



## DEATH OF BORIS BAKRAC

A former IOC member in Yugoslavia from 1960 to 1987, when he became an honorary member, **Boris Bakrac** died on 29th November at the age of 77.

**F**ormer President of the Yugoslav Olympic Committee, he was an enthusiastic sports leader and made a singularly important contribution to the development of sport and physical fitness in Yugoslavia. A civil engineer by training, he was deputy mayor of Zagreb before becoming Minister of Public Works for Croatia and subsequently a member of the Croatian and Yugoslav parliament. In these various capacities, he was particularly interested in the development of sports facilities in Yugoslavia. Well-known and respected within the construction world, his advice was always much sought after.

Parallel to this highly active political life, Boris Bakrac, whom President Samaranch unhesitatingly described as a great statesman, also succeeded in pursuing a brilliant career in sports administration. After practising several sports, particularly football and skiing, at secondary school and then university, he rapidly devoted himself to the business of sports administration, with his main objective being to educate and support young people. Renowned for his calmness and reserve, his approach to sport was always highly pragmatic. He became president of the Croatian Football Union. Gifted with great organizational ability and benefiting from excellent in-the-field experience, he rapidly created highly efficient structures for this body, leading him, by stages, to the presidency of the Yugoslav Sports Union, a position he held from 1957 to 1962. His influence on the training and preparation of top level athletes had a decisive impact, with his official functions enabling him to obtain from the authorities a constantly increasing commitment on the part of the various governments. This ensured a regular supply of

material and financial aid to support Olympic athletes before their selection for the Olympic Games. The reputation of Yugoslav athletes has long been established, but the consistent quality of their training and support should be underlined.

In 1960, Boris Bakrac was co-opted into the IOC. Here, he took over from Stanko Bludek whom he had met whilst involved in the major task of reconstructing Yugoslavian sport after the war, when everything had to be rebuilt, from the educational and sports training structures to the infrastructure which enabled sport to be practised. In 1969, he hosted the 14th meeting between the NOCs and the IOC Executive Board in Dubrovnik, before going on to celebrate triumphantly the fiftieth anniversary of the Yugoslav Olympic Committee.

Determined wherever strengthening the sporting image of his country on an international level was concerned, he took part in the preparation and running of the Mediterranean Games which were a great success in Split, on the Adriatic coast, in 1979. A number of events on an international scale have subsequently been held in Yugoslavia, and if we are to mention any, it should be the XIV Olympic Winter Games. For a long time, Boris Bakrac had wanted to see his country receive the honour of welcoming the Olympic family. The name of Belgrade, the federal capital, had been mentioned several times during the 1960s, but it was Sarajevo which won the day for the Winter Games. To him, the essential was that in hosting the Games for the first time, the whole of Yugoslavia became Olympic. With the impetus thus given, there was nothing left to prevent others in turn from launching themselves into the race.

Today, Belgrade is in the running for the 1996 Games, and this must be seen as the result of the active work in which Boris Bakrac was engaged during the last thirty years. Years of effort in the service of the Olympic ideal which have earned him the admiration of Yugoslav athletes who recognize the richness of the inheritance he has bequeathed to them.