

The Nazis' Olympic Chief Talks

"It Would Be a Great Blow if America Stayed Out"

JOHN L. SPIVAK

WARSAW, POLAND, Nov. 30.

IT SEEMS that there is no reason for any agitation in favor of a boycott of the 1936 Olympic Games in Berlin, because I have been given official assurance by Dr. Theodore Lewald, president of the German Olympic Committee, that there is no foundation for the stories spread by "lying Jews and Catholics."

If Jews come to Germany for the Games they will be protected, even if that means calling out the police to break up possible riots and insults.

Jews have no need to worry, for they will be housed, if there is no room in hotels, in Jewish homes so that they will cause no annoyance to the Aryans.

Catholics, Dr. Lewald remarked, "cannot be recognized by the shapes of their noses in the same way that Jews can be recognized, so that if they keep their mouths shut they can even be housed with the Aryans."

The Nazis are frankly dismayed at the possibility of America not participating in the coming Olympics. They have spent over \$10,000,000 building the Olympic village to house the contestants, constructing bridges and streets, and in other preparations. They expect visitors to pay well and thus bring in the much-needed profit, as well as producing the impression on visitors and on the restless German masses that the outside world approves the Nazi regime.

Boycott talk has become so serious that Count Baillet-Latour, president of the International Olympic Committee, was summoned to a talk with Der Fuehrer and issued the following statement:

There is no ground for opposition. Visitors will be welcomed and there is no risk that visitors will be offended. The present move to boycott the Olympics has its origin in political foes and is based on false assertions.

I was so impressed by this statement that I wondered whether the faith of the German people had been abused. So I went to talk to Staats-Sekretar Lewald, who has held important positions in the German government for years.

The headquarters of the Eleventh Olympiad at 43 Hardenbergstrasse are filled with pictures of Hitler. Heavy, athletic, middle-aged Germans sat and stood in the reception room. Their conversation was devoted entirely to the necessity of contacting American friends who oppose the "Jewish boycott." Their voices were filled with undisguised hate.

When Lewald's secretary heard that an American journalist wanted an interview, he made an immediate appointment for me. Apparently American journalists are not coming in droves to the headquarters of the Eleventh Olympiad.

Lewald, an elderly man with thin grey hair, greeted me cordially and started a rapid stream of talk even before I had an opportunity to ask questions on the glories of the Olympic Games. In 1932, only 1,500 contestants took part in the Games held in Los Angeles. Berlin expects over 4,000, with forty-nine nations taking part, and 100,000 to 150,000 visitors daily, totalling over 1,000,000 for the entire period of the Games. Every time I tried to interrupt his steady stream of talk, he took a deep breath and started again.

"Tell me," I finally managed to say while he was taking another deep breath, "have any countries refused to send athletes?"

"Only Palestine," he told me. "But even in this case we received a very nice letter of regret which said that since they had only recently started to develop athletics, they didn't think they would be able to compete. A very nice letter. Now the Soviet Union," he added anxiously, "has no Olympic Committee, so they cannot send competitors. We've no objection to the Soviet Union's participation if they had an Olympic Committee—"

"You see," I remarked, "America is particularly interested not so much in what happens to Jewish and Catholic competitors as in the treatment of Jewish and Catholic visitors."

Lewald fidgeted in the chair, leaning forward a little pugnaciously.

"I'm particularly interested," I con-

tinued, "that no information is carried in your press releases. For instance, I'd like to know if German Jews and Catholics will be allowed to compete in the Games?"

"Why not?" he asked, his eyes flashing. "If they have the proper qualifications for the Olympics. We admit everyone that comes up to the Olympic standard. But—" he leaned forward and smiled, tapping my knee with a fatherly hand, "it is a curious thing that out of five hundred American athletes of first rank, only five Jews are included. That makes one out of every hundred. No?" He laughed gaily. "The same situation exists here. Jews and Aryans have the same opportunities, but somehow—" he looked at me with a winning smile, "somehow, they don't meet the standard."

