

Miquel de Moragas and Miquel Botella, Editors

The Keys to Success

*The social, sporting, economic
and communications impact of
Barcelona'92*

*Centre d'Estudis Olímpics i de l'Esport
Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona
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and Communication Impact
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VOLUNTEERS OF BARCELONA '92: THE GREAT CELEBRATION OF PARTICIPATION

ANDREU CLAPÉS¹

At the end of the Barcelona Olympic Games a great emptiness filled the city and the hearts of many people. It was not easy to forget the previous four years.

Success, however, was the best compensation for the great effort the entire city made in bringing it about. The group that received the widest and most unanimous recognition was that of the volunteers. The world press confirmed this fact, along with the gratitude made manifest by public institutions and citizens in general.

1. AN INNOVATIVE AND RISKY PROPOSAL

1.1. *The difference from other Games*

Over the years, the organization of the Olympic Games has become more and more complex, requiring a more and more complicated organizational process, as well as an increasingly numerous human operational structure.

The point of inflection, without a doubt, was the 1984 Los Angeles Games, where for fundamentally economic reasons the decision was made to use a significant number of volunteers. This same posture was taken in Seoul '88. However, the objective in both cases was to strictly fulfill organizational needs, looking for maximum efficacy with minimum cost, high though this latter was in both cases.

It is worth mentioning the case of Calgary, organizing city of the 1988 Winter Games, which was a source of inspiration for the initial activities of Barcelona '92. The city had a great tradition in organizing a large public event, the Stampede. It benefited from this potential to consolidate and give worldwide promotion to their particular volunteer

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movement, especially as it involved adults and retired people.

In the volunteer centre in Calgary a series of activities was planned to establish a well prepared and efficient team that would above all be *highly motivated*. From the beginning, continuity after the Olympic Games was planned, keeping in mind the social significance and pragmatic regular activity of their own festival. The building used during the Games as the volunteer centre was ceded to the volunteers of the city.

Barcelona wished to assure the cooperation of its population from the very beginning. It set out to be an open and participative candidature. For this reason it established a starting point that, with relation to other organizational experiences, was differentiated and innovative: to achieve the participation of the population as future Olympic volunteers in the phase of the candidature, even before being nominated as the Olympic host.

1.2. *Participation campaign*

The project of the candidature of Barcelona '92 established as one of its goals a maximum number of participants in the Olympic Games. The idea was to show the Olympic family the impact and expectation that the project of Barcelona '92 could give rise to among its population, and to generate an image of a dynamic, efficient and open candidature.

The goal was set to include a minimum of 40,000 signatures of support from citizens from the entire state in the candidature package.

To this end a participation campaign was designed, articulated fundamentally in a travelling exhibit (with the slogan «Participation is what counts. Be an Olympic volunteer») which was mounted on a large truck (the Olympic bus) and travelled to the capitals of the 17 Spanish autonomous communities, all of the *comarcas* (administrative districts) of Catalonia, and all of the districts of Barcelona, starting in February of 1986.

In order to gather participations, information brochures were published with a detachable card where basic personal data could be entered, which served as the basis for the later elaboration of a cardfile of possible candidates for the volunteer organization.

After touring for five months, 55,000 signatures had been received. When the candidature was presented in September of 1986, there were more than 61,000. The campaign closed off at the end of the year, when 102,000 signatures had been received.

If the number of signatures was important, even more so was the reception for the campaign. The touring exhibit turned into a public festival. It was very clear that the index of optimism was on the rise.

The promotional strategy was based upon two basic ideas: contact the most important athletes in each area; and involve the local press in the promotion of the campaign.

With this campaign, the first part of the success of the Games had been achieved. From then on it was necessary to put the whole adventure in gear and move forward.

1.3. *The start-up*

On January 1, 1988, the Volunteers Department was created with a minimal staff of nine people, within the Operative Services Division of the then legally-formalized COOB '92.

The first task was to put the 102,000 volunteer cards in order. Two great difficulties were involved in this job: remake contact after a year and a half, and decide which of these people still wished to continue as volunteers.

The other real issue that had to be quickly solved was to find a sponsor which would finance the entire volunteer project, which was budgeted at 1,000 million pesetas. After a few months of negotiation with three enterprises, SEAT decided it could harmonize its commercial interests with the «volunteer» project.

