

# Managing a “Gentlemen’s Club”

By Monique Berlioux



Seven gentlemen and a female director – the first meeting of the IOC Executive Committee under President Lord Killanin on 2<sup>nd</sup> February 1973 (left to right): Prince Takeda, Juan Antonio Samaranch, Konstantin Andrianov, Count de Beaumont, Lord Killanin, Herman van Karnebeek, Sylvio de Magalhães Padilha. Absent are Sir Ademolo and the 3<sup>rd</sup> Vice-President, Willi Daume. Standing: Monique Berlioux and the adviser Artur Takač.

IOC Archives / OSC

In 1964, I published a book on the history of the Olympic Games, entitled *Olympica*. Three years later I began to think about turning it into a screenplay. I realized that I would need backing, and at the very least, a producer. I spoke to my friend Myriam Meuwly, who worked as a bi-lingual secretary for International Olympic Committee (IOC), and was editor of the *Olympic Bulletin*. She advised me to write to Lord Killanin, Member of the IOC for Ireland since 1952. He had just been nominated as Chairman of the IOC's newly created Press Commission. He immediately invited me to a meeting of his commission in London.

Having recently broken my ankle in three places I was trundled feet first into the meeting room in a wheelchair. Conversation stopped short. Lord Killanin was in the Chair, pipe in mouth, a silver chain bracelet clinking on his right wrist. He was a man of majestic roundness, with pink skin, and curling silver hair. White side whiskers cut across his plump cheeks. He wore a navy suit, a light blue shirt, and a lemon-coloured knitted tie.

He addressed me in English, confident, as all English-speakers are that their language is universal. That didn't bother me. But what I didn't then know was that Lord Killanin had a particular way of mumbling: dropping his voice, and stuttering and stammering in the best tradition of an old boy of Magdalene College Cambridge.

To one side of him sat Lord Luke of Pavenham, a blue-blooded Englishman. At that time he presided over

the destiny of Bovril, and the Hyde Park Hotel in which we found ourselves belonged to him. He was a man of average height, solidly built, with an engaging smile, and bushy eyebrows which protected a flickering gaze.

Then there was Heinz Schöbel, from the German Democratic Republic, a communist and a 'anti-Nazi'. His face, like his body, was nervous and emaciated. He was accompanied by a translator.

Count Jean de Beaumont was the fourth member of the commission. Unfortunately, he wasn't present. I had pinned all my hopes on my compatriot, and he hadn't come ...

The fifth person in this small pale green room was Colonel Johann Westerhoff, the Secretary-General of the IOC: a loud-voiced giant with straw-coloured hair, a broad smile, rosy cheeks, and blue eyes.

Once the basic outlines of my project had been sketched out, Westerhoff, an outgoing man with a booming laugh, took turns with Lord Killanin to question me. I began to talk about ways and means, that is, about money. I was forced to acknowledge that the IOC did not have a penny to its name. All it could offer was its patronage, its benediction, and its support; full stop.

Johann Westerhoff accompanied me to the door. He spoke. He was looking for a press attaché and a public relations director for the IOC. Would I be interested? 'Yes of course', I replied. Two months later he wrote to me, inviting me to Lausanne. It was the end of May.

At the time the IOC Headquarters was still housed where Pierre de Coubertin had left it, in a manor house known as Mon-Repos, situated in a park in the centre of the town.

On my arrival Johann Westerhoff greeted me warmly in a superb office smelling of furniture polish. De Coubertin's library took up two walls of the room. We quickly came to an agreement. I would begin work on 1<sup>st</sup> August 1967.

Once I got down to the job I was hooked; there was so much to do. But the hours of work were set by the caretaker who resolutely closed the doors of Mon-Repos between midday and two o'clock, and again at six o'clock precisely. I had always liked working during the sacrosanct lunch hour and in the evening when the telephones finally became less insistent. Now it was out of the question. Nor was anyone permitted to enter the building on a Saturday.

So Friday evenings when I was free from work I jumped into the train back Paris. My husband Serge Groussard would be waiting to collect me at the Gare de Lyon at 11 p.m. to take me to eat oysters. I had loved the bustle and excitement of Paris, with its 'open all hours' lifestyle.

