

BOOK REVIEW OF RICHARD D. MANDELL'S *A MUNICH DIARY: THE OLYMPICS OF 1972* (CHAPEL HILL: THE UNIVERSITY OF NORTH CAROLINA PRESS, 1991), 207 PAGES. Reviewed by John Lucas, Penn State University.

I never expected to say this, but Richard Mandell's Olympic Diary, written on site in 1972, but not published till 1991, is in several ways a better book than his three texts: *The Nazi Olympics* (1971); *The First Modern Olympics* (1976), and his 1984 *Sport-Cultural History*. As is the essence of a private diary, the real Richard Mandell emerges in this side-long and strange look at the 1972 Summer Olympic Games in Munich, West Germany. Dr. Mandell's chapter titles, however, are unhelpful: Introduction; Getting Ready; Opening; Developments; Adventures; High Spirits; Interruption; Cleaning Up; Finishes; Epilogue; Bibliographical Note; Acknowledgements, and a 6½ page Index. The success of his *Nazi Olympics* book resulted in his "special guest" invitation from the Organizing Committee president, the astute Willi Daume.

As befits a guest with no specific assignment, Mandell wanders aimlessly and in a perpetual state of exhilaration through the most visually attractive and nearly perfectly organized Olympic Games in their 75-year history. Daily jogging expeditions in his "Tiger Boston" shoes interrupt unstructured discussions with journalists from around the world. A full chapter in the diary is devoted to the always extraordinary and always over-long Opening Ceremonies on August 26. Mandell savours his command of the language, frequently uses it with great skill but sometimes with flowers in his hair, as in the sentence on page 55: "Sensuous interest revives with the display on the track of Mexican folklore dancers and mariachis who, alas, wear the cheap serapes of striped aniline dyes that our neighbour has brought back from Tijuana or Juarez for his nieces and nephews." Usually Olympian in his disinterestedness, almost aloofness, Mandell loses some of this in a 500-word description of the inside of a "coed" sauna "full of cooking flesh" . . . fair Teuton . . . glistening females . . . with fetching dimples above each flaring buttock . . . a few shades in the direction of voluptuousness and off the *Playboy* ideal" (p. 121). Mandell knows the English language . . . in his own inimitable way.

For sure, one learns nothing in this diary about the Olympic gold medallists and their 100-meter dash performances, their exploits in the heavyweight wrestling arena or on the women's uneven parallel bars. Mandell finds other Munich phenomena and reverie of even greater interest, such as Pierre de Coubertin's "seduction of the world" (p. 42); the Olympic Games, ideologically speaking, as "usable by just about anyone" (p. 61); Avery Brundage's remarkable speech at the memorial for slain Israeli athletes as "the crudest

evidence yet of the destructive schizophrenia that is the slippery kernel of the 'Olympic idea' and its physical enation, the 'Olympic movement'" (p. 139). There is a revealing letter on page 145, from Professor Doctor Hajo Bernett dated two days after the Munich mass murders, to Willi Daume, stating: "The barbaric decision of the International Olympic Committee to continue the Munich Games fills me with shame."

As must be the case with a private diary, this book is filled with the things and places, persons, and institutions that interest the chronicler the most. Just a few of these preoccupations are the Organizing Committee's decision "never, never to use the colour red," the stunning variety of male and female physiogomies and dress from every world continent, the behind the scenes machinations of one Otl Aicher, graphic designer of these Olympic Games and his indelible "colour dictatorship," "cultural ecumenism" (p. 17), and avant-garde cosmopolitan technocrats—abstractionists—heroic (p. 18) artistic efforts. Whatever that means!

There is here in this diary no ordinary mind at work. Trained as a historian, having gained international notoriety as a sport historian, Mandell's diary is more a personal revelation, a "stream of consciousness" that tells us as much about the man as it does about the Games of the XXth Olympiad. His observation on page 154 that Duame, Aicher, and press chief, Hans Dlein, were triumphantly successful in eliminating "anything 'Teutonic'" about these games seemed an affirmation of his own belief. One has difficulty in crediting himself or the German trio in the previous sentence with the statement: "The Munich Olympics in the last third of the twentieth century should be human, playful, musical, and nonideological—or, better said, unhistorical." Mandell is in love with this international but still very German festival. He is correct in saying and hinting that these Olympic Games are the best, the best organized, the most visually handsome. . . the greatest of all modern times.

Mandell's diary speaks at length about the Munich massacre, but the manuscript is not consumed by the atrocity. There is genuine pain and pessimism in his initial entry for Sunday, 10 September: "Just now this event [the men's 4 x 100 – meter relay] is imminent on this last day of what may be the last Olympics" (p. 166). An understandable misreading of the future of the Games, Mandell spoils things (for me) with the very next sentence: "However, the playlet about to be enacted before us is overloaded with the potential for revived astonishment." Most of us do not write this way, more literary than "scientific." But this vacillation between historical objectivity and passionate personalism is the essence of Mandell . . . as it has been for more than two decades of writing. Allen Guttmann called the 1972 Olympic Games both

wonderful and horrifying, and asserted that “no one has captured this paradoxical experience as well as Mandell.” Robert J. Higgs, on the same back cover, wrote that Mandell admirably presents a picture of Olympian athletics, art, business, show business, international cultures, language, politics, race, religion, “and, sadly, tragedy.” Both are fair assessments of the book, but may have missed the essential mark—the man Mandell himself. I can do no better than quote from Mandell on page 168 who admitted that the “naughty child within” himself, yearned for post-massacre gold medallists mounting the victory stand “to pull down their pants and hurl tendoned moons at Avery Brundage and the limousined barbarians who forced the Olympics to go on.”

Take my word: This is a provocative little book written by a very talented and peculiar person . . . in about equal portions.