

Yrjo Lindegren, one of the most well-known architects in Finland, designed Helsinki Stadium and remodelled the centre of the Finnish capital.

OLYMPIC STADIUMS FROM 1948 TO THE PRESENT DAY THE ARCHITECTS

(Final Part)

by THOMAS SCHMIDT

We complete here the study of Olympic architecture. In one of the last issues, Thomas Schmidt discussed the choice of form in his presentation of the main Olympic stadiums post-1948. He recalls in this final part the careers of the architects who designed them and discusses their influence on contemporary architecture.

The Olympic organizers have always sought to find an architect of renown to design the stadium. This usually takes place through architectural competitions. Since however pre-existing stadiums were frequently employed, only the Olympic stadiums in Helsinki, Munich and Seoul were the outcome of a successful competition. In the case of Montreal, the contract was awarded not to a native architect, but to a Frenchman, Roger Taillibert.

The author was unable to obtain any information about the work of the Australian architect **Arthur W. Purnell** (Cricket Ground Stadium) and the architect of the Jingu National Stadium in Tokyo. The terrace extension occasioned by the Tokyo Olympics was designed by the City Planning Authorities.

All the other architects had attained considerable renown before being commissioned to design the respective stadiums. Two of the most internationally outstanding architects among them are the Frenchman **Roger Taillibert**, one of the first to propagate the transition from an open-air to an indoor stadium, and the German **Otto Frei**, precursor of the modern suspended roof. What follows is a synopsis of the work of these architects in chronological order intended to make clear the different approaches to the task at hand and the influences subsequently exerted by their designs.

The engineer **Sir Owen Williams** (1890-1969), who designed the Wembley Park Stadium in 1924, was the protagonist of the reinforced concrete and steel frame method of construction in England. Williams, the designer of the famous Empire Pool (1932-1934), was Britain's first constructivist. He attracted attention as early as 1922 by his work with these new materials, initially in aircraft and railway construction. He occupies a special place in English architectural development, being neither a modernist strictly speaking, nor a traditionalist. His entire work, knowledge of which during his lifetime was almost totally confined to England, is, apart from the Pioneer Health Centre in London (1935) and the Wembley Arena, composed mainly of large industrial complexes which he sought to endow

with a clear and organic form in accordance with the static proportions. Notable examples are the Daily Telegraph Building (1928) and the Daily Express Building (1932) in London's Fleet Street and the Dorchester Hotel (1930) in Park Lane, also in London.

Yrjö Lindegren (1900-1952), who collaborated in designing the Helsinki Olympic Stadium with **Tovio Jäntti** (1900-1975) was one of the best-known architects in Finland. His exterior design for the insurance company building in Elenvara, constructed in 1928, was very much indebted to



Melbourne : Cricket Ground.

the new functionalism of the time as practised in Germany. At the start of the 1930's however his work shows the influence of pure functionalism, one outstanding example being the Olympic Stadium, which won Lindegren an international reputation. In his subsequent designs he remained faithful to the principles of functionalism. Lindegren was also active in the field of town planning. One of the main tasks entrusted to him was the remodelling of Helsinki's city centre, a project

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which was completed by **Aalto** (1898-1976) by reason of Lindegren's early death in 1952. After this death, **Auk Blomstadt** was the direct inheritor of his architectural legacy, completing the works which were still under construction or on the drawing board at the time of his death in accordance with his guidelines.

Annibale Vitellozzi (1902), the architect of the third planning phase of Rome's Olympic Stadium, is an advocate of rational architecture. His designs in the 1930's for the railway stations in Florence and Venice are strikingly modern. His design in the 1940's is similar to the German architecture of the time, marked by an adherence to neo-classicism, e.g. the World Exhibition in Rome. After the war, Vitellozzi turned to

ities of the National Olympic Committee in Rome, Aqua Acetosa (1959-1960), the Athletic School in Formea (1956), railway termini in Rome (1947-1950) the Sports Palace in Turin.

