



Messrs. Conrado Duránte and François Alaphilippe teaching classes in Cameroon.

THE FIRST OF ITS KIND

by MARIE-HÉLÈNE ROUKHADZÉ

In 1961, on the initiative of Count Jean de Beaumont, IOC Member in France, was created an international Olympic aid committee, later to become Olympic Solidarity, whose aims are to spread the Olympic ideal, promote education of athletes, coaches and sports administrators, to popularize sport throughout the world and above all to give help to those NOCs most in need of it. Very early on, Olympic Solidarity's work benefited from the enthusiastic and effective support of sports administrators in different continents.

This systematic spreading of information quickly strengthened relations between the IOC and the NOCs who, with the assistance of the National and International Sports Federations, set about training coaches, sports technicians and athletes.

As a result, continental, regional and national courses were set up by Olympic Solidarity to encourage greater participation in sports, and, of course, to increase the number of participants at the Olympic Games.

By 1982, the activities of the Commission for Olympic Solidarity related to the continental associations had increased to such a point that the Executive Board of the IOC appointed a Director of Olympic Solidarity, Mr. Anselmo Lopez, a Spanish member of the Commission for Olympic Solidarity for many years, who set about restructuring IOC aid and assistance to the NOCs so as to make it as effective as possible. He re-organized this "sports development department", alias Olympic Solidarity, introduced a four year plan to replace the annual programme which had been in force until then, and changed the process governing the allocation of technical courses. From then on it became the national sports federations, who are in the best position to determine the level of sport in their country, who, in agreement with their International Federation, decide to ask their NOC for a technical course to be organized. The NOC passes the request on to its continental association after giving precise answers, helped by the Federation, to the following questions : Who is the course aimed at? What will be the level, age range, dates and, finally, who will be in charge? Insofar as the course comes within the programme established by the continental association, the request is passed on to Olympic Solidarity and the technical course is organized.

At the end of each course, the NOC has to send Olympic Solidarity a financial, technical and administrative report to enable an evaluation of the successes and failures of the course to be made, so that lessons can be learned. It happens that some NOCs, often those amongst the least well off, sometimes fail to send their report, or else send it several months late, which means a delay in their receiving the sum representing 25% of the amount allocated by Olympic Solidarity for organizing the course concerned.

It must be added that, along with such lax attitudes towards sending the final report, the main difficulties which arise in organizing these courses, irrespective of which continent is involved, are mostly due to the makeshift, trial and error approach by the NOCs, and a lack of communication between the NOC and the national federations.

What good is it educating coaches and improving the level of the athletes if it is not possible to guarantee them a minimum of structure to enable them to develop their knowledge and pass on their experience? Experience drawn from hundreds of courses and analysis of their results shows that in their enthusiasm, people are often too keen to build the roof before they know whether the walls will hold up. Thus it happens that certain National Olympic Committees have either failed to evaluate their needs adequately, or else brought together on the course people at too widely differing levels but they have had no problem reaching an agreement on the dates of a course! So much time is lost, so many available resources neglected, simply through a lack of organization and follow-up !

WHAT IS THE ITINERANT SCHOOL, AND HOW DOES IT OPERATE ?

Mr. Anselmo Lopez decided to get to the root of the problem. He thought up a system of education, systematic yet extremely flexible, which would help everyone to fill in the gaps in their knowledge and develop their human potential to the full : the Itinerant School of Sports Administration was born ; it would move around on request to dispense its learning. The project was put before the Executive Board at their meeting in Mexico in 1984. While not wildly enthusiastic about the idea, they made no objection to the project being set up. Consequently, the director of the Olympic Solidarity worked on the idea and set up a working group whose task was to develop a manual for use by future students. Two years later, the manual was written and published in French, English and Spanish, and two trial courses were held in Jamaica and Zambia in January 1986. The adventure had begun !

The Itinerant School of Sports Administration is aimed at improving the level of training of sports leaders, both those attached to the NOCs and those working in sports organizations. The school is comprised of a group of specialists

Olympic Solidarity



Messrs. Amadou Lamine Ba, Secretary General of ACNOA, Anselmo Loper, Director of Olympic Solidarity, Ms. Diana Sharp, secretary of Solidarity for Africa, Mr. Richard Palmer (standing), Messrs. Roger Pringarbe and François Alaphilippe.

attached to Olympic Solidarity, chosen from among those sports leaders whose abilities, aptitude and experience in this field are indisputable. These voluntary experts were accepted as official course directors for the sports administration programme after attending a special seminar where they familiarized themselves with the methodology of teaching. Each course director is committed to take part, free of charge, in a minimum of three courses per year.