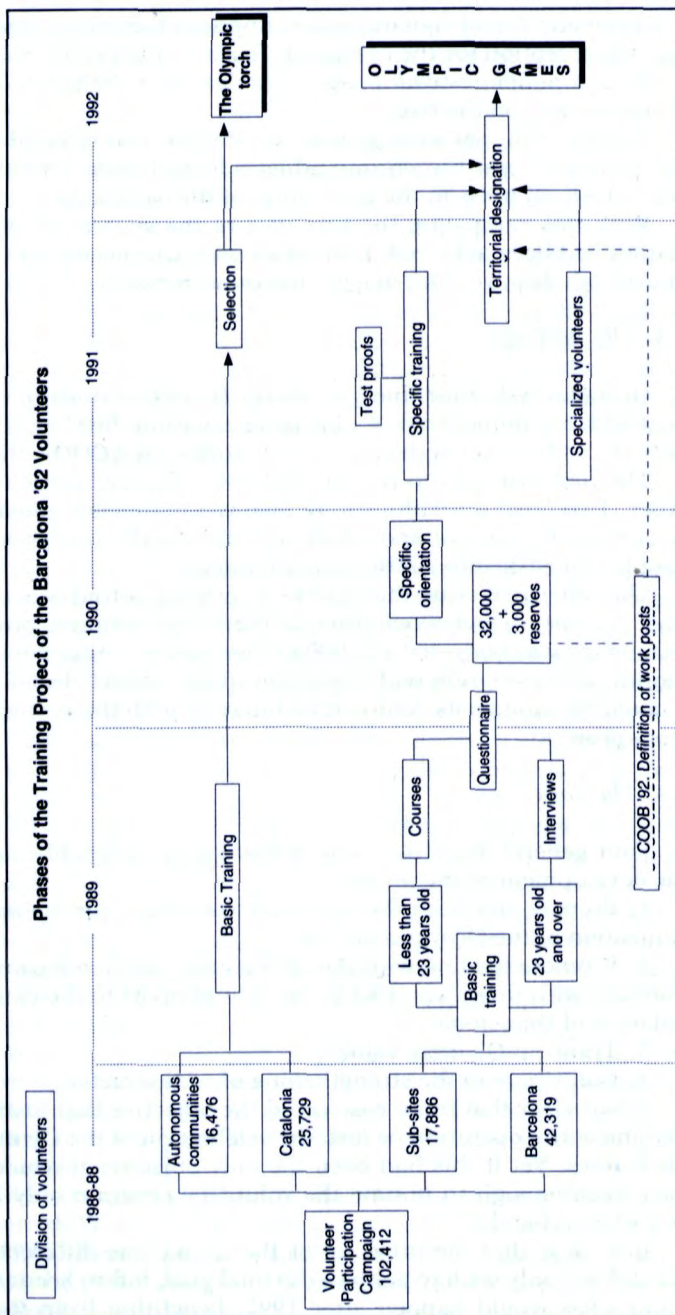
1.4. *The objectives*

Four general objectives were defined to ideologically aid the development of the project:

1. Prepare and train the necessary volunteers for the organization of the Olympic Games.
2. Promote the link with Barcelona and maintain a commitment with those who had given their support to the candidature of Barcelona '92.
3. Transmit Olympic values.
4. Contribute to the strengthening of civil society.

It was clear that in no case could the objective that justified the entire operation be lost: the celebration of the Olympic Games. Yet if this had been the only objective it would have been enough to initiate the volunteer program only 2 years beforehand.

It is clear that the proposal of Barcelona was different. We did not only wish to achieve the final goal, but to keep in mind what would happen after 1992, benefiting from the



strong investment that the Games generated. It was thus necessary to assure that the program would be beneficial for the future.

This operation was attractive enough for the different political forces to seek to capitalize on it. The solution to this was in the constitution of the COOB '92. All of the institutions that formed part of the consortium were actively integrated into the Consulting Commission for the Barcelona '92 Volunteer Project. This was undoubtedly one of the most assuring experiences of the entire process, due to the degree of involvement and cooperation achieved.

Having representatives from all of the Autonomous Communities was a communication vehicle that had to be strengthened. The potential volunteers had to take Barcelona to all the homes of the nation and, in turn, all of the nation had to feel involved, informed and in contact with Barcelona. The support given by all of Spanish society to Barcelona had to be translated into a connection with the preparation process and the celebration of the Games.