Lausanne in the late 1960s was a very different place. Fortunately the work kept me busy, for there was nothing else to do. I learnt a lot about it in those first few weeks. In the evening, the shops closed at twenty-nine minutes past six and the town emptied, as though sucked of its blood by a vampire.

There was no question of parking one's car as close as possible to one's destination, as I was accustomed to do

in Paris, less still of leaving it on the footpath. It could only be left in designated parking spaces. The locals were all policemen at heart and one was rapidly called to order by the first passer-by for the most minor offence. And I had an accent, a French accent, recognizable miles away, and there was no way round it.

At midday the restaurants were filled with men; and nine-tenths of the time only men dined out in the evening. Women were meant to 'putzer', that is to keep house and stay out of business matters.

During my first winter in the town, the Syndic (Mayor), Pierre-André Chevallaz, gave an official dinner for those members of the IOC who happened to be in Lausanne, and I was invited along. The Town Clerk was astonished that I should be in Lausanne while my husband was in Paris. 'But who washes his shirts?' he demanded. 'Sorry', I replied, 'he didn't marry a cleaning woman'. I was immediately classed as a pariah.

Even so, I came to appreciate the kindness of those Swiss people with whom I came in contact over the years, and to admire their earnestness, their appetite for hard work and a job well done, and their spirit of co-operation.

When Pierre de Coubertin discovered Switzerland he was enchanted by this hardworking, methodical, and stern little country. For him, its political organisation represented the ideal government. In his *Universal History* he wrote: 'In its current form, the Helvetian Confederation constitutes the most perfect political achievement so far attained by humanity'.

Besides, he was closely linked with two Swiss citizens:



Monique Berlioux, \*1925. She represented France as a swimmer at the 1948 Olympic Games. Before she came to Lausanne in 1967, where she served the IOC as director from 1969 to 1985, she had worked as a sports journalist and head of the press division at the Ministry for Youth and Sport. After leaving Lausanne in 1985, she advised the City of Paris which was bidding for the Games of 1992. She is married to the author and former Resistance fighter Serge Groussard, who fell into the clutches of the Gestapo in 1943.

Photo: Albert Riethausen, L'Amicale des Internationaux Français de Natation





Swiss artillery Lieutenant-Colonel André G. Berdez (1888-1940) took over from his young compatriot Fred Auckenthaler as IOC Secretary in 1925. When Berdez fell seriously ill in 1939, he was represented at the London IOC Session in June by his designated successor, the German Werner Klingeberg.

Photo: Volker Kluge Archive

From 1929 Lydie Zanchi (1905-1993) helped out in the IOC secretariat on an ad hoc basis. It was not until 1946, after she had conducted IOC business more or less single handedly throughout the Second World War, that she was appointed full-time by the new IOC President Sigfrid Edström (photo).

Photo: IOC Archives / OSC

Baron Godefroy de Blonay and Francis Messerli. De Blonay, an Egyptologist, had met de Coubertin in Paris when he was carrying out research at the Louvre. The two men got on well together. Both came from the same world and shared the same culture. In 1899, Baron de Blonay, who owned the Château de Grandson near Neuchâtel, was appointed by de Coubertin as the IOC Member in Switzerland.

In 1922, the Vaudois capital offered the IOC a floor in Mon-Repos, a property which the commune had acquired in 1910 for the sum of two million Swiss francs. The demesne had been formed through the purchase of various vineyards and the first house was built there in 1747 by the Controller-General, Secrétan.

Over the years it was to be rented out to numerous English and German nobles, including Prince Reuss-Gretz, an ancestor of the second Mrs. Avery Brundage. A theatre had been set up in the park where Voltaire's tragedies and comedies, including 'Zaire', had been performed in the presence of the philosopher, and of his guest the English historian and Member of Parliament, Edward Gibbon, who lived in Lausanne for many years.

Napoléon Bonaparte passed through in 1800 on his way to Italy. All the European gentry had been received there, from the Bonaparte brothers to the sons of King Louis-Philippe of France, from Prussian princes to King Alfonso XIII of Spain, and the future English King Edward VII.