A. Perez Palacios (1904), architect of the University Stadium in Mexico City, is one of a generation of architects who attempted to find a new style of architecture after the revolution (1910-1929). Since the 1950's Palacios' work shows aspects peculiar to Mexican architecture. The University Stadium is one of his best-known works. Palacios' constructions, predominantly office blocks, industrial complexes and hospitals, are simple and clear in conception with wall surfaces being used to display symbolic reliefs.



The Worker Congress Hall in Turin of Pier Luigi Nervi, whose work has made its mark on Italy.

rationalist forms of construction. He collaborated with his famous colleague **Pier Luigi Nervi**, on one of the most outstanding and innovative works of the time, the Palazzetto dello Sport (1958). Furthermore, Vitellozzi played a decisive role in the construction of several first-class sporting arenas : the Olympic Swimming Stadium, Foro Italico : the sports grounds and training facil-

At first sight the sophisticated tent-roof construction of the Munich Olympic Stadium, demanding considerable engineering expertise, seems somewhat uncharacteristic of the work of **Günther Behnisch** (1922). Nevertheless, its conception corresponds exactly to Behnisch's present view of architecture, i.e. an artificial environment capable of being adapted in the service of

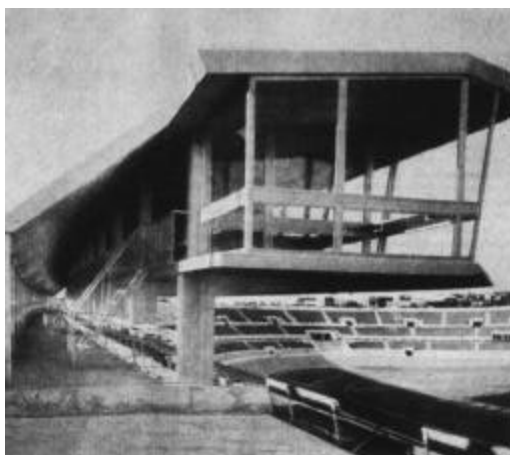
man. Originally Behnisch was exclusively involved in the construction of schools where he pioneered in the consistent use of prefabricated methods. Important stages along this road were the Hohenstaufen-Gymnasium in Göppingen (1956-1959), the state Fachhochschule für Technik in Ulm (1959-1963), the Mittelpunktschule in Oppelsbohm (1966-1969) and the Progymnasium in Larch-Württemberg (1972-1973). His latest works include the Old Peoples' Home in Reutlingen (1973-1976), various projects for the Government Quarter in Bonn (1973-1981), and the remodelling of Königstrasse and Schlossplatz in Stuttgart (1973-1980). The modern tent construction is to a large extent the work of **Otto Frei** (1925). The traditional tent, forgotten or regarded merely as an exotic metaphor, was converted by Otto Frei into a prototype of the adaptable light construction. His main works are the Exhibition Complex in Kassel (1959), Cologne (1957), Interbau West Berlin (1957), Hamburg (1963), Lausanne (1964), Expo '67 in Montreal, and various projects for lightweight and suspended high-rise prefabs.

Roger Taillibert, born in 1926 and architect of the sculpture-like Olympic Stadium in Montreal, gained a very early reputation as a specialist in the planning and construction of sports stadiums. His interest in the sculptural possibilities of architecture was first evidenced by the Deauville Swimming Stadium (1965), where the shell-like form of the roof serves as a kind of landscape mirror. Between 1968 and 1975, he constructed four swimming halls which aroused great interest both in and outside France on account of the parachute-like removable roof — made of artificial cloth — attached to a pole and which was designed in collaboration with Otto Frei. This was the first step away from the partial roof. Taillibert's Montreal Stadium, with its provision for an indoor track, brought the development even further. Taillibert sees his future using the computer to plan the large anonymous building complexes such as airports, exhibitions and Olympic Stadiums whose dimensions represent a new challenge for modern architecture.

