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THE OLYMPIC GAMES IN BERLIN

A Question of Fair Play

In recent weeks a great deal of discussion has been going on concerning American participation in the Olympics in Berlin. There are at least one or two very important developments reported almost every day in the newspapers. For example on November 12th, a brief wireless to the New York Times from Utrecht, Holland, stated that: "The Royal Netherlands Athletic Union, representing more than 300 associations, at an extraordinary meeting here today (that is yesterday in Utrecht) decided not to participate in the Berlin Olympic Games. The decision which is final was secured by a large majority and it contrasted with the recent decision of the executive board of the Union to participate in the Games."

A second very recent news dispatch, to which I would refer, records the letter which Miss Helene Mayer, German Jewish citizen, now in this country, is said to have sent Chancellor Hitler with respect to the German invitation to her to compete in the Olympics for Germany. She makes her acceptance conditional upon complete restoration of her citizenship rights which have been cancelled by the Nuremberg laws.

A third item which I take from Frederick Birchall's dispatch published in the New York Times for Nov. 12th gives us a clue to what the probable answer of Chancellor Hitler to Miss Mayer will be. Commenting on the question as to what concessions Germany will be willing to make in order to secure better relations with France, Mr. Birchall points out that on one count that question may be answered positively. With regard to Jews there will be no concession: I quote: "A scheme for what German opinion regards as a middle course in the application of the recent Nuremberg decrees -- and German opinion in this respect is wholly different from world opinion--was under discussion during the recent gathering of party chiefs in Munich. It was supported as reasonable by Dr. Schacht, Dr. Wilhelm Frick, Minister of the Interior, and the conservative elements, but it is understood to have been flatly turned down by the Fuehrer himself."

As one who has been frequently in Germany in recent years, including several visits since the Hitler revolution, I have a feeling that much of the discussion misses much of what seem to me to be the essential points at issue. I have no desire to en-



ter into a discussion of personalities and I am not going to say that those who hold a different view are animated by political consideration. To assert that the question is simply a Jewish one, or a political one, is absurd; and it is equally absurd to insist that it is purely a matter between athletes. If it were that I should be content, but it is just because it is not genuinely being handled in Germany as a matter of athletics that the question of American participation becomes one in which other than athletes are concerned. My memory is still stirred with the vivid impressions I received in Germany a few weeks ago of the extent to which the holding of the Olympics is identified with Nazi propaganda both inside and outside Germany. Before I speak in particular of that I should like to invite your attention to certain larger considerations which we must have in mind in discussing this whole issue.

I am particularly interested in fair play for Germany, because I believe so profoundly that Germany did not have a square deal from the rest of the nations after the World War. Indeed it was the injustice and unreasonableness of the Allies' treatment of Germany which led to the tragedy of the revolution and the willingness of vast masses of despairing people to accept a brutal dictatorship as the only alternative to chaos. Discrimination, hatred, and an unfair spirit has produced the present situation in Germany, therefore quite obviously discrimination and all that goes with it should be avoided by those who want to hasten the dawning of a better day.

Yet the average American is complacent about what is happening in Germany, because he hasn't the faintest idea of what it really is. I have heard people say - "Why worry about Germany's discrimination against Jews and others opposed to the Nazi idea? Look at all the discrimination we have in America with our lynchings, Jim Crow policies, and class prejudice!" I admit with sadness as an American that there is altogether too much discrimination and injustice in our own land, but thank God we don't make it a sacred doctrine and justify it as a holy crusade. The reason for regarding the existence of discrimination in Nazi Germany as in a different category from discrimination elsewhere lies just exactly here. The Nazi openly and frankly calls for the utter eradication of a whole race. To be sure, he speaks of it as a policy of "human extermination" whether it is humane or not - and it is not - it is extermination all the same. I should think it ought



to be fairly evident to anyone who accepts the facts at their face value that it is not possible to avoid discrimination in sport against a people who are slated for social, economic, and political extermination! When Americans come back from Germany and tell me that the German government is living up to its promise that there will be no discrimination against Jewish athletes in connection with the Olympics, all I have to do is to remember the signs which I saw in Germany this summer, the newspapers on the newsstands, the label on the stores, the prohibitions against Jews at bathing places, in public parks and almost all athletic fields.

