

# Olympic Games in Garmisch - Partenkirchen 1936 – sport, logistics, media

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## Summary:

The subject matter of the 1936 Olympic Games is mainly taken up in a political context because, at that time, both the summer and winter Olympic Games were held in Nazi Germany. On the other hand, however, the Olympics proved to be a great success in terms of organisation, communication and new technological solutions. This article is an attempt to show the preparations and conduct of the Olympic Games in Garmisch-Partenkirchen in terms of organisation, logistics and media. The article is based on the official Olympic report, press releases from that period and information from the Olympic exhibition at the stadium in Garmisch-Partenkirchen.

**Keywords:** history of sport, Olympic Games, Garmisch-Partenkirchen 1936

## Introduction

The Fourth Winter Olympic Games were held in Garmisch-Partenkirchen, Germany. They were of key importance for the Germans, as they were an opportunity to present organisational skills and to deprive the international community of any doubts about the organisation of the summer Olympics, which a few months later, were to be held in Berlin. The Ga-Pa Olympic Games allowed the hosts to test the procedures related to security, crowd control, communication, logistics and the media, which were planned to be used during the August 1936 Games in Berlin.

The aim of this article is therefore to present the Winter Olympics in Garmisch-Partenkirchen from an organisational, logistic and media point of view. Until now, the subject matter of the Ga-Pa Games has been largely focused on the political and sporting side, and the issues contained in the following article have been treated as a background for other considerations or those completely ignored. Consequently, this article is an attempt to supplement scientific deliberations on the Garmisch-Partenkirchen Olympic Games and broaden the knowledge on the organisation of the Games, logistics and media solutions, which were repeatedly used at later times.

## Preparation for the Olympics

In 1931, at its 30<sup>th</sup> session, the International Olympic Committee granted Germany the right to host the 10<sup>th</sup> Summer Olympic Games in Berlin in 1936. The Games at the German capital were originally intended to take place in 1916, but were cancelled due to the outbreak

of World War I. However, in 1913 the official opening of the *Deutsches Stadium* took place, attended by 60 000 people, and 10 000 pigeons were released during the ceremony [The New York Times 1913, Eisen 2013].

After granting the right to organise the Summer Games, the German Olympic Committee also decided to apply for the organisation of the Winter Games (an unwritten custom that a country awarded the Summer Games has a good chance of organising the Winter Games in the same year). Potential candidates were the following locations: Garmisch and Partenkirchen (as two separate ones), Schreiberhau in Lower Silesia, Braunlage and Schierke in the Harz Mountains. Ultimately, the choice was made regarding Garmisch and Partenkirchen. The decision was made in Vienna at the 32<sup>nd</sup> session of the International Olympic Committee in June 1933, and the exact dates when the Games were to begin and end were set at the beginning of July. The two towns of Garmisch and Partenkirchen were merged into one on 1 January 1935 by administrative decision [Large 2007, IV Olympische Winterspiele 1936. Amtlicher Bericht 1936, Lennartz 2011].

By 30 October 1933, an initial estimate was made of the potential expenses and revenues from the organisation of the Games. The expenditure was to amount to around 1 000 000 Deutschmarks (DM), and within this amount, it was planned to rebuild the *Große Olympiaschanze* ski jumping hill, which was to absorb 151 000 DM, to improve the downhill, slalom and cross-country ski slopes with 10 000 DM, 155 000 DM were to be used for the design and construction of the bobsleigh track. Most of this amount, 300,000 DM, was planned to be spent on ice-rinks, while the construction of stands at sports facilities was to close at the amount of 50,000 DM. Therefore, 666,000 DM were planned for the

Olympic infrastructure. The remaining 334 000 DM were to be used for: propaganda - 100 000, administration - 100 000, organisation - 30 000, the decoration ceremony - 30 000 and for unforeseen expenses - 74 000 DM. As regards the potential revenue from the Games, it was estimated at 1 000 000 DM. These included grants from Garmisch and Partenkirchen municipalities totalling 200 000 DM, a grant from Munich of 50 000 DM and a State grant of 160 000 DM. In addition, the revenue from admission tickets, which was expected to amount to 490 000 DM, as well as revenue from lotteries and the sale of Olympic programmes and various types of badges, totalled 100 000 DM [IV Olympische Winterspiele 1936. Amtlicher Bericht 1936].

