

XVI WINTER GAMES : INVITATIONS SENT



The IOC President with Messrs Michel Barnier and Jean-Claude Killy Co-Presidents of the Albertville '92 OCOG, signing the invitations to the XVI Winter Games, which were then slipped into the EMS Chronopost mailbags.

On 8th February 1991, one year to the day before the official opening of the XVI Winter Games, the IOC President Mr Juan Antonio Samaranch signed the invitations to the 165 National Olympic Committees to send their athletes to Albertville.

The ceremony took place at Olympic House in the presence of Messrs Michel Barnier and Jean-Claude Killy, Co-Presidents of the Albertville/Savoy 92 OCOG, who gave a run-down of the state of preparations. The former ski-champion was able to announce the previous evenings spectacular and promising debuts, a first ski jump - of 125 m - and the first tests of the bob run, while Mr Barnier stressed the improvements to the road network,

announcing that transport links would be finished by the end of the following summer, as well as the launch in the course of the year, in co-operation with the national education system, of an educational programme in over twenty thousand schools.

The IOC President placed the accent on changes the Games had brought to Savoy, enabling it to carry out a wide range of improvements in only six years. "The

major works carried out with the aid of the French government and Savoy have made possible a gain of twenty years in the scheduling of the work". Referring to the international situation, the President said that after the war, it was the battle for peace that had to be won. "The Games can help, with the participation of all the NOCs which will be present in Albertville". All the venues will have been tested by the end of March, and as regards communications and logistics in general, the organization of which is rendered highly complex by the geographical distribution of the venues in a mountain environment - but then that was part of the initial "Olympic challenge", the focus of which was Winter Games not in a city but in the mountains - the Albertville team has one year before it to perfect its arrangements and, as Michel Barnier put it, "to give these Games a heart and a soul."



The sending out of invitations was a good moment to unveil the official poster of the XVI Winter Games, an example of French good taste.

Eager to be in on the act, the snow put in an enthusiastic appearance, falling so abundantly that the delegation from Paris, Messrs Roger Bambuck, Secretary of State for Youth and Sports and Nelson Paillou, President of the French NOC, was prevented from attending the ceremony. However, art and French good taste were certainly of the party in the form of the official poster for the Games, presented by the Co-Presidents of the OCOG : an exotic composition of vigorous, sinuous lines, featuring a bright sun against the blue of a French sky shining down on the mountain peaks and the Olympic rings, the whole forming a ribbon and medals.

Philatelists will be able to add to their Olympic collection with these four stamps illustrating cross-country skiing, slalom, luge and hockey, which continue the series issued by the French postal administration.

And finally, let us not forget the postmen, who had a vital role to play. The worldwide distribution of the invitations is taken care of by EMS Chronopost, TOP Programme partner, in oversize envelopes bearing the mark of this high-speed messenger service. It was represented by Mr Rey, Director-General of the Swiss Post Office, and Mr Porras, Assistant Director-General of the United States Postal Service. The National Committees have until 8th June 1991 to send in their replies to the invitations, addressed to them in the hope of beating the record for the number of positive replies, held since 1988 by Calgary with fifty-seven participating NOCs.

