

Artur Takac

Sixty Olympic Years

This is from Arthur Takacs' memiures about his involvement in many Olympics, including 1936, Berlin, where he competed, 1972, Munich and 1976, Montreal, where he played a key organizational role. He is fondly remembered by his colleagues in Montreal and sadly missed. - PCH

WINNING

THE MONTREAL

RACE

After the horrors of the Munich Games the Olympic Movement was in need of rehabilitation, a celebration to engender confidence, to renew the spirit; what it got was Montreal. In his book *My Olympic Years*, Lord Killanin entitled his chapter about the Games of the 21st Olympiad *Oh God, Oh Montreal*. My memories from that exciting, yet truly difficult period fit more comfortably under the heading *Fighting for the Games*. We came from different directions to tackle the problem - I to give the organisers the technical expertise, in which they were so blatantly lacking, Killanin to bear the ultimate responsibility to the youth of the world by ensuring that there was a place for them to celebrate the Games. Both of us suffered a bruising and difficult experience, his Lordship, I would say, bearing the far greater wounds. In his book Killanin wrote: *I don't know whether Montreal or Moscow was more damaging to the Olympic concept, but my wife believes that the coronary I suffered in 1977 was partly due to the increasing burden of problems I had during 1975 and 1976.*

The drama of these years began in Amsterdam in May 1970 where the IOC held its annual Session and the members had to select the city to stage the Games in 1976. Critics of the Olympic Movement and the IOC are quick



OH GOD, OH MONTREAL

IOC President Lord Killanin and Technical Director Artur Takac during their first visit to Montreal in November 1972

to point the accusing finger when a city or winter centre elected to stage the Games does not come up to expectations, but so often they forget or choose to ignore the options which were before the members. In Amsterdam there were three candidates for the summer celebration, Los Angeles, Montreal and Moscow. Many IOC members favoured Denver for the 1976 Winter Games which of course weakened the Los Angeles bid against Montreal and Moscow. Montreal had been unsuccessful four years previously for the celebration which went to Munich, and some IOC members tend to look favourably upon candidates who try again. After that defeat Montreal's position in Amsterdam was strengthened.

In the first round Moscow polled 28 votes, Montreal 25 and Los Angeles 17. Without an overall majority a second vote was required, though apparently the reporter from Tass, the Soviet News agency covering the Session, clearly did not understand the voting system for he flashed a message that went world-wide to his agency's subscribers that Moscow had won. Hardly had the confusion unravelled than the second vote was complete and Avery Brundage the IOC president walked on to the stage of the RAI theatre in Amsterdam to announce that Montreal would be the hosts; all the LA votes, it appeared, moved to Montreal who polled 41 to 28, which was a clear reflection of the political thinking among the members at that time? Thus the dream of the city's dapper mayor, Jean Drapeau, had been realised.

Drapeau was the energetic leader of the Montreal campaign and one of his key lieutenants was Pierre Charbonneau, a sports fanatic. I had met them during the

negotiations to stage the America-Europe athletics match in Montreal as part of the Expo celebrations, when I was the secretary of the European Committee of the IAAF and manager of the European team.

After the Amsterdam vote Drapeau and Charbonneau were keen to use my experience in the technical fields. It was here that I found Drapeau persistent to the point of aggressiveness; once he was locked into an idea or project you needed a crow-bar to lever his mind from the goal. As the technical director of the IOC at that time it was part of my role to advise a city hosting the Games, and after the Amsterdam vote we established a situation of co-operation which seemed to become ever more intensive; I felt at times that I was not so much advising the Montreal Organising Committee as working for them. That spectre began to loom large when Mayor Drapeau unexpectedly appeared at the Château on March 20, 1971. He seemed tense and impatient and invited me to dine with him at the Lausanne Palace Hotel. I accepted, and after the usual pleasantries he came briskly to the point of his visit. *Tomorrow, evening we are both flying to Paris, where you are going to meet Roger Taillibert, an architect who designed the Parc des Princes, in Paris, the home of French Rugby Union, and who will now start to design our main Olympic venues in Montreal. I was taken aback - astonished that Drapeau should believe that he could command me to drop everything at the snap of his fingers.*

At around the time Drapeau and I were dining Lord Killanin was in Lausanne- for all I knew he was in the hotel. I explained to Drapeau about the IOC vice-president's visit and the meetings he would have the following day, one of which was with me. In view of that I suggested the Paris meeting should be postponed; Drapeau, a man of riveted determination, swept aside such an alternative arrangement. He was fixed on a plan and that had to stand. There was a certain amount of secrecy about his motive, for I was to realise later that if Montreal and Canada had heard that a Frenchman was to get this prestigious commission there might have been objections; Drapeau wanted the announcement when the commission was delivered, he wanted a fait accompli. But in this clandestine way of working he wanted to be sure that Taillibert appreciated and understood all the myriad technical details required for stadia used in the Olympic Games, which may look like creating a larger version of the Parc des Princes but certainly is not. To every alternative proposal for a Paris meeting I made Drapeau was simply evasive. Here is your air ticket and I shall wait for you at Geneva airport. I'm sure you can change your appointments with Lord Killanin, he said, which is what happened. The following day I completed my meetings in Lausanne and at ten in the evening was sitting in Taillibert's study at his office in the Rue de Pompe, Paris.

We were there all night and most of the following two days, Drapeau, Taillibert, myself and Taillibert's assistants. Questions, questions, questions: every conceivable detail was combed through with Taillibert's staff making notes, producing papers and rough drawings; it was incredible, and as the hours ticked away I realised that this Frenchman of whom I had little knowledge was an architect with courageous vision. The manner in which he grasped the special needs of Olympic infrastructure, where there was a requirement for vast media facilities which would be largely unnecessary for competitions after the Games, blended with Drapeau's understandable insistence on a main stadium which could be closed in for events in Canada's hard winter.