The German Olympic Committee and Partenkirchen authorities decided to build an Olympic Stadium with an Olympic House, which would become a sports centre for the local community after the Games. The stadium was placed at the exit point of the ski jumping hills, so that jumpers would enter it after their jumps, and in summer, it served as an athletics stadium with a 400 meters hardened track and hills. The stadium was 120 meters long and 90 meters wide, it was also equipped with a telephone line, time and distance displays and a radio and sound system. The Olympic House was 24 meters long and 16 meters wide and consisted of an underground, ground and first floor. In the basement, there was a beer cellar, a bowling alley and sanitary facilities for the competitors. On the ground floor, there was a hall adjacent to the restaurant with a terrace overlooking the stadium. On the first floor, there were two halls for various celebrations and a 16-metre wide balcony with a view of the ski jumps and the stadium. A total of about 60,000 people could stay at the stadium and around it at specially designated places at a time, but during the ski jumping competition, which took place on the last day of the Olympics in front of the stadium, an additional 20,000 spectators could be accommodated. There were 1 850 numbered seats on the wooden western stand, including 320 seats for the press. Additionally, under the stand, there was: a police station, a room for employees and rooms for sportspersons. The eastern stand had a similar layout to the western one. It had 2 400 seats, in the upper part, 10 rooms for radio commentators were built, and under the stand, there was a press room with 60 seats, 10 telephone booths and technical rooms with devices to amplify the transmission signal. The total capacity of the stands at the Olympic Stadium was 18 326 seats (2 413 seats and 15 913 standing places) [IV Olympische Winterspiele 1936. Amtlicher Bericht 1936].

The ski jumping hills were built on the *Gudiberg* hill due to the favourable weather (snow lasted until late spring) and soil conditions. The size of the large hill did not allow for its natural incorporation into the hill profile, so an inrun tower with a height of 43 meters and a width of 5 meters was built. The tower was made of wood, set on a concrete foundation. The inrun was 70 meters long and the inclination angle was 35°. Thanks

to this construction, the jumper could reach a speed of about 80 km/h at the exit from the threshold. The K-Point was located at 80 meters. On the hill, a 22-meter high judge's tower with three radio stations and three judge's chambers was also built. Right next to it, a small ski jumping hill was constructed. These modernisations and new facilities were completed in 1934 and 1935 [IV Olympische Winterspiele 1936. Amtlicher Bericht 1936].

Another facility that was built in connection with the Olympics was the *Olympia-Kunsteisstadion* (stadium with an artificial ice-rink), about the total area comprising approximately 10 000 m<sup>2</sup>, a ice plate freezing mechanism modern for those times, measuring 60x30 meters and stands for about 10 000 spectators. The main wooden stand on a concrete foundation was 16 meters long and 14 meters wide. The stand was completely roofed, it could accommodate 1 700 people, and in the middle, there was a balcony for honorary guests, from which Adolf Hitler watched the course of hockey matches. Inside the grandstand, there were changing rooms, a bathroom with 10 showers and office rooms. Opposite the main stand, 320 seats were allocated for the press. In the complex of the described stadium, there was also a building for the press office with 10 telephone booths and a telegraph with the possibility of sending 30 telegrams at the same time. The remaining part of the stadium consisted of stands with standing places that could accommodate 6 150 spectators, as well as an engine room and mechanism creating artificial ice, and a tower with soundproof transmission cabins [Large 2007, IV Olympische Winterspiele 1936. Amtlicher Bericht 1936].

In addition to the stadium with an artificial ice-rink, Lake *Rießersee* (water level of 785 meters above sea level) was adapted to completions in speed skating and hockey. On the shore of the lake, stands were built for 2 000 people (300 seats, 1 700 standing). The stands were 50 meters long and 8 meters wide. At the top of the stands, 4 soundproof cabins for radio broadcasts were placed. The layout and purpose of the rooms was the same as in the *Olympia-Kunsteisstadion* described above. An Olympic bobsleigh track was built near the *Rießersee*. It was located on the steep northern slope of the *Rießerkopfs*. It was the first bobsleigh track in the world, where the curves were lined with ice blocks, resembling the shape of a cube. The length of the track was 1 525 meters and the height difference was 129 meters. The spectators could watch the bobsleigh races from the sitting stand (1 320 seats) and the standing ones (2 050 places), as well as journalists (320 seats) [Historische Olympia-Bobbahn und Bobmuseum am Rießersee 2015, IV Olympische Winterspiele 1936. Amtlicher Bericht 1936].