In a society that is often considered materialist, and where the image of young people is associated with apathy and drugs, it was necessary to subtly present a new image of Spanish youth: dynamic, with initiative, altruistic, capable of doing things for nothing, generous, and optimistic.

It was decided to recover and strengthen the series of universal values that Pierre de Coubertin, as a good educator, had gathered in the Olympic Charter and that for their universal character could still be spread. It was also fundamental to benefit from the advantages and accessibility of the mass media to continue to spread the culture of voluntary action, beyond the world of sport. What was truly important was to speak of voluntary action so that it might receive social recognition. This did not mean, clearly, that before the existence of Olympic volunteers it did not exist. Nevertheless, the extension and social recognition of volunteerism in Spain is a merit that must be attributed to the movement generated by the Barcelona Olympic Games.

2. A FOUR-YEAR PLAN

2.1. *Basic training*

The basic training plan included two areas of action. On the one hand there was the training and motivation of personnel to achieve optimal cooperation. On the other,

this process also had to be useful in the selection of volunteers.

Basic training, which had to cover the years 1988, 1989 and 1990, had two clearly differentiated branches: Courses, and Active Participation.

Courses

Using the Olympic colours, six educational modules were designed:

- Red: Active participation: What does it mean to be a volunteer? First Aid.

- White: The Olympic movement and culture: the Olympic world. The history of the Games. The Olympic Charter. The Program of the Cultural Olympics.

- Blue: The city and its environment: knowledge of the city of Barcelona. Knowledge of the Olympic sub-sites.

- Black: Languages: linguistic knowledge.

- Yellow: Barcelona '92: the candidature project and the Olympic project. Organization of the COOB '92. Financing.

- Green: Sport and humanity: the Olympic disciplines and their technical evolution over time.

The courses were given in classrooms as normal classes, in centres all over Spain. Those in Catalonia were done in conjunction with City Halls and those in the rest of the autonomous communities were done through the National Youth Institute (INJUVE). The team of educators of the Volunteers Department was made responsible for content, pedagogical resources and methodology, starting from scratch in many aspects, as there was no material nor systematized documentation available.

The volunteers from Barcelona and the sub-sites received special treatment for cultural reasons and others related to availability. Volunteers between 14 and 22 years old had to attend classes. Those over 23 years-old did group interviews with the Volunteers Division and were offered the possibility of studying the dossiers on their own, without having to attend classes, as well as being invited to participate in all activities that could widen their knowledge (lectures, showing of films, and so on).

The courses made it possible to begin to establish a cohesive group from an originally unconnected group of people from different geographical and cultural contexts; more than 35,000 people attended them throughout Spain. At the same time, teachers began to detect possible «leaders» and problematic people. Finally, a number of group interviews were programmed, where besides presenting training materials a

group dynamic was carried out to discover aptitude profiles that could be useful when assigning concrete tasks to the volunteers.

RESULT OF PARTICIPATION IN THE BASIC TRAINING STAGE

TRAINING COURSES

<i>Area</i>	<i>Coordinators</i>	<i>Teachers</i>	<i>Volunteers</i>
Barcelona	3	96	18.728
Sub-sites	15	52	6.664
Catalonia	58	178	5.118
Autonomous communities	15	130	5.132
Total	91	456	35.642

ACTIVE PARTICIPATION

<i>Area</i>	<i>Participations</i>	<i>Volunteers</i>
Barcelona	114	8.600
Sub-sites	150	3.700
Catalonia	220	3.500
Autonomous communities	150	4.500
Total	634	20.300

Active participation

The activity developed in class had to be complemented with activities on the street, performing tasks similar to what they would have to do during the Games. At the same time people had to get used to seeing the volunteers, supporting them and recognizing their worth.

Each volunteer in his or her own territory had the opportunity to do activities. In the end this was to be one of the most important motivational and unifying elements for the group.

The activities were programmed to become news items (through the COOB press department) and arouse the press to respond to them. This situation was good for the group, though it received strong criticism from other social volunteers, who felt that they were not representative of altruistic and generous volunteerism, which acts without expecting to receive compensation or social recognition, and which remains anonymous. They were right to a degree, though we were convinced that the Olympic volunteers not only did not harm other groups, but in the long term helped to confirm volunteerism as a social phenomenon.

