance of the London agreement to hold a meeting of Asian

countries to finalize the Constitution of the Asian Amateur Athletic Federation, the Committee invited the National Olympic Committees of Asian countries to send their representatives to New Delhi to a Conference on 12th and 13th February, 1949.

#### **Meeting of 12th February, 1949.**

The first meeting of the representatives was held at Patiala House on the 12th February. The following countries were represented : Afghanistan, Burma, Ceylon, India, Indonesia, Nepal, Pakistan, the Philippines and Thailand.

H. H. Yadavindra Singh, Maharaja of Patiala, was voted to the chair. In his speech, after welcoming the representatives of their countries, the Maharaja explained the objectives of the proposed Federation : to bring the youth of Asian countries together on the field of Sport for the development of physical fitness and for the promotion of friendship and understanding between their countries.

Following the reading of messages of approval, Mr. Sondhi explained that the proposed federation was to work in Asia according to the International Olympic ideas and to be supplementary to the Olympic Movement.

The meeting then proceeded to examine the draft Constitution. This draft, based on the draft prepared in London, but considerably amplified to be in accord with the Constitution of the International Olympic Committee, was prepared by Mr. Sondhi in close consultation with H. E. Dr. Najib Ullah, Afghanistan.

A sub-committee went over the new draft and accepted it. But to avoid confusion between the word Athletic in the English sense (track and field only) and the American one (all sports), it decided to change the originally proposed name of the Asian Amateur Athletic Federation to that of the Asian Games Federation.

#### **Meeting of 13th February, 1949.**

In the second meeting of the representatives on 13th February, the draft of the Constitution, as presented by the sub-committee, was approved, with a few minor changes, and it was unanimously decided to form an Asian Games Federation.

It was decided to hold the Asian Games every four years, in the even years between the Olympic Games, beginning with the year 1950. The programme of the Games was to be :

Compulsory : track and field athletics, swimming and diving and Fine Arts (on the lines of the Olympic Programme).

Optional : any other amateur game or sport for which at least four member countries had signified their intention to participate.

The meeting also unanimously accepted the motto of the Federation and the design of its emblem as proposed and designed by Mr. Sondhi. The motto was to be " Ever Onward ", which suitably expressed the spirit of the Olympic motto — Citius, Altius, Fortius. The emblem was to be the Full Sun (orange) with below it, inter-linked circles equal to the number of member countries (blue), all on a white background.

The request of the Indian Olympic Association to hold the 1st Asian Games in February 1950 was cordially accepted. \*

The Games of 1954, were assigned to Manila (the Philippines). The following office-bearers were then elected for the ensuing term (1949-1950) : H. H. Maharaja Yadavindra Singh as President, the Honourable Jorge B. Vargas as senior Vice-President (the seat of junior Vice-President was left vacant for the time being), and Mr. G. D. Sondhi as Honorary Secretary and Treasurer.

Thus ended the most historic meeting in the annals of Asian Sport.

\* The 1st Asian Games, in New Delhi, were finally held in 1951.