In 1934, the international community became acquainted with the official poster of the Olympic Winter Games in Garmisch-Partenkirchen, which were to take place two years later. The poster was designed by Ludwig Hohlwein, a Munich artist. The poster itself depicted a skier who had five Olympic wheels attached to his chest, holding his skis in his left hand and holding up his

right hand, which aroused public interest. The Swedish newspaper "Morgontidningen" published in Göteborg even erected a question about the skier's gesture to the readers: What is he holding in his hand? Does it indicate the high peak from which he intends to jump, or to descend, or the danger associated with sport, or perhaps it simply sends greetings with a Nazi gesture. Awards were given for the best and funniest answers. Swedish readers were eager to answer the question, sometimes giving unexpected answers. Examples of answers were: the skier is holding a laurel wreath, a statuette of a "country of freedom", beer, sausages, roast goose or he is chewing gum [Olympischer Pressedienst No. 3, 1934, pp. 1 - 2].

The first teams to appear in Garmisch-Partenkirchen were athletes from Japan and Sweden. They arrived on 11 January 11. Dr. Ritter von Halt, Baron von le Fort and Mayor Scheck were welcomed with the performance of a music band. In the following days, the next teams came to town e.g. on 12 January skiers and bobsledders from the United States and Canada came, on 13 January - skiers from Luxembourg, on 16 January 16- the Norwegians, on 20 January- representatives of Romania and Turkey, on 23 January - the Polish hockey team arrived in Garmisch-Partenkirchen [exhibition at the stadium in Garmisch-Partenkirchen, IV Olympische Winterspiele 1936. Amtlicher Bericht 1936].

## The Olympics and participation of Polish Olympic Team

The official opening of the Fourth Winter Olympic Games in Garmisch-Partenkirchen took place on Thursday, 6 February. The opening ceremony then taking place, which, despite heavy snowfall or even snowstorms, attracted about 20 000 spectators. The ceremony started at 11:00 a.m. at the ski stadium, and the Reich chancellor Adolf Hitler arrived at the railway station by a special government train at 10:55 a.m. The organisational committee was responsible for the ceremony. After the entry of 668 athletes from 28 countries, Ritter von Halt gave a welcome speech in which he stressed a peaceful message of the beginning of the Olympics. He was followed by Adolf Hitler, who officially started the event according to the words recommended by the International Olympic Committee: "I declare the Fourth Olympic Winter Games of 1936 in Garmisch-Partenkirchen open". Afterwards, Willi Bogner, holding a swastika flag, took the Olympic oath and said that the Olympic flame had been lit, after which a pistol was fired and the Olympic flag was pulled up on a 35-metre high mast. The Olympic flame burnt day and night, regardless of the weather, from the beginning until the last day of the Games. This was possible due to a special electrical and gas construction and ignition devices, thanks to which gas was supplied to an iron tower 25 meters high, on which the fire burnt. During the Olympics, 2 000 steel gas cylinders were used. The

bowl in which the fire burnt was 6 metres in diameter and 2.5 meters high [Bergman 1980, exhibition at the stadium in Garmisch-Partenkirchen, IV Olympische Winterspiele 1936. Amtlicher Bericht 1936].

The programme of the Olympics on the following days was as follows:

- Friday 7 February – men's downhill run and slalom
- Saturday 8 February – women's ski run and slalom
- Sunday 9 February – men's downhill run and slalom
- Monday 10 February – 4x10km relay race
- Tuesday 11 February – fast skating at a distance of 500 m
- Wednesday 12 February – 18-km long-distance running, fast skating at a distance of 5 000 m, four-seater bobsleighs
- Thursday 13 February – combination of Norwegian skating, fast skating at a distance of 1 500 m, figure skating in pairs
- Friday 14 February – fast skating at a distance of 10 000 m, figure skating for men
- Saturday 15 February – 50-km ski marathon, figure skating for women, double bobsleighbing
- Sunday 16 February – ski jumping competition and closing ceremony.