The motivational plan

This theoretical-practical training had to be accompanied by a very concrete motivational plan.

It was thought that the most adequate solution was to link the motivational plan to the process of training and integration of the group itself. This premise was ethically defensible and coherent with the overall position and the established objectives.

The principal initiatives of the plan were:

- Define a particular style for the Volunteer Division, designed by the creator of the image of Barcelona '92, Josep Maria Trias. A line of products was created especially for the volunteers: caps, t-shirts, stickers, pins, watches, which were



Cobi brandishing the 1992 Volunteers' symbol.

considered as small incentives for the group. These products were financed by the sponsoring partners and collaborators of the Games.

- 1,000 grants to study French in France or English in England for a month were distributed by a lottery system, verified by notary.

- 2,000 other volunteers, after a selection test, received grants to study French or English during the school year in one of the language academies of the network of the *Associació d'Idiomes de Catalunya* (ADIC) (The Languages Association of Catalonia).

- In order to maintain direct contact with the volunteers, a magazine was published as the vehicle for news and the transmission of the evolution of the overall project in preparation for the final celebration. 13 issues came out, though irregularly.

- A program to visit the Olympic installations called «Roda Barcelona» (Coasting Barcelona) was organized. A total of 15,251 volunteers from all over Spain took advantage of this campaign.

- Over a period of almost four years a weekly program called *Voluntaris Olímpics* (Olympic Volunteers) was broadcast on Radio 4 and Radio 5, which included contests on Olympic themes, with the prizes being trips to Greece to discover the origins of the Olympic Games.

- The very dynamic of the volunteers lead to the systematic organization of a number of festivals and encounters («Fes-te a la festa» (Do it at the party)), with the idea of offering a place for encounters in a relaxed and leisurely context, and aid in the integration of individuals in the group and in the project. As an aside, a good number of couples formed as a result of the volunteer movement, some of which resulted in children, the first of whom was given the name Olímpia.

2.2. *Specific training*

The key objective of the design of the COOB '92 Training Plan was that everyone involved in a task could do it with maximum skill, efficiency and security in him or herself and in the system. For this reason it was necessary to be specifically trained for the tasks one was assigned.

The criteria used in designing the training plan were essential when bringing the plan into practice. It was not necessary to train anyone as if they were studying for a Masters degree. It was fundamental to respect the availability of those involved, with austerity and careful budget control.

For the great majority of volunteers the apprenticeship was simple to assimilate: the tasks that had to be carried out were not difficult. Yet for a smaller though nevertheless numerous group of volunteers, more exact training was involved, requiring greater time and dedication. The rhythms of implementation of the training process had to be different, adjusted to each task. These criteria determined what, how and when the training had to be done.

Those responsible for the content were designated in the functional divisions of the Organizing Committee. The first draft, which arose from the contributions of various thematic heads, created necessities that would have required the rental of the University of Barcelona for a year and a half! The process involved constant cutting and negotiation with those in charge. That this occurred was understandable, as everyone wished to assure maximum perfection within their own areas of responsibility. For this reason it was vital to have someone with decision-making power to adjust positions and programs.

This same problem appeared when establishing the requirements so that each functional area could determine its own necessities in terms of volunteers. The first estimation required 75,000 volunteers.

In fact, each thematic and functional area took a different approach. Within each area there was an important grading of cases, in function of the level of responsibility and technical criticality. Starting from a common design, the quantity of materials put together for training (dossiers, manuals, audiovisual material) was truly varied and complex.

It should be pointed out that there was significant cooperation with the enterprises associated with the COOB '92, which backed up this process with materials and trained personnel, especially in technical theme areas, or in the supply of specialized apparatus.

The Specific Training began in 1990. The Test Proofs held in the Summer of 1991 helped to evaluate the adjustment of various tested and applied training plans. There was little room for manouever, though enough to allow for a relatively small amount of corrections. Overall, the plan was satisfactory, well planned, and rational.

2.3. Designation of Work Posts

From the initial potential of 102,000 volunteers in 1986, the final figure, adjusted to necessities, was of 35,000 volunteers.