"Well, do *any* German Jews come up to standard?"

"We can't tell yet," he said hastily. "The elimination contests are not over." He made an expansive gesture. "But there has certainly been no discrimination against Catholics here. The Catholic youth organizations are privileged to enter the Hitler youth movement—that shows that there is no discrimination, doesn't it?"

"Sounds like a strong argument," I agreed cautiously. "But viewing the well-known Nazi activities, do you really expect Jewish and Catholic athletes to come to Berlin?"

"Of course, we invited them—" he grew increasingly excited. "Why does America talk so much of Nazi discrimination? Why doesn't America look to—look to the wood in your eye—you know the Biblical quotation."

"Beam in your eye?" I said helpfully.

"Ja!" he exclaimed with enthusiasm. "Why doesn't America look to the beam in her own eyes? What about discrimination against Negroes in the South. No? You don't let Negroes mingle with white people—even Jews. Why look at the beam in our eyes?" he demanded. "The Olympic Committee doesn't ask whether a competitor is a Jew or an Aryan."

"What we want to know is what sort of treatment Jews and Catholics will get if they come to Berlin?" I repeated.

"They will be received with open arms. We hope many Jews will come and spend lots of money. They have money, you know," he added slyly and laughed. "It's really an absurd question. You never heard of Americans being molested in Germany."

"Yes," I said sadly. "Many have been molested. In fact, it became so bad that the American ambassador protested to Hitler."

"I doubt it," Lewald cried excitedly. "I never heard of it. All right, maybe one, maybe two cases, but all that is past and anyone who comes to the Games will have a pleasant time. Why Baillet-Latour saw the Chancellor and issued a statement guaranteeing there would be no trouble for the Jews."

"How can you guarantee no trouble from insults?"

He waved his hands excitedly. "This summer thousands of Americans, and there were many Jews among them, thousands came to Germany and not one was bothered. Germany is a peaceful nation. Peace will prevail. If it is necessary to call the police to protect the contestants and visitors—" he stopped, adding hastily, "But that won't be necessary."

"I understand hotels in Berlin can accommodate 30,000. But you expect four or five times as many people, to be placed in private homes. Where do you intend to place the Jews—with the Aryans?"

Lewald's face reddened. He stood up, making a nervous gesture.

Excitedly—"They can go to the Adlon, the Bristol, the Kaiserhof. They don't ask a man if he's a Jew or a Catholic. We'll place Jews and Catholics where we have room for them."

"What happens when a Jew has semitic features and when he's placed in an Aryan home and waited on by an Aryan frau?"

"We won't—" he began, then stopped suddenly. "Of course, Jews will have to look for rooms themselves and make arrangements for meals and residence. If they don't like what they get, they don't have to stay."

"You mean if Aryans don't like their semitic features they don't have to rent rooms?" I wanted to know.

"There won't be any difficulty," he broke in. "You see, we hope many Jews will come and spend lots of money. Germany needs Jewish money."

"Suppose America doesn't send teams? What will Germany's attitude to Jews and Catholics be then?"

"We would regret such a move exceedingly. It would be a great blow to the Games and to Germany, because America is the greatest country for sports. The trouble comes," he continued excitedly, "the trouble comes from speeches by rabbis and priests. They're always talking against the Olympics held in Germany. This is not a religious question but a question of sports. Nothing to do with religion. The whole Olympic organization never thinks if a man is a Jew or a Catholic."

"That's very interesting," I remarked. "Tell me, are there Jews and Catholics working in this Olympic organization?"

His face grew apoplectic. He jumped up from the chair and banged his fist on the table.

"I—I—I refuse to answer such a question. Why do you come here and ask that? I say there is no discrimination!"

"I know, but you said that the question doesn't arise so I merely asked whether Jews and Catholics are employed here?"

"That's nobody's business but ours,"

he shouted, losing his temper completely. "Why do you come here and ask such questions? Look at your own athletic clubs. I've been there. You don't find Jews in them—"

"I merely asked because you are so emphatic that the Olympic Committee does not consider religion and does not think of discrimination."