Mentally it was challenging and exhausting; coffee after coffee as the queries, notes, rough drawings, diagrams, calculations, came flooding from Taillibert and his lively-minded youthful assistants; they coped with my input on the technical demands which the International Federations would make, the electronic equipment required by the TV broadcasters and the results and measurement systems; the facilities for the written press as well as the TV and radio commentators, the extended back up medical service to embrace for instance physiotherapy facilities. They matched all my points with their insistence on the accurate calculation of detail in every aspect; at the end of our meetings a desk was piled high with technical data to be incorporated in the plan - to make the Taillibert vision a reality. I realised then the enormity of the task which faced these two exceptional men; each in his own way had the blood of adventure coursing through his veins; originality rather than ordinariness dominated their lives and the fusion of their imaginations toward a single goal was exhilarating. Sadly, as will follow, Drapeau's vision did not quite match his resources and influence and the Games in Montreal, with the most costly sports complexes in the history of the Movement, opened as scheduled, but in a stadium bearing the signs of skilful improvisation.

Drapeau's Offer

Before I returned to Lausanne from Paris, exhausted but exhilarated, there was the hint of what was to come; Drapeau could see my enthusiasm for his ideas and the plans on which Taillibert was working; while we worked he kept saying, We need you in Montreal - think it over and come. You are not an administration man you are a typical operations executive. With those thoughts the black mood of brooding, which I had so often felt in Lausanne, increased the closer I came to the city. I had worked at the Château de Vidy since 1969, and while my enthusiasm for the Olympic Movement and what It could do world-wide had never wavered, I was unhappy with the spirit and atmosphere I found at the Château and often I became dispirited and depressed. My explanation for that is in the chapter on my work under Avery Brundage.

At the end of May 1972, the IOC Executive Board met in Lausanne with progress reports from both the Organising Committees of Munich, just about to stage the Games of the XX Olympiad, and Montreal. This gave Drapeau the opportunity to revive his plea, though in his usual brusque manner he was telling rather than asking me. There is a pleasant bistro in the Avenue de la Grotte, a rendezvous for students in Lausanne called *San Marino*, where Drapeau, Charbonneau and I met for a drink. We stood away from the main throng and it was Pierre Charbonneau who set out the offer: *You are going to move for four years to Montreal, and as personal advisor to the president of the Organising Committee, Roger Rousseau, on all technical questions. You will have a free hand in the development of this aspect of the Games planning. You will find ideal working conditions and a friendly atmosphere* - this last point I felt was pertinently stressed. When that outline was put Drapeau added that he required an immediate answer. My questions and our discussion delayed this for a while, as the thoughts tumbled through my mind: *Am I deserting the IOC at a time when there could be big changes with Brundage's impending retirement from office?* By one o'clock in the morning I could filibuster no longer and from the cafe telephoned my friend, Arpad Csanadi, the IOC member in Hungary who was chairman of the Programme Commission. I had known Arpad for over ten years; he was one of the leading soccer experts in

Hungary whom I tried to entice to coach in Yugoslavia but was thwarted by the Hungarian Minister of Sport Hegyi Gyula. That was more than ten years before this meeting in the bistro. I called Arpad in his room at the Palace Hotel and explained the offer which had just been made to me and the predicament in which I was placed. You *must accept the post*, he said. Arpad convinced me: *You will be more valuable to both the organisers of the Games and to the Olympic Movement if at this time you are working in Montreal. Artur you must go.* With these words ringing in my head I replaced the phone, went back to Drapeau and Charbonneau and accepted the offer. It was nearly two in the morning; a momentous moment for me and the beginning of a complex period in my Olympic life.

Lack of Olympic Experience

I took up my post in March 1973 and soon realised that Montreal would have many challenges. My first impression confirmed the fact that Coubertin's re-invention of the Olympic Games had not penetrated very deeply beyond the borders of Europe. Of course the United States and Canada had been supporters of the Olympic Games since their revival in 1896, but there was not the depth of awareness or appreciation of the totality of the Games and their influence that there was in Europe. All the Olympic sports, summer and winter, are widely practised in European countries, but Canada's sporting diet in the 1970s was heavily reliant upon professional ice hockey, baseball, American football, ice skating and in some parts basketball. When I accompanied Lord Killanin on his first visit to Montreal in November 1972, within three months of his election to the presidency; I was surprised by curious enquiries, *What actually is the Olympic Movement, what is the Olympic idea, where are the roots of Olympism?* It made me realise that in addition to preparing for the Olympic Games, Montreal and Canada needed a very thorough education course on the history and development of the modern Games.

My concern about this lack of Olympic experience increased as the months went by. It was difficult to find people in sports clubs with experience in organising competitions and even scarcer where judges and referees of international standing. An Organising Committee needs to draw on such people in the preparation of the 21 sports. But that of course was detail, and by March 1973, with three years of preparation time gone and just over three more before the opening ceremony, there was not a proper strategic plan. My first task was to form an operational nucleus to oversee the general planning of the operation of the Montreal Games.

This lack of Olympic and sporting expertise worried me, but fortunately we were able to call upon local people of European origin with an understanding of sporting administration. With Drapeau as the political leader of the operation and Roger Rousseau, a diplomat and once a leading figure in Canada's international trade administration, as president of the Organising Committee, the upper

echelon of the structure appeared to have stability. The first task was to assemble a small operational group to oversee the development of the organisational and technical requirements. We selected three men: Simon Saint-Pierre, who could grasp and control the breadth of operations and was really a workaholic; Michel Guay, a technologist; Walter Sieber, a naturalised Canadian of Swiss origin, who was Charbonneau's assistant; and our *fourth musketeer* was Paul Howell, one of IBM's bright young men, who had spent seven months studying the electronic operations of the Munich Games and was therefore crucially aware of the part which data processing played in the planning and control of the Games. From time to time I added to this group Larry Eldridge, a track and field fan, a man with rare perseverance and drive who organised the athletics competition programme at the America - Europe match in 1967. We drew upon my organisational experience of the European Championships in Belgrade in 1962 as well as that of the Games in Mexico and Munich to establish a prototype in athletics from which we developed parallel systems for the organisation of all other sports on the programme of the Games.

These people carried the burden of responsibility for the technical organisation of the Games; sadly the quality of their work and the diligence they showed was never properly recognised or rewarded in a Games which was blighted by construction delays, financial overruns and political interference. That was the story the world read in the run-up to the Montreal Games, but beneath these clouds the participants had good competition arrangements: which were largely due to the efforts, often in harrowing circumstances, of this group.