The 1922 agreement having been tacitly renewed, from 1935 onwards, the City of Lausanne retained the first floor for reception rooms. It allowed the IOC to use the second floor, consisting of a fine meeting room, a vast office overlooking the park, and three or four smaller rooms. The third floor, on which de Coubertin had lived towards the end of his life in order to escape the rages of his lady wife, was converted into an Olympic Museum. The caretaker lodged on the ground floor.

The Olympic administration purred along tranquilly at the appropriately named Mon-Repos ('My Repose') between two Sessions. During the Olympics, it was transferred to the city in which the Games were being held.

De Coubertin had carried out all the administrative tasks himself, for most of his life but in 1922 Fred Auckenthaler, a Swiss, was appointed Chancellor. He resigned in 1925. He was succeeded by André G. Berdez, a Lieutenant-Colonel in the Swiss Army, who died in January 1940. From then until 1946, when Otto Mayer took on the Chancellorship on 23<sup>rd</sup> June, Mrs. Lydie Zanchi, a Swiss woman of Russian origin, was in charge of the secretariat and led it with great efficiency and competence throughout the Second World War, ensuring exchanges amongst members of the opposing camps and sending out circulars from Count de Baillet-Latour to the four corners of the world.

Mayer had been 'recruited' by Sigfrid Edström when the latter became President of the IOC in 1946. He had also been 'recommended' by Lydie Zanchi. His brother Albert became a member of the IOC. Born and bred in the Canton of Vaud, Otto and Albert were well-known jewellers in Lausanne and Montreux, respectively. Having a prosperous business in a luxury trade enabled Otto to carry out the job of Chancellor on a quasi-volunteer basis. 'Otto Mayer', recalled Lord Killanin in *My Olympic Years* 'ran the IOC's business from the back room of his premises, and the bar of the next door hotel'. Besides, he was 'a jolly good fellow', and held in high esteem by whisky drinkers and imbibers of the local white wine alike.

Otto got on very well with Sigfrid Edström. When Avery Brundage became President, he confirmed Otto in his post, with a salary of 500 Swiss Francs a month. All went well for the first few years. But then Otto became friendly with David Burghley (the future Marquess of Exeter), and with the French journalist Gaston Meyer. It was an explosive cocktail. Avery Brundage took umbrage at this Swiss-British friendship, and was astounded that Gaston Meyer's paper *L'Equipe* always had hitherto unpublished news, and knew more about the intentions and voting patterns of the IOC than certain members did themselves.

Otto had engaged a pretty young saleswoman-cum-secretary who was to become more fascinated by Olympism than by jewellery: her name was Myriam Meuwly. Brundage took a very serious interest in the new recruit, who accompanied him on his travels as interpreter, and kept him well informed about the course of business. Her tall, slender silhouette pleased Avery Brundage. Jean de Beaumont pursued her. But there was gossip amongst the old guard, led by Lord David.



Otto was not happy. Madame Zanchi gritted her teeth. Relations between the President and the Chancellery were soured. Avery criticized Otto for his attitude, and above all, for his support for Exeter, to such an extent that Otto resigned in 1964. He maintained that he had too much work and was neglecting his own business. Nonetheless he remained in post until the end of the Tokyo Games in order to see in his successor.

The title of Chancellor was abandoned, as being too grandiose, and a Secretary-General was sought. The job looked great on paper but was poorly paid. Candidates who were in the know about earlier vicissitudes drifted away. In the end Marc Hodler, the second IOC Member recommended a former Judo player who had become an official. His name was Eric Jonas and he came from Lausanne. He started work on 1<sup>st</sup> September 1964.

Jonas, although a respected administrator of the Judo Federation, entered the hushed and aristocratic environment of Olympism with all the subtlety of a decent Swiss peasant. He rubbed some members up the wrong way, and exasperated others. He considered himself invested with almost divine powers. He ordered forthwith a pennant for his car with the Olympic rings. Avery Brundage did not play around with the use of the rings; other times, other customs. He upbraided the culprit in no uncertain terms. Two or three similar blunders taxed the President's patience.

The Tokyo Games were barely over when things went downhill. The following April, the Executive Board unanimously decided to dispense with the services of the Secretary-General. As for Jonas, he had other ideas, and took the IOC to court, claiming four years' salary.

