



Art and culture

at the Mexico Games

Mr. Lopez Mateos having had to resign from his post on the Organizing Committee of the Games of the XIXth Olympiad for reasons of ill-health, Mr. Pedro Ramirez Vazquez succeeded to the Presidency in July 1966 and to him fell the task of presenting an intermediate report to the Executive Board of the I.O.C. in Mexico last autumn. From this report we have taken the very interesting passage concerning the artistic and cultural programme planned by the Organizing Committee, the originality and variety of which will add a special note to the Mexico Games.

To quote President Ramirez Vazquez :

Fully aware of the fact that sports events do not represent the only means of bringing young people of different countries together, we feel on the contrary that one of the main purposes of Olympism is to create mutual understanding, brotherhood and friendship capable of uniting the youth of the whole world inspired by the conviction of the equality of all men.

One of the features of our tradition being an aspiration towards universal peace, Mexicans adhere wholeheartedly to the ideals of Olympism.

Consequently, alongside the programme of sports events we have drawn up plans that will enable the 1968 Olympic Games to step beyond the purely sporting field and to present at the same time a cultural panorama for the benefit not only of the inhabitants of the country, but also of tourists and competitors.

We have called this programme " The Presence of Culture " and the reason we do not consider it appropriate to award prizes or select winners is that it is impossible to judge painting, music, literature or any other cultural activity in terms of " tenths of a second ".

We plan to ask the National Olympic Committees to take the necessary steps to send two works of art with their sports delegations, the first to be representative of a brilliant period of their cultural past, and the second one of the best creations of the contemporary period. Thanks to this idea, it will be possible to present a survey of universal art and, in this way, our Games will combine the presence of both man and the mark he has made on the world down through the ages.

These cultural events will allow athletes from all over the world to be not only performers but also spectators at the Olympic Games in all their facets.

In the olympic village, it is planned to group the houses accommodating the athletes round small squares in which very short programmes will be held daily, lasting a quarter of an hour at the most, featuring various dance and folklore groups as well as university chairs from the different provinces of Mexico. Thus, by performing in the capital, these groups will give the country as a whole the feeling of participating in the Olympic Games, and at the same time allow us to show our guests the richness of our traditions. In these same squares there will also be



performances by groups of athletes from different countries or performers that National Olympic Committees may decide to bring to Mexico with their delegations. This will not only enable the countries taking part to make their own traditions better known but also create among competitors that atmosphere of sympathy and good fellowship born of the sharing of traditions, an atmosphere which should moreover contribute to maintaining the athletes at the top of their form both physically and morally and

enable them to take part in the events under the best possible conditions.

This experiment in communal living marked by artistic expression arising spontaneously out of popular tradition will leave an unforgettable memory among those taking part.

In the centre of the olympic village, we wish to create an open space which might be called "Peace and Olympic Concord". A number of leading sculptors will be invited to meet in Mexico at the beginning of 1968. Each

of them will be given a large block of stone with which to create a personal work based on the theme of the olympic ideal. These works will remain in this central open space, bearing permanent witness to the meeting of Olympism and sculpture.

We are also studying the possibility of putting on a performance by our well-known ballet company of a new programme entitled "Ballet of the Five Continents".

In addition to the cultural events organized at previous Olympic Games, which we shall continue at Mexico, such as a stamp exhibition (without lucrative aims), and exhibitions of sports photography, sport in art, the history of pre-Columbian sport, etc., we are also considering programmes of a scientific nature devoted to genetics (in view of the presence at the Olympic Games of some of the finest specimens of contemporary mankind), the space age and the use of nuclear energy for the welfare of man and not for his destruction.

These projects will not involve Mexico in excessive expense but only considerable work in the way of promotion and coordination for, in many cases, these projects already exist on a national level or correspond to those of national or international institutions that might be willing to place them under their auspices. Here too, the cooperation of the Mexican people can be counted on.

In imparting these features to the Olympic Games, Mexicans will be able to feel satisfied with their contribution, without placing undue importance on the number of medals they might win in the sports events. Loyal to the tradition of its history and its culture, Mexico hopes thus to distinguish itself in the field of brotherhood and peace.

The Games of the XIXth Olympiad will therefore bring together the best of mankind and at the same time provide a survey of contemporary culture.