The problems which I saw facing the Canadian Olympic hosts could be encapsulated in the following way: Montreal, Quebec and Canada had to fuse their authority and summon the strength to face the unyielding pressure of the labour unions, the blackmail of construction companies and the harsh winter climactic conditions in order to achieve the deadlines. There was a need to inject the ambience appropriate to the Olympic Games. Most cities staging the Games enrich the treasure chest of Olympism with something from their own heritage, but in Montreal's case they needed to wake up to the traditions of the Olympic Movement.

Yet there was another crucial dimension to these Games. After the riots in Mexico in 1968, together with the political demonstrations in the main arena and the murders in the Munich Olympic Village four years later, there was a disquiet about the Movement; critics were not slow to revive the gloomy memories of those unhappy events and this would eventually damage the integrity of the Olympic ideal. It was essential that the Montreal Games were completed smoothly.

Our planning and operational group began to examine the existing plans and soon became alarmed, for it was clear to us that the departmental heads were working in isolation; there seemed to be no co-ordination so that projects which were logically inter-linked were developed separately. The department heads did not seem to know with whom they should be working or presenting their projects to, and there seemed n

continual bottleneck within the General Secretary's office or with some of the vice presidents.

My "musketeers" had numerous meetings to unravel this tangled knitting and came up with the idea of creating a Management Committee and a system we called Project Approval Procedure [PAP]. The management committee was to consist principally of the directors general and should be the co-ordinating body monitoring the elaboration and implementation of the Games projects.

But these surprisingly were rejected; President Rousseau considered that this would in some way duplicate the responsibilities and reduce the authority of the Executive Board, a decision which I suspected was politically motivated rather than pragmatic. So the work continued under the old clogged up system for the next three months, during which time Paul Howell put his electronics expertise to work and the computer gave its verdict on the Organising Committee's existing plan of preparation; they would have everything ready for the official opening ceremony 24 weeks after the date into which they had been locked since 1970. The computer screen shining out this piece of information set off the alarm bells, and within a few days the plan to have a management committee and the Project Approval Procedure was, as my American friends might put it, retrieved from the trash can. If the change of direction brought relief there was much anxiety about the time scale. We were on the threshold of 1974 and more than three years of preparation time had not been properly used. We needed a planning schedule that could be tightly monitored as the count-down to the opening ceremony dripped away day by day.

Simon Saint-Pierre, Paul Howell and I slipped away for three days to the Handfield Hotel on the left bank of the St Lawrence river and there, without interruptions and telephone calls, we worked virtually non stop to set out the elaborate detail of the entire Games system. We drew up a list of 280 projects and worked out the programme to be adopted by sixteen general directors. All this was built round the blueprint from the Main Co-ordination Centre of the Games and Operation Units system for each site which was to be adopted by the middle of October 1975; it worked well enough for future Games planners to use it. The crucial part of our work in that hotel retreat was to ensure the Management Committee met weekly so that planning glitches, duplications and waste could be spotted quickly. In the remaining 900 days before the Games began, all the operational deadlines were met and the official report of the Organising Committee published at the end of 1976 said *The Project Approval Procedure (known under the acronym PAP) became an important element in the success of the Games and deserves special mention.*

The construction side of the Montreal, Games did not have such good fortune. Serious planning and construction of the new sites did not begin until 1973 because of a lack of co-ordination between the government of Quebec and the authorities in Montreal and when the work finally got underway it was bedevilled by problems of all kinds from the geological and meteorological to human greed.

The Ancient and Modern Ice Age

In the harsh Canadian winter the temperature dropped to -25 degrees and winds reached 100 kilometres per hour, buffeting equipment on the



THE FIGHT OVER VENUE~CONSTRUCTION

as adviser to the Montreal organizing committee, the author was especially concerned with - building of the main stadium and other venues. The photograph shows him with Mayor Drapeau and architect Roger Taillibert during the crucial construction period.

Construction sites. At times outside work was impossible and it made me realise, coming from a country which has hard winters, that Montreal was a city in which to stay indoors during the deep winter months. On top of this factor the strikes of one group of workers and then another bringing construction to a halt caused alarm. From December 1974 to April 1976 out of a total of 530 working days the workers were on strike on 155. That amounts to almost 30 per cent of the working time available in this relatively short but crucial period. It is obvious that the trade union organisations and individual groups of workers frequently used the Games as a means to increase their wage rates and get better conditions. They had Montreal and the Organising Committee over a barrel. We were thus exposed daily to pressure and criticism by the IOC, the sports federations and the attacks by the local national and international press.

The focus of the crisis was the main stadium, the swimming pool and the Velodrome, designed by Taillibert. There were also problems with the construction and financing of the Olympic village. This complex was based on a pyramid design from the Côte d'Azur in the area of Antibes. Each was imaginative and avant garde in style but there were basic misconceptions

compounded by geological discoveries and blackmail by the labour force which developed into a nightmare, and plunged the Olympic Movement into a loss of confidence about anything that was going on in Montreal.

For the Parc des Princes Taillibert used pillars weighing twenty tons to support the fabric. With Montreal's stadium carrying a movable roof, so that the arena could be used in the depth of the worst of winters, the weight of similar pillars was 120 tons, to hold the roof, which weighed 41,000 tons. The rocky subsoil proved incapable of holding that weight and some geological detective work showed why. Around 10,000 years ago the site of the Olympic Park which was to house the stadium village and velodrome ran along a terrace bordering the Champlain Sea and later, around 4,000 BC, formed a bank of the St Lawrence River. The base rock proved fragile and fissured in many places threatening to collapse under pressure. It was too late to turn back from this site and engineers offered a solution but a very costly one. New foundations were dug, supporting casing put in place and stems of concrete forced in at high pressure to a depth of 48 metres below the surface. This constituted an entirely new form of foundation, which therefore required a complete recalculation in the seismic building protection elements. All this added \$12 million dollars to the cost of the velodrome - equal to the total initial estimate of the entire project.