The Polish national team was among the teams taking part in the Olympics. The Polish state sent 20 representatives to the Games. They performed in 6 sports disciplines. In addition, Poles exhibited four athletes in the military patrol, which was a demonstration discipline at that time. Bronisław Czech went to Garmisch-Partenkirchen (1908-1944) as the most titled Polish cap in the interwar period. He took part in the alpine combination (downhill and slalom - first time at the Olympics), in which he assumed 20<sup>th</sup> place, the Norwegian combination, in which he finished 15<sup>th</sup> and the competition of jumps, for which he was classified in 13<sup>th</sup> place. In the 4x10 km relay, B. Czech together with M. Górski, M. Woyna - Orlewicz and S. Karpiel achieved 7<sup>th</sup> place. It is worth mentioning that for Czech, it was the third consecutive Olympics in which he took part. After the outbreak of World War II and the occupation of part of the Polish state by the Germans, he was offered a job as a coach for the German national team, which he rejected. In 1940, he was sent to the Auschwitz concentration camp, where he died four years later [Zdebska 2000, 2007, "Dziennik Bydgoski" 1936, <http://www.olimpijski.pl/pl/194,polska-reprezentacja-olimpijska-garmisch-partenkirchen-1936.html>, <http://web.archive.org/web/20121113004543/http://www.sports-reference.com/olympics/countries/POL/winter/1936/>].

In addition to Bronisław Czech, Karol Zając and Fedor Weinschenk took part in the alpine combination, assuming 34<sup>th</sup> and 35<sup>th</sup> place, respectively. In the Norwegian combination, the highest achieved by Stanisław Marusz, ranking 7<sup>th</sup>, while Marian Woyna-Orlewicz and Andrzej Marusz, were ranked in further places. S. Karpiel took part in the marathon, coming in 26<sup>th</sup>. In the ski jumping competition, which was finally watched

by about 130 000 spectators, Stanisław Marusarz won 5<sup>th</sup> place and two Olympic points for the Polish national team. In addition to Bronisław Czech, Andrzej Marusarz took part in the competition, achieving 21<sup>st</sup> place. In addition, Poles participated in the hockey tournament, in which they finally assumed 9<sup>th</sup> place. In fast skating, Poland was represented by Janusz Kalbarczyk, coming in 12<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup>, respectively in 5 000 and 10 000 meters individual races [Zdebska 2000, "Dziennik Bydgoski" 1936, <http://web.archive.org/web/20110830011848/http://www.sports-reference.com/olympics/winter/1936/ICH/mens-ice-hockey.html>].

After nearly two weeks, on 16 February the closing ceremony took place. On this occasion, forty special trains were launched on the track, which set off e.g. from Munich. The first of them left at 2:00 a.m. and the last at 8:00 a.m. Due to the dispatch of special trains to the tracks, the railway line for regular services through Griesen was blocked. On that day, Ga-Pa was visited by around 130 000 people, of which approximately 35 000 spectators participated in the closing ceremony. The ceremony was also broadcast live by radio via a loudspeaker on Eisenbahnstraße. The ceremony itself consisted of an award ceremony for the competitors, military demonstrations (saluting of German soldiers and firearms) and a firework show. Twelve Luftwaffe spotlights illuminated various events throughout the closing ceremony. A total of 543 155 tickets were sold, entitling them to enter the Olympic arenas with a value of 1 010 618.41 DM. It was only at the 1972 Sapporo Olympics that the number of sold tickets was higher than in Garmisch-Partenkirchen (621 232) [Lyberg 1989, exhibition at the stadium in Garmisch-Partenkirchen].

## Logistics

The Olympic weather forecast was emitted daily, especially for the time of the Games. Information on weather conditions was collected on the basis of meteorological observations and consultations during the preparations for the event. At the end of January 1936, the weather was nice and the valley was free of snow. A few days before the start of the Games, on Sunday, 2 February, it started to rain. At night, on the same day, the temperature dropped significantly, and on Monday, it began to snow in the valley. The following days brought gradual cooling and increased snowfall [exhibition at the stadium in Garmisch-Partenkirchen].

No Olympic village was built in Ga-Pa. The athletes, members of the Olympic teams and VIPs stayed at Bavarian hotels and guesthouses. The Olympians could count on meals similar to those they usually ate in their own countries, which was the responsibility of specially selected chefs who had experience in preparing international meals (the organisers declared that the daily cost of such food would not exceed 8 marks corresponding to the equivalent of 2 U.S. dollars). Competitors and team members could also try local Bavarian cuisine, in

particular, liver dumplings, pork and knuckle, and regional beer, although Bavarian dishes were limited to the aforementioned international cuisine, adapted to the preferences of individual teams. On the other hand, 81 000 simple, warm meals a day were served at special dining rooms and local restaurants. The German authorities also made sure that there was no shortage of food products, in particular cold cuts, which surprised foreign observers and visitors who thought that such food was very difficult to find in Germany [Krebs 1997, *The Journal of Health and Physical Education* 1935, Large 2007].