"We chose our help to suit ourselves," he shouted. "That's our business and not America's or anyone else's."

"That's okay with me," I said. "Now—"

"That's all the questions I'll answer."

"One more," I insisted gently. "Aren't you part Jewish yourself?"

His face became purple with fury. "I refuse to answer," he shouted at the top of his voice, so loud that the secretary and reception clerk rushed in. "You go—you must go—" Lewald's voice had risen so that it was almost a shriek. The secretary's and clerk's faces were white. "Please," they urged, "You had better go."

"I only wanted to tell America," I said cheerfully.

"We have a press department and friends in America. We'll tell them," Lewald shouted. "Go!"

JOHN L. SPIVAK

has been in Europe for several months as the roving correspondent of *THE NEW MASSES*. He has been traveling up and down Fascist Italy and Nazi Germany, observing, inquiring and finding out. He will cover most of the other major countries within the next few months, and his dispatches will appear in *THE NEW MASSES* each week. In his second article, in next week's issue, Spivak relates his experiences with the Special Tribunal of Fascist Italy. It is called

"LA MADAMA SMILES"

by JOHN L. SPIVAK

In The New Masses Next Week

Why Lewis Resigned

WILLIAM F. DUNNE

THE resignation of John L. Lewis from the Executive Council of the American Federation of Labor in order to dramatize the industrial unionism issue and the organization of the Committee for Promoting Industrial Organization, shows the speed with which struggle between forces of reaction and progress within the A.F. of L. is proceeding. It is only six weeks since the Atlantic City convention adjourned.

The battle line between craft unionism and industrial unionism within the American Federation of Labor is now clearly defined by decisive developments which have crowded upon each other since the Atlantic City convention where the opposing alignments were indicated in the resolutions and debates, following the San Francisco convention, where issues and forces appeared in outlines only.

The organized workers in the basic industries are now, through their union machinery, taking determined steps to reconstruct the A.F. of L. on an industrial basis.

As *THE NEW MASSES* stated in estimating the results of the Atlantic City convention, the central question was the organization of the unorganized in the basic industries as the most necessary step for effective resistance to the open-shop drive, company unionism, wage cuts, speedup, fascist reaction and war.

The Committee for Industrial Organization recently established by eight unions, headed by John L. Lewis of the United Mine Workers, with headquarters in Washington, D. C., is not only the organizational expression of the determination to organize the unorganized on an industrial basis but is an open challenge to the throttling authority of the tory wing of the A.F. of L. executive council. In actuality it is another labor-union center to which the organized workers in basic industries already have given their allegiance.

But the question raised by President Green and others of the likelihood of a split in the A.F. of L. as a result of the activities of the Committee for Industrial Organization and its adherents serves only to befog the real issue. The craft-union wing of the Executive Council—now the majority of that body—bases its opposition to industrial unionism and its support of the right of craft unions to “raid” the industrial unions, on purely formal constitutional provisions and precedents that have no real connection with the present needs of workers confronted by the gigantic power of monopoly capital—increasingly concentrated during six years of crisis.

Permanent mass unemployment with a rising index of industrial production, the continued existence of an army of ten to twelve million unemployed while production figures are within ten points of 1929, the continued lowering of the total income of the working class and its living and social standards,

have brought millions of workers to the realization that their right to work and live depends upon the building of a powerful industrial-union movement in the United States—that all barriers to this in the form of persons and policies, union officials and outworn programs, must be swept aside.

In only one decisive basic industry has wide mass organization been secured during the crisis and the period of N.R.A.—in coal mining. (In the clothing industry there has been sweeping organization but it cannot be compared to coal mining in importance for the labor movement as a whole.) The great majority of workers in steel, metal mining and smelting, oil wells and refineries, heavy machinery and electrical apparatus manufacturing, auto, rubber, textile, chemical manufacture, light and power production, telephone and telegraph, are still unorganized. Marine transport is well organized but the unions of seamen and longshoremen are dominated by thoroughly reactionary officials who, however, face a powerful rank-and-file movement for industrial organization.