The following table gives some indication of the escalation in costs:

	Venue	Olympic Village	Organisation	Total
1973	250	32	60	342
December 1974				
January 1975	585	49	80	714
March - April 1976	1,125	72	130	1,327
'Main Stadium	985	In million \$		
Other Venues	140			

These problems, strikes and building contractors who in some instances seemed incapable of the work they were undertaking, were taking the Montreal Games towards disaster. The highly competitive Montreal news media, with English and French outlets, had plenty on which to employ their investigative journalists and the stories were not just published locally, The world's media revealed the events often with embellishment compounding Montreal's reputation for scandal and corruption. At a meeting with the IOC Executive Board in Vienna in October 1974, the Organising Committee admitted that they had not found a construction company to undertake building the Olympic Village, so in one of their hotel rooms, in between meetings, they formed their own company.

By the end of the year the IOC President and his Executive were becoming alarmed by reports they were not only reading in the media but also receiving from their member in Canada, Jim Worrall. On Thursday January 9, 1975, I was called for an emergency meeting

with Rousseau, president of the organising Committee, who was panic stricken. He had just had a call from Lord Killanin in Dublin demanding that the Games be held on a more modest scale. Rousseau was convinced, and I suspect that he was swayed by information from Killanin, that the main stadium would not be completed in time. Under normal working arrangements that was correct but by May, a little more than a year before the Games were held, there were 3,000 construction workers employed day and night on the Olympic complexes.

I felt Rousseau was deeply depressed by his conversation with Killanin and had reached the conclusion that the main stadium could not be completed to meet the needs of opening and closing ceremonies as well as the track and field programme Rousseau kept repeating I cannot think of a solution to this problem - please, with all your experience, think of a way out of the impasse, let us get the opinions of all the Organising Committee members but try to find a solution. I have rarely seen n man carry the marks of worry so deeply.

I set aside my work schedule for the day, carried out Rousseau's request and by that evening confirmed my belief that the key problem was the main stadium. The man with the best on the ground insight into the Olympic construction plans was Raymond Cyr, one of the architects. He knew that the situation was very complex, even critical. He believed that whatever the technical requirements it needed the authority of the Quebec government to intervene to halt the obstruction of the labour force who were by now running wild.

Not -surprisingly, the view of Taillibert and his architects who were partly operating from Paris was that the stadium could and should be completed in time - with the caveat that the trade unions be brought into line; their guerrilla action had to be stopped.

These consultations and discussions among members of the Organising Committee went on for five days. It was then that I was called by Drapeau to a before-breakfast meeting. Rousseau is trying to find an alternative for the Olympic stadium. He wants to adapt the "Autostade" stadium instead, he said. If that news was startling it was not surprising when I recalled the panic in Rousseau's face when we had met five days previously. He was looking for a safety net and he thought the Autostade was the best place for his jump - but Drapeau was not going to leap with him. He was adamantly opposed to such a plan and not just to save his ego. Deep down the Mayor of Montreal had a feel for Olympism -he was inspired by the Movement on a trip to Lausanne in 1964 many years before he formulated a bid, so I was not surprised when he told me: Without n modern Olympic stadium, an adornment and a necessity for an Olympic city, there are no Olympic Games. Drapeau was a hard man; he did not vacillate and I knew that with this philosophy he was ready to fight all the way.

I returned to my office with one battle line in place and there on my desk was a note from Rousseau calling me into a meeting in a couple of hours' time, where I confronted the opposing force. Rousseau was in a calmer mood than at our previous meeting, because he felt confident about his plan. He expressed his doubts about the main stadium being completed and then told me what I had heard in Drapeau's suite - to use "Autostade" instead. This is a grand idea - and will save money. Please go to see the architects working on my project, but just you - keep this matter confidential - and give me your opinion as soon as you can.

Within an hour I was at door of the architect's studio. The civil engineers Maurice Desnoyer and Emil Leziy were surprised that I was familiar with the stadium and easily understood their plans. It was ironic and a fortunate coincidence that I could bring expertise to both sides of this problem. I knew the Autostade in great detail because I had been the manager of the European team in the match against America held there in 1967. I well remember the difficulties we faced then adapting the arena for the needs of what was a straightforward international competition, involving a very small number of athletes compared to that of the Olympic programme. There had to be many improvisations on that occasion and here I was being asked to examine the same place as a potential Olympic stadium. The two architects preparing the plans for Rousseau frankly had no idea of Olympic requirements.

The following day I met Rousseau and gave him my conclusions. In a brief analysis I explained that the Autostade was unacceptable. The group of architects dealing with the matter had not addressed the problems seriously nor had they included the fundamental technical necessities required for a main Olympic stadium. I presented a proposal to establish closer co-operation between the Organising Committee of the Games, the city of Montreal and the Quebec Government. It required such unity if we were to construct the stadium in time. Simon Saint-Pierre and Pierre Charbonneau who also saw the civil engineers, came to the same conclusion.

Nightmare Drive to Beat the Autostade

We had thus established a strategy to go ahead with the main stadium but the battle was by no means won; and on another front there were more mountainous worries. In the evening I met the general director of the Olympic



AGAINST COLD AND WIND

The harsh Canadian winter drastically hindered construction work on the Olympic stadium. The assistant to the Sports Director Robert Dubeau and the author are seen here on the frozen building plot at the beginning of 1976.

Village, Yvan Dubois; he was also under stress and I soon understood the cause. The cost of building the complex had risen from 32 million dollars to over 60 million. Montreal's Olympic problems in the first month of 1975 were piling up.

During January, the Quebec government's Permanent Commission for Municipal Affairs was investigating alternative methods of financing the Games and the problems relating to the main stadium and the village. Drapeau and Rousseau were at the meetings in Quebec City prepared to defend their differing positions on the main stadium argument - it was a duel between the city of Montreal and the President of the Organising Committee. I did not expect to take any part; this after all was the political arena and I had tried throughout my working life in sport to keep the technical problems away from the politicians.

