

# The olympic flame from Greece to Mexico



In October 1968, Olympia and Teotihuacán, which were the seats of gods and one of which, before the Christian era, was the centre of Hellenic culture while the other was the centre of the culture of Teotihuacán, will be joined by the flame which is to be lit in the temple of Zeus and later placed on the sun pyramid.

The Mexican Organizing Committee has planned the route which the olympic flame will take with great care. This journey, which starts with the ceremony at Olympia during which the flame is lit, is a traditional custom which was revived for the Berlin Games in 1936 and has been maintained with growing enthusiasm ever since. This is the first time in olympic history that the Games will be staged in a Latin-American country and also the first time that the flame will be brought to the American continent.

The route planned has been inspired by the events which were of great significance for the progress of mankind : the historical and geographical expansion of greco-latin culture which was born in Greece, spread to Italy and Spain and from thence crossed the Atlantic to America. In the same way, the olympic flame will be lit at Olympia and will be carried on land by relays to Athens ; from Piraeus, the Hellenic Olympic Committee will bring it on a Greek vessel to Genoa where it will be handed over to the Italian Olympic Committee. There, in the birthplace of Admiral Christopher Columbus, homage will be rendered to the discoverer of America and the flame will be put aboard a ship belonging to the Italian navy bound for Barcelona.

The Spanish Olympic Committee will then take charge of the flame and will bring it across the country, passing on the way through towns which, from a historical point of view, are closely linked with the colonization of America. From Palos, which was the port of embarkation for Christopher Columbus and his caravels, the olympic flame will be put aboard a frigate of the Spanish navy which will carry it across the Atlantic following Columbus' route : Santa Cruz in Tenerife, the Sargasso sea and finally the island of San Salvador, which is also called Guanahani

or Watling, the first American land to be discovered by Europeans on the morning of 12th October 1492. Here the flame will break its journey for a few hours before being transferred to a ship of the Mexican navy and brought to the port of Veracruz.



In Veracruz the flame will be divided and will start out on five olympic routes through Mexican territory, five rays which will symbolize the five olympic rings and which will spread out to the country's frontier towns of Tijuana, Ciudad Juarez, Matamoros and Chetumal and Tapachula. From these outlying points will start the different journeys which after having passed through the capitals of all the Mexican States will converge simultaneously on Teotihuacán where, according to Aztec tradition "... men become gods." On 11th October, at dusk, on the great platforms which separate the pyramids, the original flame will be solemnly received during a typically Mexican ceremony inspired from the sacred rites of Pre-Hispanic peoples — a homage to fire rendered in the most elevated manner : the purity of spirit.

Culture and tradition, from Hellas to Teotihuacán, will therefore be revived next year and linked by the course taken by this living symbol — the olympic flame.

*Jacques M. Yerrey.*