

the whole stadium, together with a standing ovation that had them bursting with pride.

Some 7,000 international athletes, all saluted the royal box, responded delightedly to the excited greetings of a packed stadium and finally formed columns – dazzling ribbons of colour – in the centre of the field behind their respective flags.

Short addresses were made by Roger Rousseau, Organizing Committee president, and by Lord Killanin, International Organizing Committee president. Then, Queen Elizabeth, who had been saluted by Princess Anne, an equestrian competitor marching in the British contingent, made the formal proclamation: "I declare open the Montreal Olympic Games of 1976 celebrating the XXI Olympiad of the Modern Era."

Next came the ceremonial raising of the Olympic flag, carried into the arena by eight male and four female athletes, to the strains of the Olympic anthem. It was written by a Greek composer for the first modern Games in 1896. As the flag slowly ascended the flag pole, a choir of 42 voices sang the words of the anthem.

Transfer of commemorative flag

Then the Olympic commemorative flag was borne in, the one that had flown first in Antwerp, Belgium, in 1920.

The mayor of the previous host city, Munich, handed it to the President of the International Olympic Committee, who gave it to the mayor (Jean Drapeau) of the present one. Montreal is charged with its safekeeping until the opening of the next Games in Moscow in 1980.

A group of dancers and musicians from Munich, who had carried the commemorative flag into the stadium, performed a specially choreographed "Munich-Montreal" ballet to music based on a Bavarian folk tune. Then a troupe from Montreal danced to music of traditional Canadian folk airs, accompanied by Montreal musicians and singers. As a finale, the two groups merged and danced a series of figures to German and Canadian folk tunes. It was a rousing performance, the spirit in every beat as the crowd clapped in time to the music.

The dancing ended. A three-gun salute boomed. At the last shot, 80 girls in billowing white gowns released

80 pigeons, symbolic of doves of peace carrying their message to the world. (The number 80 represents the current anniversary of the modern Games.) As they fluttered upward to the trumpeting of the Olympic fanfare, all eyes watched. The birds circled once or twice, found their direction in the sky and disappeared from view.

Entry of the Olympic torch came next, held high by two runners, a girl and a boy, one English-speaking, one French-speaking, representing the two cultures of Canada. Completing their circuit of the track, they mounted the steps to the huge urn and slowly raised the torch in salute, first to the royal box, and to each corner of the compass before turning to light the urn. When it burst into flames, the cheering was highlighted by the simultaneous blinking of hundreds of flashes as photographers from all parts of the globe recorded the historic moment.

The torch bearers bent on one knee in salute as the Olympic flame finally glowed in Montreal.

A spectacular gymnastic ballet came next, performed by more than 1,000 students from Montreal secondary schools, joined by international gymnasts from 12 countries. They danced with orange, green and red flags, some with yellow swirling ribbons – a mass of colour in perfect unison with the music.

Canada has never put on such a show. The whole ceremony – its colour and precision timing, combined with its highly emotional moments – was superb. The majestic rendering of the national anthem by the World Youth Orchestra has never been equalled.

The solemn Olympic oath taken by Canadian Pierre St. Jean on behalf of all contestants personified the feeling of every athlete there: "...we will take part in these Olympic Games, respecting and abiding by the rules which govern them, in the true spirit of sportsmanship, for the glory of sport and the honour of our teams."

Despite everything – athletic striving, the rigid routine of gruelling training, despite the doubts, the uncertainties, the fears, the political problems that had plagued the preliminaries – despite all – the competitors were here and they all looked like champions.

The XXI Olympiad had begun.

Olympic flame arrival in Canada seen as "act of the gods"

An estimated 5,000 people, including the Prime Minister, foreign diplomats, members of the House of Commons and Senate, Lady Killanin, wife of the International Olympic Committee chairman, and Roger Rousseau, Commissioner-General of the XXI Olympiad, gathered on Parliament Hill, Ottawa, July 16, to witness the arrival of the Olympic flame in Canada. Lord Killanin, who had to attend a meeting of the International Olympic Committee in Montreal, could not be present.

The ceremony in Athens, from where the flame for the first time in history was transported by satellite, was broadcast to the crowd, who listened as the Canadian and Greek national anthems were played. Trumpets sounded as Angela Simotas, a Canadian teacher in Greece, placed the flame into a sensor that activated an electronic impulse, triggering off a laser beam. All eyes were on the urn on the Hill. Within a second, it burst magically into flames.

The first torch was lighted by 17-year-old Elizabeth Street of Ottawa, who handed it to the Prime Minister. "If the ancient Greeks could have witnessed the instantaneous transmission of this flame," said Mr. Trudeau, "they would certainly have seen it as an act of the gods."

Twelve torch bearers, representative of Canada's ten provinces and two territories, led by Premier William Bennett of British Columbia, together began the relay to Montreal, stopping *en route* to light urns in Hull, Gloucester, Buckingham, Papineauville and Montebello.



Olympic firsts

For the first time in the history of the Olympic Games, two athletes instead of one, carried the Olympic torch and lit the Olympic flame at the opening ceremonies.

Montreal Mayor Jean Drapeau, who negotiated for the Olympic Games to be held in his city several years ago, is the first mayor still to be in office when they took place.