

Focus

Germany's Olympic leap

By David Winder

Munich, Germany

It's Olympic Games. It's a festival. It's a celebration to show Germany has fully emerged from the shadows of the last war into the clear light of international acceptance.

The organizers of the Olympic Games have those thoughts very much in mind as they prepare for the 20th Olympiad to be staged in Munich Aug. 26 to Sept. 10.

"It is to be hoped that the Munich games will expunge impressions which have been prejudicial to Germany's good name since 1936. They will certainly give the world an introduction to a new and different Germany," says Willi Daume, president of the organizing committee.

The 1936 reference is, of course, to the Olympics held in Berlin three years prior to the outbreak of World War II.

A Berliner pointing to the name of Jesse Owens inscribed on one of the victory plaques at Berlin's Olympic stadium exclaims "He was the one who made Hitler so furious."

The reason is obvious. Hitler sought confirmation of his belief in Aryan athletic superiority. It didn't come. Jesse Owens, wonder athlete of the games and an American Negro, streaked past the winning tape to win three gold medals—four including the 400-meter relay.

But all that is past.

Now Germany is hosting games that will be worthy of this modern, thriving democracy.

Even the host city, Munich, thinks of itself as a cultural rather than a sporting center. It boasts 22 theaters and 26 museums and collections.

The stadium site itself is small by Olympic standards. Seating and standing capacity is only 80,000. To an extent never realized before, culture and athletics run side by side in playful pursuit.

An opera has been specially written for the occasion. There will be theater. There will be folk singing. There will be a world culture and modern art exhibition.

Above all, the games are to be held in this Bavarian capital, the loveliest of all large German cities with its haughty gabled buildings and wide streets awash with Italian classical fountains.

Crout and sausages

is of sauerkraut, German fried sauerkraut, pig's knuckles, and continental cheeses linger in wood-paneled restaurants with old-fashioned hatstands and seep out into cosy courtyards.

If the city is ornamental, the Olympic Games site less than three miles from the town center is stunningly bold and futuristic.

A scalloped, translucent, acrylic glass tent roof spreads batlike across the main Olympic stadium, the indoor sports hall, and the swimming stadium.

The cycle stadium, with vivid orange and red seats and with its furiously fast track made from a special Cameroon hardwood that tilts at the corner with a take-your-breath-away 48-degree slope, is a real beauty.

Some 550 engineers have been engaged in transforming the very site where Neville Chamberlain landed by plane in 1938 and took back to London the scrap of paper promising "peace in our time." Rubble from 40,000 war-destroyed homes was carted here to form a hill now grassed and landscaped that dips down to an artificial lake below.

Probably never before in great international sporting events has the public had such fast and comprehensive information as will be offered in 1972.

Computers will inform statistics-hungry journalists in a matter of seconds the name, age, height, weight, family status, number and sex of children, club memberships, hobbies, previous athletic records, and all the etceteras of each of the competing 8,000 men and 2,000 women athletes.

Clearly, West Germany looks upon these upcoming Olympics to put gloss on its international reputation.