I recall that just twelve days after Mr. Brundage left Berlin after securing promises of German compliance with the rules of the Olympics with particular reference to Jewish athletes, the seven Jewish athletes who had been accepted for tryouts in the Olympics received a form letter from the district sports leader informing them that their athletic performances had been found unsatisfactory and that it was necessary to strike them off the list of eligibles. I remember likewise that only two months after America's acceptance of Germany's pledge of fair play Sport Commissar, Tschammer-Osten, issued a circular to all Nazi athletic associations in Germany forbidding any intercourse or contests of an athletic nature with non-Aryans and likewise forbidding the use of training fields, dressing rooms, and camps in conjunction with them.

I see as symbolic that empty spot where stood until recently a statue of a Jewish soldier boy, one of the 12,000 Jewish soldiers who laid down their lives for Germany in the World War. He had distinguished himself by saving the lives of many of his comrades and the statue had been erected to his memory in his home town. But when the Nazi madness struck the land his statue was removed, as it is now proposed to remove even the names of the Jewish war veterans from the memorials throughout Germany. Members of the local Jewish community made the request that they might have the statue to place in the synagogue burying ground. They were told, however, "He did not die for Jews, he died for Germans. You can't have it." That policy, exactly in line with the whole spirit of Nazism, is to my mind so utterly incompatible with the spirit of fair play that I confess I find myself one hundred percent sceptical concerning the much publicized promise of Mr. Hitler to Count Latour with respect to the treatment of Jews in Germany during the Olympics. I have a fairly good memory and I recall what officials



of the Nazi party told me in 1933 and 34. One thing they told me was that Jewish war veterans would be exempted from the discriminations leveled against their brethren. They told the world the same thing. Yet this summer I was in Berlin when front line fighters of Jewish ancestry were dropped on twenty-four hours' notice from their positions. And on what appeared to be a general order from headquarters. Those who accept Nazi promises on their face value might be advised to reread a statement in Mr. Hitler's book, Mein Kampf in which he says, "By a judicious use of propaganda it is possible to make people believe that heaven is hell and hell heaven. Mr. Hitler's intimate friend Mr. Streicher of Nuremberg, party leader for that section of Germany, publishes one of the most notoriously vile and untruthful newspapers in the world under the amazing caption, "Der Stuehrmer, a German weekly devoted to fight for truth" Propaganda nowadays means direct or indirect lying on an organized and systematic basis.

But further more in this connection I ask you not to forget that Mr. Schacht, Minister of Finance, has stated that certain of the most stringent new laws against Jewish citizens will not be put into operation, "until after the Olympics." That is a very interesting phrase which one hears repeatedly in Germany - "until after the Olympics." How would you like to deposit in a bank where you knew that the cashier said to the president, "We must observe the rules of banking until after the bank examiners have been here."? How would you regard a public servant who promised to live up to the rules of fair play until after the election? When I was in Sunday School as a little boy there were some scholars who were notoriously studious and punctual until after Christmas. Can you imagine a college in America being willing to engage regularly in intercollegiate sport with another college which agreed to live up to the rules only until after a certain game. No, it is absolutely impossible for Nazi controlled sport to conform to the spirit of fair play. It may conform to the letter for a consideration. The holding of the Olympics is that consideration at the present time, and the government is desperately anxious not to have anything happen. Did I say government? I did, and I mean it. And therein lies another important consideration to which I have already alluded. If the games were coming to New York or going to London or Paris, local chambers of commerce and other groups, non-political or political, would of course be interested, but only in a totalitarian state