

high ideals which can only react favorably on the cause we all love.

For those of us reared to believe that the 1908 Olympic Games were a watershed in terms of Olympism and organization, these views are food for thought!

My archeological digs continue. Whilst preparing a journey based on the old "*silk road*" from Istanbul to China, I came across yet another "Olympic Games" staged in the late 1930's. Sven HEDIN⁴ describes his own journey on this famous road. In Sinkiang a group was gathered to witness the "*great Olympic Games of the year*". The crowd was composed of "*White Russians, Red Russians, Chinese, East Turki's, Torguts, Kirgises and others*".

HEDIN continues "*There is not much else to say about these Olympic Games in the heart of Asia. There was an obstacle race, a relay race, wrestling, a marathon and all the usual events, not badly arranged for such a*

barbarous country"! A local dignitary, Sheng TUPAN, took part in a short distance race on the second day of the two-day event; he then made an eloquent speech after the prize-giving, about "*the importance of physical training for the defence of the province*". He, also, did not lose the opportunity of saying "a lot of nice things about Imperialism and Japan"!

Any reader interested in joining me on the *Silk Road* route to Peking in 2008 should get in touch.

I am designing also a replicate historical tour to Athens in 2004, following the Adriatic routes taken by George ROBERTSON, Jack BOLAND and others in 1896. Again I would welcome company!

So much for these "Olympic Excavations". I hope that the objects I have unearthed make interesting subjects and that some bells will be ringing around the world of Olympic history!

⁴ HEDIN, Sven: *The Silk Road*, Routledge, London 1938.

A PART OF HEAVEN

by Rupert Kaiser

65 years ago a Norwegian journalist cabled his newspaper, that the Olympic village in Doeberitz near Berlin was a part of heaven. 65 years later I took part in the monthly tour organised by the busy society *Historia Elstal*. Because I knew what happened to the Olympic village after the war, but especially after the fall of the wall, I was prepared for the worst. But, to tell you the truth, it was not enough!

Training grounds

The tour started in the north-eastern part of the village, on the former athletic grounds. The cinder track, where the heroes of '36, OWENS, LOVELOCK, SALMINEN and Co., prepared them-selves for winning the Gold, is overgrown by grass and weeds. The gym is in a sad situation and the swimming pool burned out in 1993 when children set fire to the roof. The mechanism of the famous lifting windows was destroyed by the Soviets. It is difficult to

imagine that only 12 years ago Soviet Athletes prepared themselves for international competition on these grounds.

Dwelling-houses

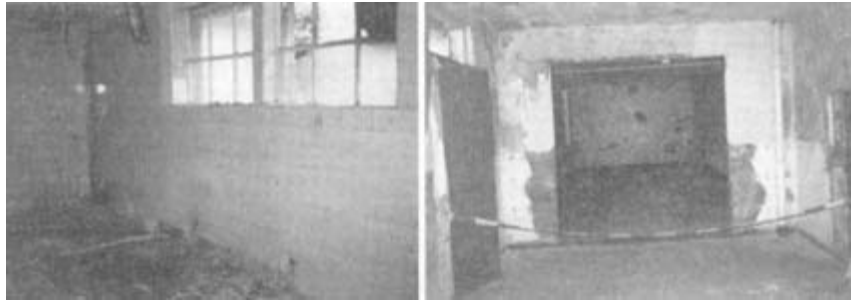
During the time when the former Olympic village was in the hands of the Soviets most of the dwelling houses were razed to the ground. Sometimes the visitor sees their foundations or a cellar-window in the high grasses. The demolition of the houses was unnecessary, indeed, but a Soviet commander, who was anti-Germany and anti-Olympics, gave the order. That was too much even for the government of the Soviet Union, the order was cancelled and the commander was removed. (It is said that he was sent back to Moscow in a Zinc coffin). So 25 of the 149 dwelling-houses, where the athletes lived during the Olympics, were saved. (See below.)

But they are in a terrible condition, too. The

windows are crudely boarded up or walled up. I was able to visit house number 52, which was named “*Rudesheim*” – as you know, all the houses of the Olympic village of 1936 were named after German towns. The artistic sign with the symbol of the town has vanished from this and all the other houses. After the departure of the Soviet troops, there were some “*interested people*”, who stole the little reliefs. These had been made by students of the German schools of art. I wondered in whose garden I could find them now...

The Uruguayan athletes lived in number 52. They competed in boxing, fencing, swimming and in the water polo and basketball. The Footballers potential champions did not come to Berlin. So the “*Uru’s*” had no medal-winners to celebrate but life in the Olympic village was celebration enough. Anyone who remembers the opening sequences of RIEFENSTAHL’s “*Olympia – Fest der Schönheit*” will understand me.

I enter the house. It needs some moments to adjust to the deep darkness. It looks like a prison – the windows are boarded up. I think about life here during the Games. The telephone box, where the athletes spoke to their families. Now dead wires come out of the wall. The living rooms are empty. At the end of the house – the common room, where the athletes spent their spare time, where they sang, read, wrote. Students of art drew beautiful graffiti of the town which gave the house its name. I hoped I would see remnants of them at least. But in vain – our guide explained that this part of the village was used as a military hospital by the Soviets. So they made a kitchen out of the former common room. The walls are tiled and the broad glass-door to the terrace is walled up. The terraces loved by the athletes do not exist anymore. (There is a picture of Jesse OWENS sitting on such a terrace surrounded by his medals and Olympic oaks and signing photos). Only this and other photos give an impression, how wonderful it looked here decades ago.