That philosophy had to be set aside suddenly on January 22, the day Montreal and Quebec suffered one of their worst snowstorms - temperatures of -22 degrees and wind speeds up to 120 kilometres an hour. It was a day for staying put firmly indoors, which is where I was when the phone rang at five in the afternoon; Jean Pierre Dugas, the head of

Rousseau's cabinet, wanted me in Quebec to appear before the commission. He said that the security chief would arrange a plane or helicopter to get me there. What need is there for my presence, Rousseau and Drapeau know exactly my view on this question? Dugas swept aside my questions. We will wait for you in the foyer of the parliament building at nine this evening. The security chief Guy Tupin would have nothing do to with this scheme as far as the transportation was concerned. Flying in this vile weather is tantamount to suicide, he said. I called Dugas on the phone but his response was unchanged - we'll meet you in the foyer at nine.

Just after seven I nosed out of the car park of my office in my powerful Organising Committee Pontiac Parisienne and got on to the highway; there was little traffic, because of the blizzard; visibility was poor, the car lurched in the strong winds, slid on the icy patches across the lanes and there were moments when I was losing control. Driving 120 kilometres an hour in these conditions was really risky but I accepted the request to be in that foyer by 9 o'clock. I switched on the car radio, for a calming influence - and there on Radio Quebec was a live broadcast of the Parliamentary Commission's deliberations, so instead of relaxing to music I was locked into a duel of words between Mayor Drapeau and President Rousseau. To the uninformed listener this must have sounded baffling; here were the two key men involved in staging the Montreal Games in a public disagreement about where the main arena should be - less than two years before the opening ceremony.

At precisely 9 p.m. I brought my car to a parking place in front of Parliament. My three colleagues, Executive Vice-president Simon Saint-Pierre, Vice-president Sports Pierre Charbonneau and Jean Pierre Dugas were waiting for me. *Just present the fundamental concept and the technical outline for it, main stadium. Don't get into details* was their advice. I took my seat before the 15-man commission; they had spent 12 sessions lasting over 30 hours discussing the Montreal problems and when I went before them the Prime Minister of the province Robert Bourassa, plus the Minister of Finance Raymond Garneau and a man who was to play a key role, Victor Goldbloom, Minister of Communal affairs, all members of the Commission, were in the session.

Garneau eased the tension and anxiety which had clearly built up before I arrived with a humourous opening. I think that I am making an enemy by requesting at the last moment that someone should be brought here in such harsh weather conditions. Then he came bluntly to the point. Does the alternative to the main Olympic stadium, in your opinion, meet the requirements of the International Olympic Committee and the International Sports Federations? I replied: A stadium for between 70-75,000 spectators is required containing an eight lane track, runways and pits for the jumps on each side of the arena with the throwing circles duplicated as well. There must be provisions for the press, radio and television with facilities for the latest technical equipment, call up rooms for the competitors, medical facilities including secure arrangements for drug testing and special requirements, for opening and closing ceremonies. I was really saying no underscored three times to the chairman's question.

No state authority has spent so much time on the problems of the Games, and the long hours spent by the Parliamentary Commission probing into the problems showed me that the magnitude of our difficulties was understood. That was summed up when Victor Goldbloom said at a press conference: It often happens that Quebec is viewed by all of Canada, but it is not often that the eyes of the entire world are focused on us as is the case today. That understanding of the international magnitude showed that he and at least some of his colleagues realised the reputation of the country, state, and Montreal was being damaged by the preparations for the Olympic celebration. After my evidence Goldbloom sought confirmation of what I suspect he already believed when he asked whether we could organise the Games in a modified Autostade. We cannot, sir, I replied. To go with that Drapeau conceded what for him must have been a very difficult admission, when he told the Commission that it was not essential to complete the tower or the stadium roof. The practical use for it was in the construction of the sections to be used for making the facility an indoor one and that had no part in the Olympic requirements. He wanted the stadium which he and Taillibert had created to be the edifice of Montreal's contribution to Olympism. The tower and the roof were necessary for the winter season to hold baseball and football matches which of course was not an Olympic requirement, however, the base of the tower was absolutely essential not only in the construction of the arena but also the adjoining Olympic swimming pool and velodrome. Thus the tower, as such, finished or unfinished, was not required for the Olympic celebration.

Undermining Schipol Schemes

There were further difficulties with the construction through 1975 and into the Olympic year, and these were compounded by the views and influence of people who were not directly involved. In the middle of January suspicions seeping round Montreal were virtually confirmed when a report in the Swiss newspaper Zurich Sport disclosed that secret meetings had been held at Schipol airport Amsterdam to prepare alternative sites for competition should Montreal fail to meet their deadline. A group comprising Killanin, Herman van Karnebeek of Holland, a member of the Executive Board and Willi Daume, a German member who was president of the Organising Committee of the Munich Games, Jim Worrall of Canada, who was on our Organising Committee, and Thomas Keller, the head of the International Rowing Federation and a man whose influence went beyond his sport, were engaged in seeking alternative sites. To say that we in Montreal were dismayed at this leakage would be putting it mildly; we were indignant. This was a body blow and one which sounded like a vote of no confidence. It was undermining our efforts which needed all the support we could get. I can understand that Killanin was mindful of his duty to the competitors of the world, but any hope of keeping such a scheme secret was futile. In spite of the fact that the Ruhr area - Düsseldorf, Essen, Duisburg and Dortmund - contained a convenient cluster of existing sports facilities, the focus of the problem remained in Montreal and had to be solved there.

It was around this time that I met the German consul in the city, Wolfgang Thoele. He was a pleasant, mature person who showed great interest in the Games; he came to my office several times to see the progress we were making, and I had been a guest at his house. Yet his inquiries suddenly began to take a different line. Perhaps I was naive about the political nuances of such visits but I began to understand that he wanted to hear not about progress, but delay and failure. I hear you are experiencing great difficulties on the construction sites, he said. I played the diplomat and placated him: everything is going to be ready my dear Mr Thoele, I said.

Look, I know that things are going wrong and I want to hear from the inside what is happening. I am not coming to you to hear the good news Artur, he said.

I tried to be as polite as possible and he understood from my answer that my loyalty was to the Organising Committee, and that he would have to find some other partner for such conversations. We remained good friends, but he never again came to my office.