Marc Hodler tried to smooth things over, but his efforts were taken badly. Avery Brundage held him responsible. The local press took Jonas's part. They attacked the IOC and Brundage in savage fashion. In 1965, the people of Lausanne had not yet forgiven the fact that Lausanne had not been chosen to organise the 1960 Games, which they considered to have been an insult. The IOC had chosen Rome. Avery was not *persona grata* in the capital of Vaud.

After the Jonas experience, the IOC, and its Executive Board, determined not to make the same mistake by employing another local. As the months passed looking for a replacement for Jonas. Madame Zanchi, who had had the title of Secretary under Otto Mayer, was nominated interim Secretary-General. Admittedly at this time it was out of the question that a woman be appointed to take the place of Eric Jonas. Women had recently been granted the right to vote at Cantonal but not Federal level in Switzerland and were meant to be confined to lesser posts. The United States Constitution had been amended on 26<sup>th</sup> August 1920 to ratify votes for women, and France had followed, a generation later, on 21<sup>st</sup> April 1944. Incredibly, the Swiss Confederation waited until 7<sup>th</sup> February 1971

Lydie Zanchi was well supported by the brilliant and attractive Myriam Meuwly, who later resigned in 1967 because of disagreements with the Secretary-General. She then resumed her studies and became a famous journalist.

As a successor to Jonas the Dutchmen Jonkheer Herman van Karnebeek and Colonel Pahud de Mortanges proposed their compatriot Johann Westerhoff. Born

in Jakarta, and trained at the Netherlands Military Academy, Westerhoff was a successful businessman who had retired to his farm in Grub (in the Canton of Appenzell) to train horses, and was looking for an occupation rather than a profession. He was a handsome man with many sporting interests, and spoke several languages. Brundage was impressed by his military bearing and his linguistic talents. He agreed to meet him but added that the final decision would be made by the Executive Committee. Thus the candidate was called to Rome where the 65<sup>th</sup> IOC Session was to take place, in 1966.



Meeting of the IOC Executive Committee under President Avery Brundage in June 1964 in Lausanne: on his left Vice-President Armand Massard, on the right the Marquess of Exeter. Far left: Myriam Meuwly (1936-2010), through whose good offices Monique Berlioux came to the IOC. In the foreground: Lydie Zanchi and Chancellor Otto Mayer (1900-1970). At this meeting Mayer wanted to clarify rumours about his resignation. He described his relationship with Brundage as "excellent".

Photo: IOC Archives / OSC

Colonel Westerhoff was made to wait for some time in an antechamber before finally being introduced. His opening speech was brief: 'Mr. President, members, thank you for having chosen me as Secretary-General'.

To say that the members were dumbfounded by the candidate's aplomb would be an understatement. The Marquess of Exeter was the first to recover his wits. He welcomed the Dutchman. His colleagues could only follow suit.

Colonel Johann Westerhoff was the first non-Swiss to head the IOC's administration. Like Jonas, he was given the title of Secretary-General. Once in place, the Colonel moved swiftly to make changes. He wished to increase the number of staff, and give more importance to the administration. In short, he wanted to establish a proper Secretariat General in Switzerland, and not in Chicago, where Brundage managed IOC affairs.

Having taken the measure of Mon-Repos, and of Lausanne, he decreed that Zurich would be an infinitely more suitable place to house the Olympic Movement. Zurich possessed an international airport, which was not the case for the capital of Vaud; one had to travel to Geneva, sixty kilometres away, to catch a flight. Also Zurich, as the biggest city in the Swiss Confederation, was at the centre of Europe. What Westerhoff failed to mention was that Zurich was also just thirty kilometres from his farm at Grub.

So he began his campaign. Shouts of protest all round. The people of Vaud could not understand why they



After the dismissal of IOC General Secretary Eric Jonas, the Dutch industrialist Johann W. Westerhoff (1915-1994), who lived in Switzerland, was appointed as his successor. Born in Djakarta, Westerhoff was a top level show jumper and had hoped to compete for the Dutch Olympic team in 1940. In 1965 he founded a stables in Grub in Canton Appenzell. After continuous criticism of his work at the IOC, he announced his retirement.

Photo: IOC Archives / OSC

should be deprived of the Canton's only international organisation, they who had always offered such generous hospitality to the IOC.