A. Vlassov (1900-1962), the architect of the Lenin Stadium, is the designer of the city's best-known silhouette, the Sport and Leisure Complex

on the Moskva, opposite the Lenin Mountains. Vlassov is one of the older generation of architects who led the theoretical and practical foundations of socialist architecture and shaped the cities of the Soviet Union. Vlassov made his name designing leisure and recreation parks e.g. the Gorky Culture Park. His Lusniki Sports Park, a part of the Second City Development Plan for Moscow in 1943, added a new dimension to inner city planning. Vlassov's work is characterised by his attempt to create contrast within a given area. For example, the Krim suspension bridge which he constructed in 1935 forms a contrast to the bulky, monumental buildings along the river banks, and the Lenin Stadium, which counterbalances the Lomonossov University. The People's Hall which Vlassov designed in 1932 introduced, by its use of organic forms and structures, a turning point in Soviet architecture. One of his monumental postwar building complexes is the 1947 main street in Kiev. Here for the first time outer walls were covered with tiles. This became almost a standard procedure in later

The stands of the Olympic Stadium in Rome.

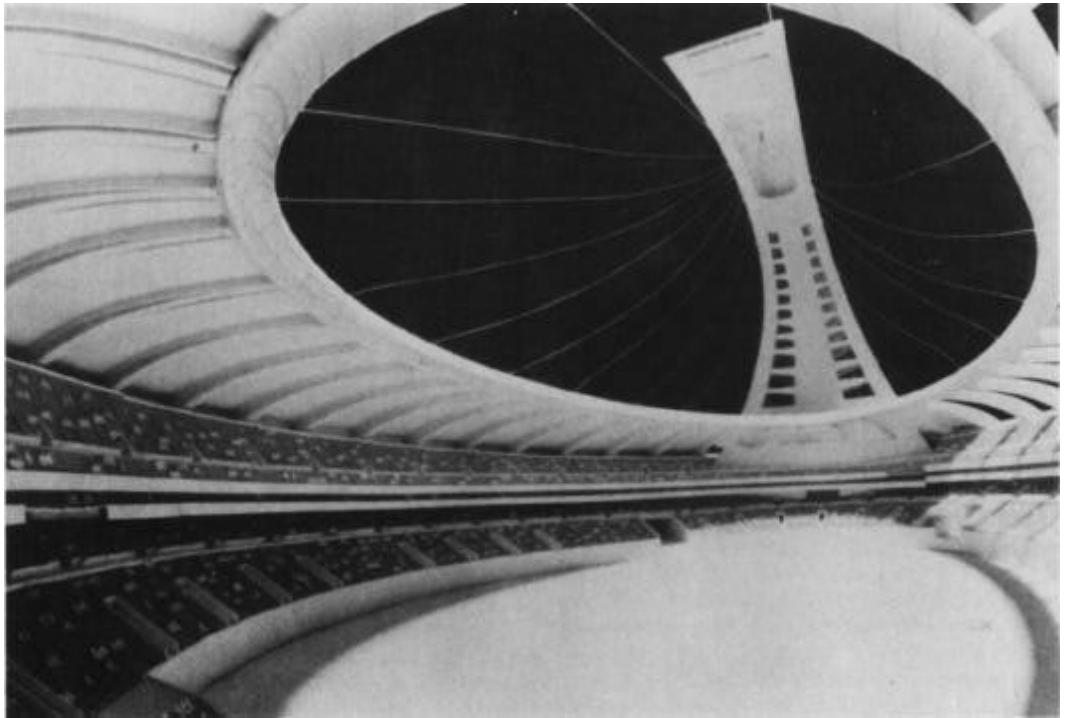


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building projects in the south-west of Moscow and in the Lenin Stadium. As a rule the facades of such large building projects were richly decorated. In 1954, a decision was taken at the Congress of Soviet Architects in Moscow to eschew such eclecticism. This marks the beginning of a

new period of development, the first fruits of which are to be seen in the Lenin Stadium. In its form and dimensions the stadium is a traditional construction but in accordance with the new guidelines without superfluous decoration.

T.S.



The work of Roger Taillibert in Montreal, with the support cables for the canvas forming a canopy over the arena.