In addition to his individual talents, the course director has a sports leaders' manual available to him.

THE MANUAL

A 270 page manual, developed from previous experiences, and the result of many years of research, was put together by a group of experts on sports administration appointed by Olympic Solidarity. It is the first work of its kind to be produced, and is first and foremost a work-tool, the use and exploitation of which depend not just on

the course director but on the participants themselves. In five chapters it tackles the essentials of what a sports leader ought to know. After an introduction covering the history of the Olympic Movement, its structure and traditions, the manual deals with the following questions: fair play, doping and violence, women and sport, Olympism and the media, government and sport. Then comes a section on administration and management proper. The final chapter puts forward a series of programmes aimed either at helping resolve problems of communication between people, locating talent, training coaches, developing top level athletes, and planning an international tour, or at helping organize a mission to the Olympic Games, a sporting event, or a sports medicine service.

This manual was sent to all the NOCs, all the International Federations, and all the Institutes of Physical Education. It provides a source of reference and inspiration which Olympic Solidarity distributes to all the participants on the course of the Itinerant School of Sports Administration.

THE COURSE DIRECTOR

Throughout 1987, the experimental year for the School, the director was above all a teacher and instructor. From 1988, he will be more an ambassador of Olympic Solidarity, with the task of visiting each NOC to explain to the administrators and to the governmental sports authorities the aim and significance of the School, a new means which they can employ to improve or increase the knowledge of sports leaders. This ambassador will have not only to demonstrate the advantages to be gained from such a service for the development of national sport, but also to be a capable speaker who can quickly relate to the local situation and skilfully direct the NOC towards the IOC for any question outside the scope of Olympic Solidarity.

In 1986, letters were sent to all the NOCs to inform them about the creation of the Itinerant School, about its aim and its importance. To take advantage of it, all they had to do was to send a request to Olympic Solidarity who then appointed an expert to visit the leaders of the NOC and do some on-site planning towards organizing a course. In Africa, for example, 27 courses were requested and planned, but there are 45 NOCs. Why did so many NOCs fail to profit from the opportunity to gain new knowledge enabling them to develop sport more effectively in their countries? Why is it that of the 27 courses decided upon, only 14 actually took place? Is it a question of money? But Olympic Solidarity pays the transport and accommodation expenses of the course directors, and pays the bills of the NOCs up to the sum of 3,000 US dollars accounted for in a provisional budget. So then, if it is neither interest nor money which is lacking, it is probable that the cause is due to problems of communication, and that some NOCs never read the circular concerning the creation of the Itinerant School. And if thirteen African NOCs did not actually see their project through, it is obvious that they did not know how to, or did not want to resolve difficulties caused by misapprehensions or misunderstandings. Consequently, as it is impossible for Olympic Solidarity to know the problems of everyone straightaway, it is going to send its ambassadors. Once informed, the NOC will be totally free to decide whether or not it wishes to accept Olympic Solidarity's working conditions. If it is decided that the course will take place, the NOC can then

send out invitations so that during his preparatory visit, working alongside the NOC, the expert can work out all the material and technical aspects of the course (place, dates, number and level of the participants, transport, customs, etc.) in order to avoid any kind of improvisation, and to allow the course to take place under the best possible conditions.

THE COURSE

The course is open to anyone in any way connected with sport. At Yaounde, for example, the five-day course organized in 1987 brought together around fifty high level participants, all with positions of responsibility. There were general secretaries of national federations, national coaches, journalists and sports administrators. They had all been confronted by specific problems, and the experience of each one made the course extremely lively, the courses being essentially participant-oriented. The course directors, in this instance Mr. François Alaphilippe and Mr. Conrado Durántez, kept a constant dialogue going by inviting the course members to envisage real-life situations like organizing a sports club, planning and setting up a sporting event, working out a budget, etc. Obviously it was not possible to cover all the topics in the manual in only five days, but the thought processes, procedural and planning processes are the same in the majority of cases.

The course and its programme were prepared by the NOC and its Secretary General, Dieudonne Timba, who had sent a letter to the Ministry of Youth and Sport and all the national federations informing them that an Itinerant School course was taking place, and inviting all those interested in taking part to send in a candidature file.

NEVER ROUTINE

Since its creation, Olympic Solidarity has not ceased to expand its activities aimed at encouraging the development of sport throughout the world. Through its desire to be effective, it has overcome many obstacles, adapting to every situation thanks to the dynamism of its leadership and the IOC.

The creation of the Itinerant School of Sports Administration is one more new and exciting step forward along the path of knowledge.

M.-H. R.