Brundage, who had not been consulted before discussions with the German Swiss had begun, looked unfavourably on the growing administration developing outside his orbit.

The Municipality sent a letter to all members on 14<sup>th</sup> April 1967 complaining about the actions of the Secretary-General. Summoning up the history of relations between Lausanne and the IOC, it promised to find a satisfactory solution to the need to expand the Headquarters. It offered the Château de Vidy, a two-story country seat on the outskirts of the city. By coincidence, as in the case of Mon-Repos, Napoléon had also stopped there in 1800 before the Italian campaign.

The advantage of Vidy lay in the fact that on the one hand it was close to the motorway, enabling access to Geneva airport in thirty minutes, and on the other, it came with tied accommodation in the form of Villa Gruaz, just 500 metres from the 'château'. No solution was offered for the Museum, however, which would remain on the third floor of Mon-Repos.

In addition to rent-free use of the Château de Vidy, the Municipality offered to pay for heating and electricity. Given the precariousness of its resources, the IOC was not in a position to make difficulty. Nonetheless the new Headquarters proved impractical as offices, being on the extreme west of the city. Those members of the secretariat who did not possess a car had to rely on a bus service which stopped almost a mile away, and ran every half hour. The building was in the centre of a square formed on one side by the motorway, and on the others by a cemetery where de Coubertin's body lay interred (his heart being buried at Olympia), a sewage works, and a campsite.

Once the decision had been taken, the move took place in the spring of 1968, at the close of the Grenoble Games. With the departure from Mon-Repos, a page of Olympic history had been turned. I have always regretted the move from that fine elegant building, so ideally situated in the centre of the town. The monies poured into the Château de Vidy by the Municipality and by the IOC, could have been used to turn Mon-Repos into an ideal Headquarters.

The Grenoble Games were barely over when Westerhoff began a world tour in order to visit the many National Olympic Committees which, under pressure from Giulio Onesti, IOC Member in Italy, wished to escape the tutelage of the IOC. For Avery, his was the final straw. It was up to the President, and the President alone, to travel, and to conduct himself as Head of State. He could no longer tolerate this attack on his authority, this act of lèse majesty. And what is more, from a paid employee!

At the time a gulf separated 'volunteers' from 'staff', a gulf which, curiously, still exists, albeit to a lesser degree. Within the Olympic Movement, there was only one class of sports administrator: those key figures who gave their time freely, without seeking other reward. Any employed person was a 'professional' and did not enjoy the prerogatives of the former. This attitude was entirely logical in de Coubertin's time; it ensured that volunteers were independent, and that the workforce was submissive.

Johann Westerhoff did not see things this way. Over the weeks, relations between the President and the Secretary-General deteriorated and by time of the Session preceding the Mexico Games, in 1968, the two were barely speaking. Both lived in sumptuous suites at either end of the immense Camino Real Hotel; I acted as runner between them, carrying messages.

Once re-elected at the Mexico Session, Brundage's one thought was to send the Dutchman back to his farm. This he achieved on 21<sup>st</sup> January 1969, having obtained his resignation after hours of discussion. The Swiss members, Albert Mayer and Marc Hodler, together with the Egyptian, Taher Pacha, had participated in the negotiations, and given Brundage their support. A formal announcement was made. And so I was made responsible for administration, on a temporary basis, while a new, less ambitious, Secretary-General was sought. And once again the title had to be changed in order to avoid any confusion over the functions required of the post. At the Mexico Session in 1968, Brundage had nominated General Clark (Mexico) as President of the Co-ordination and Supervision Committee, which was charged not only with re-organising the IOC's structures, and its relationships with National Olympic Committees and International Federations, but also its administration.

José Jesús de Clark Florès was the son of an American father and an Indian mother. Highly intelligent, he had succeeded not only in making a career in the Army, rising to the grade of General, but also in the private sector, having amassed a considerable fortune in the construction business. Avery used to tease him by calling him 'Dedo General' ('fingered General'), that is, taken out of the ranks and promoted through favouritism. He had concluded flourishing deals with Avery, notably in Baja California, in northern Mexico. He hoped to play a big role in Olympism and, who knows, succeed Brundage, but he only spoke Spanish. For the time being, he was just a Vice-President.