Rüdesheim house and **Rüdesheim house common room**

On the way to Hindenburg House

The way to Hindenburg-House goes through the beautiful landscape of Brandenburg in which the Olympic village was built by the star-architects of the Berlin Olympics, Werner and Walter March, in a wonderful composition. The man-made lake became muddy and is a meadow now, after the Soviets used the area as a dump. The famous log-house of the sauna built for the the Finnish athletes and then welcomed by the sportsmen of other countries, too, is long since gone.

Near the lake was the so-called Bastion with a little non-alcoholic bar under its yellow shining thatch. From this romantic place the inhabitants of the village had a marvellous view. Only the foundations and the stonewall are preserved. Keepsakes of sadness.

If I stood on the site of the Bastion today I could see the concrete street, which divides the area of the old Olympic village and several so-called Plattenbauten of GDR-standard, which destroyed the scenery. Here the Soviet officers and their families lived. There were two categories: The members of the lower level had to share their flats with other families, the members of the upper level had their own flats. Because the area was top secret in those days the people of Dallgow, Doeberitz and Elstal thought that rockets and atomic weapons were deposited there, but fortunately it was not so.

Hindenburg House

From afar, the neglect and decay of the Hindenburg House is not immediately apparent. Named after the Generalfeldmarschall Paul von HINDENBURG, the last President of the Reich this building was a place of entertainment, training and medical aid during the Olympics. But coming closer you will remark it. Seen relatively, HINDENBURG



The Uruguayan team home and The USA team home

House is the building of the former village in the best condition. The Soviets took care of it, because it was used as officers' mess and place of tradition. The memory of HINDENBURG - the bust and the soldiers-relief in the foyer - is extinguished and changed into the memory of the Soviet leaders. Only on the front walls in the vestibule you can read the badly whitewashed words "*Ich baue fest auf Dich, deutsche Jugend*" (*I base on you, German youth*) and "*Die Treue ist das Mark der Ehre*" (*Faith is the pith of honour*) written by the protector of the house.

Three murals used to be shown by guides. These depicted moments of the Stalingrad-battle, the Soviet banner at the Berlin Reichstag and the triumphal procession at the Red Square in Moscow taken from the world-famous photos by Jewgenij CHLADEJ. The guides do not show them anymore. They were destroyed by vandals. But in the big hall you can see another mural: A colossal LENIN greets the stage. During the Olympics the hall was the centre of entertainment in the village. Only the best was good enough for the youth of the world. The hall is decayed now. A lot of damage was caused by water, the plaster is crumbling and so on and so on. The guide is enthusiastic about the acoustics of the room and remembered a piano-soiree organized by *Historia Elstal* some years ago. Such things are impossible now.

Reception-building

The society *Historia Elstal* wants to save preserve as much as possible in the area. But too much was destroyed by the ravages of time. I think over it on the way to the place, where the Reception-building spread out its wings like arms for greeting the youth of the world. To the place, where the chime at the little clock-tower struck. Of all this you can see nothing any-more. Instead of the building you

will find coalbunkers. The reception-building was the only one in the village that was destroyed in 1945. So the tunnel connecting the square in front of the reception-building with the Reichsstraße 1 (direction Berlin) remained the only evidence of events near the

village. Some years ago, till the street was widened, it was passable. But those responsible did not see any necessity to preserve the tunnel and ordered that it be filled in.

Dining-hall of nations

The Dining-hall of nations was and is the centre of the area, another master-piece of Werner March. Its style is reminiscent of the tradition of Bauhaus banned by the Nazis and it had more than forty dining-halls and kitchens. Now the building is in sad condition and inaccessible. The windows are boarded up. But even in this inhospitable condition you are able to sense the former beauty. And we can recognize the first traces of reconstruction. That gives hope. Hope for the rescue of a monument. But "one swallow does not make a summer". It is necessary to restore the former Olympic village, the former school of the Wehrmacht, and the former Soviet barracks as a place of remembrance. It is necessary to find out the potential for reasonable use of the area the one and only way to protect it final decay and oblivion.

The follow buildings still exist in bad condition: "Dining-hall of nations", Hindenburg House, swimming-pool, gym, house of the village mayor, house of machines, waterworks and 25 dwelling-houses (48 – Cologne, 49 – Bonn, 50 – Koenigswinter, 51 – St. Goar, 52 – Rudesheim, 53 – Mainz, 54 – Saarbruecken, 55 – Trier, 56 – Bernkastel, 57 – Cochem, 58 – Coblenz, 96 – Dresden, 98 – Schandau, 100 – Zittau, 101 – Dessau, 102 – Leipzig, 103 – Freiberg, 104 – Meissen, 105 – Bautzen, 106 – Chemnitz, 114 – Marienburg, 115 –Schneidemül, 116 –Bunzlau, 117 – Liegnitz, 118 – Goerlitz)