The picture of the forces of the American Federation of Labor compared to those of the organized employers is not a pleasing sight to anyone conscious of the fact that labor throughout the capitalist world today has to fight for such elementary things as the right to organize and to strike—the mere right to a minimum level of human decency.

At the Atlantic City convention Secretary Morrison was able to show by per capita tax figures a gain of only some 450,000 members over 1934. The figures show a gain of some 900,000 over 1933, but if we deduct 100,000 newly-organized coal miners and some 100,000 clothing and textile workers from this estimate, we see that the gains in other industries by the A.F. of L., under the leadership of the Green-Woll tory wing, amount actually to very little in spite of all their orotund pronouncements about the benefits handed to labor by the New Deal. The membership figures are 3,050,000 for 1935 and 2,600,000 for 1934.

The Committee for Industrial Organization has a perfect case. The shameless neglect and sabotage of the organization of the unorganized by the executive council during the whole crisis, its paralyzing policy of sifting out the mechanics from industrial unions, distributing them as gifts to the moribund craft unions, thereby splitting the unions and discouraging the struggles of workers facing the might of the most powerful corporations and their agencies, cannot be explained away. But the tory wing of the council has no intention of stopping these treacherous practices, no intention of relinquishing the right of the craft unions to raid not only the new but the older unions with industrial charters.

The forces for industrial unionism have now taken the offensive by the organization of a center, by launching a propagandic campaign for industrial unionism, by practical aid to the independent union of shipyard workers in Camden, by appeals to central labor bodies and state federations—by the resignation of Lewis and an open challenge to the authority of the executive council on the central question of organization in basic industry.

These are historic acts. They are of revolutionary significance when seen in connection with the background and development of the American labor movement. Writing in *The Daily Worker* for Nov. 28, William Z. Foster, chairman of the Communist Party and a trade-union organizer whose remarkable ability even his enemies acknowledge, said:

The millions of unorganized workers are now looking with hope towards the A.F. of L., feeling that at long last a real organization campaign will be carried on. . . . The Committee on Industrial Organization, headed by Lewis, composed of eight presidents of industrial unions, has declared that its purpose is to unify and strengthen the A.F. of L., to organize the workers in the basic industries into the A.F. of L. . . . The Communists have always fought for such an organizing campaign. . . . The Communists support the struggle. Of course Communists have many important differences with many of the major principles of John L. Lewis. Lewis is now opposed to the Farmer-Labor Party which would further unite the workers. . . . Lewis still supports President Roosevelt whose party has launched a murderous strikebreaking campaign. . . . Lewis speaks of fascism and Communism in the same breath. He lumps together fascism and Communism, which means democracy for all who toil. . . . But the Communist Party supports the struggle of Lewis and all others in their fight to achieve unity . . . through the elimination of craft barriers. The Communists will, as they always have, support with all their energies the movement for organizing the unorganized workers in A.F. of L. industrial unions.

The industrial unions grouped around the Committee for Promotion of Industrial Organization are the backbone of the A.F. of L. There is no doubt that in the near future the committee will include representatives of the Amalgamated Association of Iron, Steel and Tin Workers (whose members are in favor of the industrial union program) and of the new unions in rubber and auto.

The powerful movement for industrial unionism cannot and will not remain purely an economic one. It must and will and rapidly take on a definite working-class political character. Something of this is to be sensed in Lewis' statement quoted in *The Herald Tribune*, Nov. 29, in an interview giving the reasons for an industrial union center:

There are forces at work which would wipe out, if they could, the labor movement of America just as the labor movements of Germany and Italy were wiped out.

The progressive forces of American labor are now preparing for decisive struggles and spurred on by the most pressing necessity a new labor movement is being built. In the course of this struggle the “non-partisan political policy” will have to make way for an independent Labor Party based on unions.