There continued to be delays -short strikes which led to planning hitches. But while this was depressing at the time, the greater the depths plumbed the more likely the recovery, for there came a point where the Government of Quebec had to take over responsibility as control slipped from the grasp of the Organising Committee. This occurred in November after a report to the Organising Committee that the opening date of the Games still could not be met. Drapeau and Robert Bourassa agreed to set aside their political differences, the Quebec administration set up an Olympic Installations Division - RIO - (Régie d'Installations Olympiques) under Claude Rouleau, an administrator with vast experience in construction operations.

Minister Goldbloom was assigned to monitor the work and report to Quebec and the IOC. From these changes a new philosophy, a new work element developed which relied much on Rouleau's dynamic approach and Goldbloom's understanding and persistence. He changed the work patterns, cut out, over time because the workers were so exhausted - gave them seven days break at Christmas, reduced the amount of machinery on the sites and introduced an eleven-hour day, six-day-a-week schedule which satisfied the unions. With a labour force of 2,500 working day shifts and 800 at night progress was soon evident and the completion date of June 6 did not look over-optimistic. There were architectural changes which annoyed Taillibert - who felt his work was being damaged by the workers and their strikes, but the overall image was unchanged.

Death of Simon Saint-Pierre

The criticism, particularly from overseas, continued and many of the international officials did not share our faith. One of them was Harold Henning, the President of the International Swimming Federation, who visited the site accompanied by an architect, John Smith of New York. Henning was absolutely convinced that there would not be water in the pool on July 18, the opening day of the Games. Fortunately he was wrong, but I could understand his misgivings, for he visited Montreal on January 24 of Olympic year and all there was for him to see was an enormous gaping hole in the ground hardly resembling even the shape of a swimming pool. I had the facts and estimates of our experts and plied Henning with them, but I was unable to convince him that it would be possible to have Olympic swimmers on the starting blocks by the scheduled date; and he told me that his report to the Executive Board of the IOC in a few days' time would be a negative one.

Matters were becoming incredibly difficult and I felt we needed every strong man amongst us, to cope with the demands and the pressure. Yet that was denied us for another and far worse blow followed two days later; Simon Saint-Pierre our executive vice-president and my closest colleague was riding in the Bromont equestrian centre indoor arena when he had a fatal fall from his horse. I felt numbed at the news, more so from the fact that there was not time for silent grief away from the work and the

problems; Rousseau called me in and I saw he shared my feelings. He accepted my advice that Michel Guay would take Saint-Pierre's place and Maurice Louvet the position of General Director of Technology. All this happened amidst frantic meetings to get ready for the IOC Session in Innsbruck, where we had to convince the members that our plans were realistic. We spent our final night until three in the morning at the design studios. All the expert decision makers in the field of construction and operation of the Games were present on this crucial night. We tightened up the plans for the main stadium construction, leaving out all but essential elements for the Games, and building a water-tight case for completing the swimming pool and velodrome. The main press centre was relocated to an existing downtown building, *Complex de jardines* and since the competitors' village was next door to the main complex we left the changing rooms there bare, and instead used portable trailers. The report was in best possible shape to put before the IOC - first the Executive Board and then to the full IOC Session - with plenty of probing journalists barking at us in between. Flight LH 445 took off from Montreal for Munich at 7.20 in the evening, and I suspect that as soon as the food trays were cleared and thoughts of Simon Saint-Pierre had drifted across our minds, the entire Montreal delegation slumbered.

Innsbruck on the eve of the XI Winter Games was icy, underfoot and in the atmosphere, particularly when the IOC members, the International Federation delegates, the press and the Montreal delegation came together. We were looked upon with great mistrust and in the closed sessions we came under a cross fire of attack from the athletic and swimming chiefs as well as the IOC. Yet one member of the IOC, Pedro Ramirez Vázquez, firmly supported us; that was most crucial to our cause, for he was an architect of international reputation and had designed many of the facilities for the Mexico Olympic Games in 1968 where he was chairman of the Organising Committee - and I was one of his advisers at that event. He among all those who faced us understood our difficulties and assessed that our proposals were realistic; his reputation was such that his colleagues on the IOC responded with a vote of confidence for Montreal.

At the end of an intensive session, the press crowded round our delegation. I took care with my words and to most of the questions: Acceptable solutions were adopted and we will organise the Games correctly, I said. Yet I was surprised, unpleasantly so, to read the following morning a German version of my words Takac: Fantastic solutions. The Games will be fantastic. Daume, one of the IOC vice-presidents, leapt upon this misinterpretation: A man of Takac's experience should be more careful when using fantastic as an expression. A man of Daume's experience - and position - should take the precaution of enquiring of the quoted person before making such remarks. Perhaps his reaction could be linked to the visits I had received in my Montreal office from Mr Thoele, the German Consul, and his anxiety to hear about our construction problems.

On their return to Montreal, the organising team were in much greater heart; the burden ahead was still great but we felt there was now more support for our cause and understanding of the problems, from the Olympic world at least.

Two months of work had progressed smoothly after the Innsbruck meetings when another tragedy blighted Montreal's cause. It was March 9, the deep snow still carpeted the city and the Olympic sites. I was dealing with some details in electronic measurements of results at the sports venues when my phone rang; it was Michel Guay from whom I expected a call to arrange a meeting, but

instead of the lively energetic voice I knew, the words came from a man shattered by shock as he wailed stuttering in his distress: There's been a terrible disaster at the stadium site. He was incoherent on the details, so I told him I would meet him on the site. When I arrived hundreds and hundreds of workers stood mutely near their work, many suffering grief. Four of their colleagues had been killed when a section of the roof broke away and crashed over 100 feet. The inquiry held later established that a temporary rope to hold the section had been cut accidentally before the permanent cable was locked into position.

