

Welcome address by Dr. Kurt Heller, *President of the Austrian Olympic Committee*

The 77th Session of the International Olympic Committee gives me, as President of the Austrian Olympic Committee, the great honour of bidding you, ladies and gentlemen, most sincerely welcome to Austria for the second occasion within such a short time.

I should particularly like to thank Dr. Fred Sinowatz, Federal Minister of Education and Art, for kindly joining us today to perform the official opening of the Session on behalf of the President of the Austrian Republic.

My most cordial greetings go to Lord Killanin, President of the International Olympic Committee, with whom the Austrian Olympic Committee enjoys an excellent rapport. But equally I should like to welcome all the members of the International Olympic Committee as well as the Presidents and representatives of the international sports federations.

This is the fifth session of the International Olympic Committee in Austria. In 1933, 1951 and 1974 Vienna was selected as the venue; in 1964 it was Innsbruck, and now, in 1976, Innsbruck, the capital of the Tyrol, has again been given the honour of acting as host to you for your 77th Session. We know you were made to feel very much at home in Vienna, and we are optimistic that your stay in Innsbruck will be equally pleasant. At all events we have endeavoured to provide ideal conditions for your work, and we hope your discussions will be most fruitful.

Since the Olympic Games were re-introduced in 1894 Austria has played an active part in the international Olympic movement; the excellent results achieved by our athletes have demonstrated that even a small country is capable of top-class performances in the field of sport. We have always upheld our commitment to the Olympic ideals and have furthered the aims of the Olympic movement to the best of our abilities.

At the end of 1972, when it was apparent that Denver would have to withdraw as organiser of the 12th Winter Games, a serious situation developed for the continuance of the Winter Olympics. In Austria, we were not slow to see our opportunity and no less slow to act; after brief discussions between all parties concerned, it was quickly agreed that Innsbruck should apply to stage the 1976 Winter Olympics. Undoubtedly this speedy and unanimous decision contributed largely to the success of Innsbruck's application, and I hope I may be permitted to offer my most sincere thanks to the Austrian Government in particular, but also to the authorities in the Tyrol and the City of Innsbruck, since they have to bear the greater part of the financial burden.

Although Innsbruck was given very little time in which to make the preparation necessary for the second Winter Games within twelve years, the city had the advantage of a team of organisers who had already proved their mettle and with whose aid all the problems have been mastered in the creation, if I may say so, of optimum conditions for staging the Games. The brevity of the period for preparations, as well as the decision to reject gargantuanism, which, in its very inhumanity, is alien to the nature of sport, readily lent themselves to a new approach under the motto of « technical perfection, unpretentious Games ».

It is hoped that this return to simplicity, such as the reasonable restrictions imposed on the media sector or, in particular, the construction of a combined bob and toboggan run, to give only two examples, will be of some consequence for future Winter Olympics. If the Innsbruck approach finds enough imitators the future of the bob and toboggan events as Winter Olympic disciplines, which has been the subject of many discussions, would seem to be secured for many years to come.

With this approach, of which the two examples mentioned are symptomatic, Innsbruck is undoubtedly making an extremely valuable contribution to a viable future for the Winter Games themselves, all the more so as any reduction in the programme of events would represent a danger for the continued existence of Winter Olympics.

Seen in this light, Innsbruck 1976 is more than just the second occasion in the space of twelve years on which a small country like Austria has been the venue of Winter Games. The very fact that Innsbruck has successfully stepped into the breach left by Denver and

has developed a new strategy for staging the Games has a significance that the superficial observer may fail to appreciate.

At present the organisers are working flat out to put the finishing touches to the preparations. Everything has been done to ensure a success equal to, and perhaps even greater than that of 1964. Now we can only hope that no unforeseeable and uncontrollable event will occur to ruin our endeavours.

With the organisation of the 12th Winter Games, we in Austria feel we have rendered the Olympic movement good services. We hope that our great efforts and earnest endeavours will be accompanied by a small measure of good fortune and rewarded with success, so that « Innsbruck 1976 » will manage to fulfil its role as a model for future Winter Olympics.

Hopefully trusting in the successful outcome of the 1976 Winter Games and gratefully acknowledging our bonds with the international Olympic movement, on behalf of the Austrian Olympic Committee I should like to wish you every success in the deliberations of this the 77th Session of the International Olympic Committee.

K. H.



General view taken during the speech made by Dr. Fred Sinowatz.