

MAORI FESTIVAL FOR THE COMMONWEALTH GAMES



*The opening ceremony of the
14th Commonwealth Games
in Auckland (NZL).*

It was to an exciting encounter in Auckland that the IOC President was invited on 24th January last, with over 3,000 athletes from 55 countries meeting to celebrate in unity the 14th Commonwealth Games, the second time these Games have been held in New Zealand's biggest city since 1938.

In the Monte Smart stadium, built on one of the extinct volcanoes which surround Auckland, the chants of thousands of Maoris and the sound of conch-shells marked the opening of the 14th Commonwealth Games, the largest since they began sixty years ago.

The ten days of competitions, which brought together more than 3,000 participants from 55 countries, mostly former British colonies, were officially opened by Prince Edward, Queen Elizabeth II's youngest son, who has just succeeded Prince Philip, Duke of Edinburgh, as head of the Commonwealth Games Association. After receiving the traditional Maori salute, the prince read the message from the Queen which he took from the ritual baton (the equivalent of the Olympic torch), transported from London and carried across New Zealand by thousands of runners. The 36,000 spectators gave a standing ovation to the last two runners bearing the baton: the Olympic equestrian champion Mark Todd, who entered the stadium riding the no-less famous-Charisma, and Peter Snell, triple gold medal-winning middle distance runner at the Games in Rome and Tokyo. The climax of this ceremony, during which the great mythical episodes of Maori history were depicted in festive spirit, was of course the procession of the delegations, ranging from the 347 English participants to the sole competitor from Sierra Leone and including the twelve Pakistanis making their comeback to the event after a twenty-year absence. Ten sports featured on the ten-day competition programme, namely athletics, badminton, bowls, boxing, cycling, gymnastics, judo, shooting, swimming and weightlifting. In the next issue we shall look at the actual sporting aspect of the Games which should give rise to some interesting performances and doubtless some new records.

Answering questions from journalists whilst a spectator at some of the initial events, President Samaranch declared that «The situation in South Africa is evolving, and we hope that the political develop-

ments will have important positive repercussions within the field of sport». He stressed, however, that South Africa could not expect anything from the IOC regarding a return to the Olympic arena until the apartheid system had been abolished. Mr Samaranch also repeated his hope of seeing a joint «east and west» candidature to hold the Olympic Games in the year 2000 or 2004 in Berlin, which had become the city of unity after so long symbolizing the division of the world.

A decision on such a candidature would, naturally, be up to the NOCs of the two German states, but if a bid were presented to the IOC, it would be sure to have strong support.

Continuing his journey in Oceania, the IOC President travelled to Australia to watch the 4th Australian Open tennis tournament in Melbourne, which also gave him the opportunity to visit the sports facilities of this city, which has presented its bid to host the 1996 Games.

In the photo, Mr Juan Antonio Samaranch congratulates the winner of this tennis tournament, Ivan Lendl.