*As the bodies were removed and the bereaved families informed we stood silently, many of us wondering what we had done to deserve this disaster. A small piece of paper was handed to me; it bore the names: **Benoit Breton, Bertrand Fortin, Xavier Harvey, Paul-Emil Neveu.** Olympic stadia resound to the names of the heroes, gold medallists at the top of the podium, the world record breakers and those losers who provide dramatic contributions to the history of the Games. But here were four names of modest, almost unknown men, making their contribution to the Olympic Movement. At the opening of the Games, when grief will have mellowed, their family members will recall: 'Our father, our son, my brother, took part in building that Olympic Stadium. He also has a place in the Olympic success.' Work stopped for four hours, cranes were stationary, the cutters and drills remained silent as the chill March wind kissed the snow and the concrete membranes which in those moments were the haunting, instant memorial which is part of Olympic history.*

Work resumed with energy and application everywhere, and the stadium was ready for the Olympic competitors. Through all these months of stress and tension - some of the most demanding in my peacetime years - I needed refreshment and stimulation away from daily problems; I found it in the dedication and commitment of a group of people who were involved in the artistic and musical aspect of the opening and closing ceremonies and the cultural programme of the Games.

While the Montreal Organising Committee worked tirelessly to get the Olympic sites ready for the competitors in time and saw in the final months that they were going to achieve their goal, other clouds were looming over the celebration.

Taiwan Upsets - Departure of Africans

In May reports began to appear in the media about difficulties over the participation of Taiwan and suggestions that the Canadian Government would not grant their team entry. We had known that this might be a problem since the submission of the bid to stage the Games in 1969, because Canada only recognised the People's Republic of China with whom they had very large grain contracts, so links with Taiwan in any form were politically sensitive in view of the Republic's attitude to Taiwan. It was baffling to hear that Lord Killanin was surprised by the reports. When the Canadian Government granted free entry to all competitors as a condition of Montreal's bid the offer had the words *pursuant to normal regulations* in the condition.

I was puzzled by Killanin's reaction since at a meeting in June 1975 with Edward Skerbec of the Canadian Foreign Affairs department who was assigned to deal with political matters relating to the Montreal Games, Skerbec quoted from his notes of a meeting held in April of that year with Lord Killanin when the question of the

Republic of China's admission to the United Nations had been discussed. It was stressed at that meeting that it would be almost impossible to allow Taiwan athletes into the country under their Olympic title of the Republic of China. Killanin, according to Skerbec's notes, said that the IOC would intensify its contacts with Taiwan and endeavour to find a compromise solution. If the IOC thought the matter might just evaporate then the alarm bells rang in November of that year when a group of Chinese boxers from Taiwan were due to take part in a pre-Olympic tournament in Montreal. The Canadian immigration authorities indicated that the normal terms of entry to Canada would apply - visas would be granted so long as the Taiwan team did not claim to represent the Republic of China; the Taiwanese refused to accept the condition and so did not take part. James Worrall, an IOC member in Canada, was informed of the event and passed on the details to Killanin.

It was not until the IOC Executive Board met in Montreal a few days before the Opening Ceremony of the Games that the problem was really tackled. In fact I suspect that the IOC president was rather like a diplomat walking the tightrope; he knew that had the matter come out into the open earlier then there would have been a political campaign by the right wing in the United States NOC supporting the Taiwanese which might well have led to a boycott of Montreal. If that was his thinking prior to arriving for the Games then he was right, for when the suggestion was made that the invitation to Taiwan be withdrawn, Phil Krumm, president of the US NOC, said that if that happened the Americans would withdraw from the Games. Killanin and the Canadian president Pierre Trudeau agreed a solution: that the Taiwan athletes be allowed to participate in the Games under their flag, using their national anthem but not the name of the Republic of China. The Taiwan delegation, in a somewhat unpleasant manner before the IOC Executive Board, rejected the plan and Taiwan did not take part. While this battle was being lost another far more damaging problem was left neglected until it was too late to resolve.

The Olympic Village is without doubt the most vibrant and exciting part of the Olympic scene. It bubbles with hopes and expectations and the wonderment of each team as they arrive in their distinctive colours and uniforms. It is the place to watch the youth of the world settling into an unusual environment, ethnic lines blurred by the mingling and meeting and new friendships, but all the time concentrating upon the competition and the ultimate goal. Thus it was on the morning of July 14 that a complete contrast to this atmosphere began to surface. Around noon in the office of the Village Director Yvan Dubois the mood was gloomy as another shadow began to fall upon Montreal's Games. Jean Claude Ganga, secretary of the Supreme Council for Sport in Africa, was in the office asking for facilities to enable the leaders of the African National Olympic Committees to hold a meeting. For several days there had been media reports about a meeting of the Organisation of African Unity in Port-Louis, Mauritius where there had been calls for the exclusion of New Zealand from the Games with the threat that African countries would withdraw if this were not to happen. The OAU - among other organisations - had been angered by the New Zealand rugby tour of South Africa which had been completed just before the Games began; it was seen as positive support for the apartheid regime.

It was not a matter which the IOC had considered, and strictly speaking it had no reason or authority to do so since rugby football was not on the Olympic programme and the sport was in no way attached to the National Olympic Committee in New Zealand. The politicians of Africa saw this from a different perspective and through their diplomats at the United Nations ensured that the representatives of the supreme Council for Sport in Africa, many of whom were in Montreal, knew of their discussions and the demands which followed. After their meeting in the Village, Jean Claude Ganga went to the Organising Committee and saw the president Roger Rousseau, appealing to him to go to Mauritius and influence the African political leaders. He also met Lance Cross, the IOC member in New Zealand, and sought a meeting with Lord Killanin, the IOC president. But that strangely did not happen even though what was a threat of a boycott became a reality when Tanzania withdrew before travelling to Montreal. Whatever the political significance, missed or ignored, in sporting terms this was a huge loss for it deprived the sporting world of a 1,500 metres contest on the track between Filbert Bayi, the world record holder, and John Walker of New Zealand, the world record holder for the mile.

The resolution of the OAU to express its contempt and anger over the New Zealand rugby tour remained and became a sad succession of tearful exits from the Village by African countries and their supporters. Disappointment and bewilderment were laced with tears as teams departed. Across eight days the scenes of departure were repeated, as 21 teams and Tanzania did not take part. Those who left were Algeria, Cameroon, Congo, Egypt, Ethiopia, Ghana, Guyana, Iraq, Kenya, Libya, Mali, Niger, Nigeria, Sudan, Swaziland, Chad, Togo, Tunisia, Uganda, Upper Volta and Zambia.