The methodological and functional criteria for the designation of volunteers to concrete work positions was based on the systemization of the list of selected people in function of similar aptitudinal profiles, forming groups called «modules». At the same time a list of well-defined work posts, adjusted to the level of technicians and professionals, was created on the basis of criticality, technical knowledge required, social abilities, languages, and so on.

ORIGIN OF VOLUNTEERS

<i>Olympic venues and sub-sites</i>	24.577
Barcelona	16.868
Badalona	1.641
Banyoles	258
Castelldefels	310
Granollers	326
La Seu d'Urgell	404
L'Hospitalet	1.340
Mollet	330
Reus	214
Sabadell	690
Sant Sadurní	153
Terrassa	793
Vic	194
Viladecans	288
Saragossa	410
València	358
<i>Rest of Catalonia</i>	8.414
<i>Rest of Spain</i>	1.435
<i>Total</i>	34.426

On the basis of these modules, the volunteers were assigned to a concrete Territorial Unit (the installation of a sports competition, lodging, or logistic support) according to the requirements in each case. When the volunteer and the person in charge of the Territorial Unit agreed, the person in charge validated the volunteer and this latter was then registered in the project and assigned to the specific tasks to be carried out. In some cases this was done after a personal or group interview, depending upon the criticality

of the work position and the level of responsibility. Later—and in some cases simultaneously—the Specific Training began.

The designation of each volunteer to the Territorial Unit had to be adequately assimilated and detailed on computer so as to prepare the adequate accreditation and designation of the corresponding uniform which would have to be worn during the Games.

2.4. Specialized volunteers

The designation process for work posts lead to the identification of «gaps», tasks that could not be filled with the profiles of the available volunteers. This lead to the activity know as «recruitment of specialized volunteers».

To establish those responsible for the direction of groups public institutions were consulted (Generalitat de Catalunya, City of Barcelona, Delegation of the Central Government in Catalonia, Diputació (provincial government) of Barcelona).

The Royal Automobile Club of Catalonia supplied 3,000 drivers.

The sports federations could not be kept apart from the event, since it was the maximum expression of the activities that they normally carried out; they thus supplied people of high technical level in each of the sports disciplines represented.

The students of the Tourism Schools had the opportunity to participate in the specific tasks for which they were being prepared. This was a testing ground that would never be repeated again and signified the perfect culmination and exercise of practice in their respective careers of informers, guides, receptionists, and so on.

Students of the Catalan National Institute for Physical Education (INEFC) and other specialized schools were also able to carry out their respective specialties.

Individuals were asked to cooperate as volunteers for their administrative capacity in posts where their professional profiles would guarantee optimum management.

A cooperation agreement was signed between the COOB '92 and the Ministry of Defense so that 3,000 soldiers could cooperate with the Olympic and Paralympic volunteers, with time worked discounted from obligatory military service.

3. THE VOLUNTEERS DURING THE GAMES

3.1. *Support volunteers*

Once assigned to a tasks and to a Territorial Unit, on-site training was begun. The enormous group of people willing to cooperate in the organization had the difficult challenge of having to confront a hard and uncertain task. In spite of planning, they would certainly have to confront an important number of unexpected situations and changes.

On the basis of the experience of other Games it was known that one of the serious problems that arises in the last moment is that large multi-national enterprises hire Olympic volunteers for their own particular needs. The sums are offered to them are not insignificant. The response was, in spite of this, very positive: the level of desertion was not higher than 1%. Evidently this was a credit to the volunteers themselves, who demonstrated once again their high level of motivation.

750 volunteers from other autonomous communities and distant points of Catalonia were lodged in the homes of other volunteers. The operation, initiated a few years earlier under the name «A friend awaits», was quite successful, and the number of problems was quite low.

Mention should also be made of what we might call the «support volunteers». Though their role is difficult to measure and evaluate, we should mention all of those people who gave logistical support to the volunteers themselves (including parents, friends, siblings, grandparents, neighbours), thanks to whom the volunteers had their schedules freed up, their uniforms washed, were fed, and so on, not only during the Games but also during the previous years of training and preparation. This was an important support movement made up of many anonymous people who should be recognized and thanked publically.

3.2. *Support for volunteers*

From early on one of the imperatives was to ensure that the volunteer felt he or she was being treated with careful support by those in charge and by the organization as a structure.