## Media

Representatives of the national and foreign press came to Ga-Pa on 4 February. Two barracks were prepared for journalists, which were built on the premises of the "Olympic Centre". In addition to the press room, a room for the newspaper's headquarters and management, a room for film reports and radio, as well as a post office reserved for the press office were also offered. The journalistic record was made available in three languages: German, English and French. The Games were reported by 403 journalists from 29 countries, of which almost half (193) were German journalists. Stands were specially set up for media representatives, from which there was good visibility of the competitions. During numerous receptions for journalists, Germans tried to present their country and its inhabitants in the most positive light [IV. *Olympische Winterspiele 1936 Amtlicher Bericht*, exhibition at the stadium in Garmisch-Partenkirchen].

Cinematography loomed large during the IV Olympic Winter Games. Thanks to the recordings, the course of the Games and individual disciplines and competitions was documented and presented. The film crew consisted of four cameramen, two filmmakers responsible for slow motion recording, three narrow-tape cameramen, five sound technicians, sixteen workers and eight assistants, and forty workers wearing equipment and sixteen lighting technicians. The whole team had eight cars with drivers, four snowmobiles and one glider at their disposal. Every day of the Olympics, film recordings were sent to Berlin, where they were processed and copied. In the Third Reich, the edited film could be shown at the cinema within 24 hours, and in the largest European cities within 48 hours [exhibition at the stadium in Garmisch-Partenkirchen].

The Olympic radio transmitter was located in a barrack next to the railway station. Around the central control room, there were twelve recording and playback rooms and a broadcasting cabin. All transmission lines from sports facilities (there were ten of them) were led to the headquarters, hence, the inter-city lines started their course. Additionally, five mobile transport trolleys were available. Forty-nine radio announcers came to the Olympics. In Germany, 66 radio channels transmitted Olympic news and information, with a total duration of

65 hours, and 201 radio broadcasts abroad, with a total duration of 236 hours. Live transmissions from the Olympic competitions and the use of Olympic fanfares prior to all radio broadcasts, both in Germany and in all other broadcasting countries, were completely innovative. It was in Garmisch-Partenkirchen that for the first time in the history of the modern Olympics, full radio coverage of the events in the Olympic arenas was broadcast. Radio coverage appeared for the first time at the St. Moritz 1928 Olympics, when Radio Bern broadcast the opening ceremony [Slater 1998, exhibition at the Garmisch-Partenkirchen stadium].

For the duration of the Olympics, the German post office was additionally responsible for telegraphy, remote speakers and power transmission. In addition to the main post office at the Ga-Pa railway station, a post office was created at the ski stadium. As already mentioned, at the Olympic Centre, a press post office was created for the press. Other points of this type were set up at the ice-rink, *Reißersee* Lake, the bobsleigh track or at the *Kreuzeck* railway station. Around 2.7 million letters and postcards were sent from Garmisch-Partenkirchen during the Games. In connection with the Games, special stamps and stationery were also issued [Bergman 2002, exhibition at the stadium in Garmisch-Partenkirchen].

## Conclusions

Several months after the end of the Olympics, a summary and statement of expenditure and revenue was made (April 1936). It showed that both the expenditure and revenue had more than doubled compared to the projected intended amounts. In total, 2 618 259 DM were spent. 1 257 200 DM were spent on the expansion of the sports infrastructure, 1 099 000 DM on the organisation and management before and during the Games. Other expenses included propaganda, cleaning, office work and the construction of temporary infrastructure, such as barracks. Revenues from the organisation of the Games amounted to 2 415 368.60 DM. Included in this amount were grants from Garmisch and Partenkirchen municipalities, Munich from the Bavarian state and the German government, amounting to 1 253 831.25 DM. As mentioned above, the revenue from admission tickets amounted to 1 010 618.41 DM. It can therefore be concluded that the expenditure exceeded the revenue by 202 890.40 DM. The official Olympic report stated that the German State undertook to cover this difference [IV Olympische Winterspiele 1936. Amtlicher-Bericht 1936].

The Fourth Winter Olympic Games brought forward a number of new solutions in terms of organisation, logistics, communication and sports infrastructure, most of which were used during the summer Olympic Games in Berlin. The Games in Garmisch - Partenkirchen were successful on many levels: sports, propaganda, as well as in terms of the number of spectators who watched the

Olympic Games German resorts for less than two weeks at. The organisational success of the Olympics contributed to the precedent, which was the awarding the next Winter Games in 1940 to Garmisch-Partenkirchen.

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