Indians Chiefs Guard Queen Elizabeth

The opening and closing ceremonies of an Olympic Games are in part a reflection of the cultural ambience of the country and region in which they are held. More recently these events have been handed over to the direction of a producer whose remit is very much to meet the needs of television. But here in Montreal, the emphasis was on exploring the wealth of cultural heritage in Quebec, and it evolved in the living rooms of a group of artists and cultural enthusiasts. At first I was just an appendage, someone to be referred to frequently, it turned out, when matters of Olympic protocol and tradition came up. But hour upon hour through the aperitifs and coffee my wife Darinka and I were enthralled listeners to music, prose, poetry and play. There was Jean Dupire, a colleague of Mayor Drapeau, who was a leading personality in Montreal's cultural life; André Morin, aesthete and musician, who was adviser to Jacques Lorion, general director of Games' ceremonies; Victor Vogel, composer, score writer, conductor and instrumentalist, who brought a high creative sense to the musical aspect of the ceremonies; Louis Chantigny, music and literary enthusiast, who was a journalist; there were others whose contributions sparked our thoughts and directions. Among them were François Godbout, a young lawyer who was a Davis Cup player for Canada and whom I partnered in the Montreal Tennis Club, a man who could talk for hours about the lives of Liszt, Chopin, Mozart and other giants of musical history. Also Père Sablon- Marcel de la Sablonière, a Jesuit priest who was a vice president of the NOC. Upon reflection I felt

that these artistic interludes, away from planning, budgets, schedules, media attacks and other burdens enabled me to keep my sanity through this difficult period.

One evening early in our get togethers during March of 1974 in the house of our hospitable host Jean Dupire, he and Morin talked about the young Quebec composer André Mathieu and his rich musical creativity. He was 39 when he died long before his musicality was understood: his legacy included 80 works, concertos, sonatas, ballads, symphonic



INDIAN PROTECTION RING

the magnificent closing ceremony, real Canadian Indians and their wigwams created a special atmosphere.

poems and rhapsodies. It was the conversations of Dupire and Morin and Morin's light touch on the piano keys in Dupir's drawing room, which evoked the musical variants of Mathieu's compositions. From this beginning through a range of excerpts Vogel based the musical elaboration of the opening and closing ceremonies.

My most significant contribution to the ceremonial came in an important aspect of the closing ceremony. One of the ideas we worked upon was to have young women forming the five Olympic Rings and dressed in the appropriate colour of each circle. The athletes taking part in the closing ceremony would be handed a coloured card and invited to go to that circle and express the joy they had felt in their part at the Games. A good idea but might not some more exuberant competitors, how shall I put it, interfere with the dignity of the young women? It seemed we might fall into the trap of inviting horseplay, which would go beyond the line of fun and offend. It was at this point that I felt we could ask the North American Indians to play a positive role in the ceremony. There was concern about the Indians' participation because historically and more recently

they had been treated unfairly and might therefore see such a ceremony broadcast to the world as a place to demonstrate their dissatisfaction. Killanin and Drapeau were clearly worried, but I put forward my idea which was that we should have five outer circles of Indians protecting the women, and my device which locked in the safety aspect - two Indian Chiefs taking their place in the VIP Box as ceremonial guards to Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II. I knew that if the chiefs were in that position they would ensure the best possible behaviour and dignity of the young men of their tribes. I put my idea to Drapeau and we visited the chiefs on the reservation. After a cordial reception we explained our plans, inviting them to provide the protecting rings and for two Chiefs to sit directly behind the Queen.

They agreed to the idea, and when both Chiefs attended a reception just the details had been worked upon before the Games given by Roger Rousseau, the Organising Committee president where I met one of them - Max One Onti Gros-Louis, Grand Chief Huron Wendat Nation. He and all his colleagues listened to our presentation about their part in the



HIS GREATEST MOMENT

Cuba's Alberto Juantorena enjoyed unique sporting success in 1976. Already the world record holder in the 400 and 800 metres, Juantorena won the gold medal in both distances at the 1976 Games in Montreal.

ceremony and they clearly understood the dignity of their role. I met him in the box on the day of the ceremony and he was very honoured and excited by the position he was taking. Moreover it was a significant step in Quebec's history, for this was the first time in 200 years that the eight tribes in the territory had come together. They played their part admirably.

Nineteen years later there was an unexpected sequel to this episode when at the IOC session in Budapest Quebec were bidding to organise the Winter Games

and among the delegation was my friend Max One Onti Gros-Louis. Of course as a member of the delegation he was presented to the IOC President Samaranch. The Games were awarded to Salt Lake City but never mind that, we celebrated to a gypsy orchestra on the banks of the Danube, reviving the memories of the closing ceremony in Montreal.

After so many crisis in construction and organisation and, at the last, political problems, Montreal presented to the athletes of the world ideal conditions for training and competing and the participants responded to make these Games rich in the creation of Olympic legends. In the main arena there were a host of extraordinary performances.



THE GREAT LADY OF MONTREAL

The unforgettable Polish athlete Irena Szewinska, who won the 400 metres in a world record-beating 49.29 seconds.

Irena Szewinska of Poland, coming towards the close of a brilliant career, set a remarkable world record for 400 metres of 49.29 sec; Alberto Juantorena of Cuba achieved unique victories at 400 and 800 metres; and there was another double gold medal winner, Tatyana Kazankina of the Soviet Union at 800 and 1,500 metres. Edwin Moses began his legendary contribution to the sport with his first Olympic gold medal and world record (47.64 sec) in the 400 metres hurdles. Perhaps the greatest achievement in the arena came from the Finn Lasse Viren, who successfully defended the 5,000 and 10,000 metres titles he had won in Munich. In the gymnastics hall Nikolay Andrianov of the Soviet Union left his imprint on the celebrations by taking four gold, a silver and a bronze medal, and Nadia Comaneci of Romania almost matched his peaks with three golds and a bronze. After the basketball drama of Munich the USA returned to their position of supremacy, taking gold in the final against Yugoslavia.