My first contact with him was difficult but clear cut. He had complained, in rather discourteous terms, about an article which I had written for the IOC's *Information Letter*. I had responded like for like, finding, in my fury, sufficient Spanish for the purpose. He was so taken aback that a woman, and what is more, an employee,

should address him in such terms, that he softened. We came to know and respect each other and worked together well.

General Clark's Commission had prepared an organigram which was adopted by the Session. There would no longer be a Secretary-General, but instead three Directors: one for Administration, one for Information and Propaganda, and one for Technical Assistance. Thus the persons appointed would not be tempted to liken themselves to the Secretary-General of the UN, not to forget that the President alone held the reins.

The three posts envisaged by General Clark's organigram were to be filled in 1969; in the meantime I was acting as interim administrator in addition to being Press Officer.

Avery Brundage accepted the appointment of a Technical Director willy-nilly but balked at the appointment of the Director (administration), preferring the status quo, despite the instance of certain members of the Executive Board who did not believe that I could carry out two functions.

My relationship with Brundage was always cloudless. Our roles were clear: he presided, reigning over everything, whilst I administered and put his decisions into practice. This did not stop me from giving him my opinion nor from disagreeing with him at times. But once a decision had been taken, I submitted to it. And from time to time, I managed to influence him.

Once work was over, Avery liked me to accompany him at mealtimes. On the one hand, he wanted to avoid being monopolized by a Member of the IOC. On the other hand, he liked to relax after meetings, and to talk of other things. Frederick Rueggsegger, a Swiss German whom he had recruited in the 1950s, followed him everywhere as his private secretary, butler, and right-hand man. The three of us spent unofficial lunches and dinners telling stories punctuated by great cries of laughter. How many times had I surprised wrathful looks from members, shocked that their President should be mixing with the staff ...

With Lord Killanin, professional relations were immediately stamped with a confidence which I believe to be reciprocal. But during the eight years of the Irishman's mandate our personal contacts were rare. In my eyes, this had a double advantage: firstly no one could complain and secondly I was free to eat lunch and dinner as I pleased, provided that there were no official social engagements. In between meetings, Lord Killanin came regularly to work for two or three days at Vidy, when we got through a lot of business. The rest of the time, we exchanged mountains of telexes and memoranda. Here again the demarcation was clear: he defined policy, I applied it. He often asked my opinion, particularly on the speeches which he had to deliver. It was a great pleasure to seek out new ideas. We did of

course have our disagreements, although today I can hardly remember any.

On his appointment, Lord Killanin had incontestably been put under pressure to have me replaced. He himself had considered it for a moment. Above all, he wanted me to be overseen by a man. Then as the weeks passed, he saw the advantages of the situation, and decided to team up with the woman that I was, rather than risk another Jonas or a Colonel Westerhoff, who would be less flexible. Besides, economies had to be made, and a woman's salary was naturally lower than a man's!



Apart from the official act which sealed the establishment of the IOC at Lausanne on 10<sup>th</sup> April 1915, there had been few exchanges between its Presidents and the Municipality. In any case, Avery Brundage, and Lord Killanin after him, both enjoyed good relations with the Syndics in office: Pierre Graber, Georges-André Chevallaz and Jean-Pascal Delamuraz, who all three became Members of Parliament and each, in turn, became President of the Confederation. Encounters were infrequent, however. The city fulfilled its contract to offer free accommodation, heating, and lighting to the IOC. The IOC ensured a high profile for Lausanne by organising meetings there which drew in members of high society and the international press.

If Avery Brundage often thought of moving the IOC Headquarters from the city he never followed up this aspiration. In the same way, Lord Killanin did not care much for the narrowness both of the site and of its inhabitants. He was strongly urged by Giulio Onesti to leave Lausanne. The Italian member offered him a superb palace in Rome, with a promise from the Italian government to create a sort of sporting Vatican.

Willi Daume, one of the German members, detested Lausanne, where he always seemed to be greeted by rain, and he wrote to Lord Killanin in 1974 that 'I have been and will always remain absolutely against

**On the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the IOC the City of Lausanne was awarded the Olympic Cup. But it was not until the first Session after the Second World War held in Lausanne, that IOC President Sigfrid Edström was finally able to hand over the cup to Pierre Graber, the City Syndic (Mayor). Right in front of Edström: the new IOC Chancellor Otto Mayer.**

Photo: IOC Archives / OSC

Lausanne. The city is totally unfit as Headquarters for the most prominent sport organisation of the world'.