Volunteer personnel were treated with the same consideration as the rest of the personnel. In fact, volunteers, hired personnel, and the personnel of the COOB '92 formed a single body, EQUIP '92 (TEAM '92).

The person in charge of an installation could be a volunteer. This meant that the levels of responsibility were occupied indiscriminately by hired personnel and volunteer personnel. Thus in many cases, salaried personnel were directed by volunteer personnel. This gave considerable validity to the figure of the volunteer, undoing the belief that they were only acting in an auxiliary mode.

In each installation there was a person in charge of human resources, and within their team, a specific person who took care of the volunteers. A *Manual of Aid to the Volunteer* specified in clear language how the volunteer had to be treated. Evidently the result was unequal, depending upon the sensibility of the person who held this responsibility. Overall, however, almost everyone assumed their responsibilities professionally.

It was felt that there should be an explicit recognition of the rights and responsibilities of the volunteer as a guarantee of their seriousness and respect for the work they had to perform. In this way the *10 X 10 of the Olympic Volunteer* was created, a type of «carta magna» that regulated the contractual relations of the two parts, even though legally it was only binding for the organization and not for the individual working for it.

Since it was not binding for the volunteer, different ways were studied to in some way ensure the volunteer's commitment. Finally there was no other option but to trust the moral commitment that they had made before society. This commitment was not even formalized in writing, even though this possibility was considered. The result was satisfactory enough, and the volunteers understood this clearly.

The fulfillment of and respect for rights and responsibilities from both sides created moral credibility and trust. This was reinforced publically when members of the press or elite sports personalities were seriously disrespectful towards volunteers and their accreditation was taken away. The press commented upon these incidents and word was spread throughout EQUIP '92, raising trust in the organization, so that at every moment the volunteers felt truly supported.

As a final piece, the figure of the Volunteer's Ombudsman was created, similar to political ombudsmen. A complementary group of eight volunteers was chosen to initially attend claims and complaints at the «Volunteer Attention Office».

This office did not only receive complaints, but the team of volunteers at the office reviewed all of the installations to keep a check on the spirits of the group, solving *in situ* any

small problems that arose. When the questions went beyond their capacity for decision, the complaint was transferred to the Ombudsman, who took the relevant measures or passed the problem on to the Main Operations Centre if it was particularly grave, so that measures could be taken.

The volunteers had a uniform code of conduct found in the Volunteer's Manual, two versions of which had already been tested, one for the Active Participation training and the other for the Test Proofs of 1991.

Establishing a series of norms for conduct was a difficult challenge, as it was easy to resort to the classic, overused urbanity manual of another era. A conscientious norm was drafted using up-to-date language that was both synthetic and practical. In order to ensure that it reach more people, a video with rap music was made, which was shown in the different installations during the training period.

The most conflictive issues on a group level were related to food and to the drivers. As for the food, it should be said that this was foreseen to a degree. It is always complicated to satisfy the tastes of thousands of people on a daily basis. The other theme was that of the chauffeurs, who found that they spent many hours in car pools with nothing to do. The degree of complaints and uneasiness was quite significant. In all cases the conflicts were overcome. The quickness with which solutions were found was one of the most important characteristics of the organization.

Other overall issues that generated conflicts and the intervention of the ombudsman was that of the uniforms, and of tickets to see the dress rehearsal of the opening ceremony. Cars, motorcycles, motorboats, launches, and buses transporting such a great number of people could make one imagine a great number of accidents. There was only one person who died in an accident when he was off duty, and another of a certain age who had a heart attack at home.

4. AFTER THE GAMES

Once the games had ended, a diploma accrediting their participation was given to all volunteers, along with a commemorative medal of the 1992 Barcelona Olympic Games.

So that historical memory would not be left blank, the final issue of the volunteer magazine was published in two parts: the magazine itself, with a photo album of the volunteers, point of view of the 1992 Barcelona Olympic Games, so that this visual record could be taken home, and the *Golden*

Book of EQUIP '92, which gathered together the names of everyone who had participated according to the installation where they worked, whether they were from the COOB '92, or volunteers.

The evaluation of what this event has meant in terms of volunteers is a task that time will have to make with objectivity. Overall the result was a success, since the response of society made it a success, filling the streets of the city in every moment, as if it were the grand festival of all humanity.