As for Juan Antonio Samaranch, he saw the advantages for him of the situation. First of all, long before 1980 he had wanted to get away from Spain where he considered that the attacks on prominent personalities had become too frequent for his safety. It would be an ideal place to stay. He had only to obtain residency permits for himself and those close to him, and settle his family and fortune in a safe place. Besides, on the death of Franco it would make an ideal place to stay in the run-up to a change of government which would inevitably bring the Socialists to power in Spain. Reassuring the authorities, and guaranteeing to maintain the Headquarters in Lausanne, was just an overture to resolving his personal problems.

From 1972 Lord Killanin presided over the Château de Vidy. His right-hand woman: IOC Director Monique Berlioux.

Photo: Albert Riethausen



Once he became President, in July 1980, his links with the Lausanne authorities multiplied. Using the income from television rights, which continued to rise, he committed the IOC for the long-term, buying property. A loan on 'advantageous' conditions was obtained and the concrete was poured.

The Château de Vidy having become too small, other premises were needed to house members of staff. Eventually the Municipality found a villa not far from Vidy, but close to the abattoirs.

The Olympic Museum had been closed since the new offices had been set up at Vidy. In effect the municipal architects would not allow members of the public to enter Mon-Repos, which was in danger of collapse, and no other premises were offered. An inventory had been drawn up, the objects packed away in cases, and the various bits of furniture belonging to de Coubertin had been stacked up, waiting for better days.

Samaranch wanted the Museum re-opened as quickly as possible. He rented a building not far from the railway station which was set up as a provisional Museum. He also decided to transfer there the document and film libraries, and gave charge of it to Swiss member Raymond Gafner, who had recently retired as director

of the local hospital. At the same time, Geneva offered sumptuous premises, but the President did not wish to inspect them.

When control of Olympic Solidarity passed to Samaranch's childhood friend, Anselmo Lopez, more office space was needed. And as luck would have it, one of Samaranch's wife's cousins, a doctor living in Lausanne, had a suitable property for rent. His daughter also became Lopez's secretary.

When I left the IOC in 1985 the offices were spread over six different sites in the City, and two runners were needed to take files from one place to another.

In order to improve his corporate image amongst the locals, Samaranch appointed a personal adviser 'for Swiss affairs'. This was a young politician who, having served as a town councillor had been defeated in recent elections. Paid by the IOC, he organised meetings for Samaranch with city and Canton notables whilst at the same time pursuing his political career, thus enabling him shortly afterwards to be elected a State Deputy in Vaud. To him fell the task of facing up to those Lausanne citizens who were opposed to more construction around the Château de Vidy. He had to sweet-talk the ecologists (a group to which this man belonged) who did not want to see the parkland tarmacked over when there were other plots available. Agreement was obtained, however.

Pedro Ramírez Vásquez, Member of the IOC for Mexico, and a famous architect, had volunteered his help in drawing up plans for new Headquarters. Local laws did not permit a foreigner to be in charge however and so it was that the deal fell to a native Lausanne architect. Once the available land had been measured it became apparent that it could not house the entire secretariat. The overflow would be accommodated at Ouchy, three kilometres away, where the IOC planned to construct a museum and Olympic Studies Centre, at its own cost.

With temporary exhibitions at the museum on Swiss themes, free film showings for the population, an Olympic Week for the youth of the Canton, the nomination of Lausanne as "the Olympic City", an exhibition during the annual national fair known as the 'Comptoir', Samaranch used the IOC's purse to heap benefits on Lausanne. In this way he hoped to be elected, as de Coubertin had been, an Honorary Citizen. But the city turned a deaf ear.

In 2014, on the proposal of its current President, Thomas Bach (Germany), the IOC Session agreed the construction of an imposing building covering 2.4 hectares in the park surrounding the Château de Vidy of which 1.8 is to accommodate 450 members of staff, numerous meeting rooms and various other facilities. The cost is estimated at 1600 million Swiss francs. Designed by a Danish firm of architects, it is due to be ready in 2018. ■