

# Noel-Baker in Agony: His Resistance to the 1936 Nazi Olympics

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Philip Noel-Baker devoted his whole life to the Olympic movement and to peace and disarmament movements. In the course of his lifetime, he experienced numerous bitter trials, but in the year before the Moscow Games in 1980, Noel-Baker had to face his last trial. An argument broke out in Britain over the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan which had taken place in the winter of 1979, and one politician from the Conservative Party brought up Noel-Baker's previous action as an example to justify the boycott of the Moscow Games. In 1936, Noel-Baker had boycotted the Berlin Games.

Noel-Baker was infuriated at this politician's behavior. We are able to read how he felt about this incident in *Man of Sport, Man of Peace: Collected Speeches and Essays of Philip Noel-Baker, Olympic Statesman 1889-1982* compiled by Don Anthony. Noel-Baker states as follows: "It is true that I did not attend the Berlin Games; but this was not because I thought the ideas of Adolf Hitler was evil—although I did think that. It was because I understood that Jews and members of the German Workers Party were not allowed to try for the teams! There is an essential difference."

Then, why did he have to oppose the Berlin Games, and what aspect of the Olympic movement did he try to protect by his act of boycotting? The purpose of this paper is to examine these points.

Having made a painful decision, Noel-Baker contributed a "letter to the editor" to the *Manchester Guardian* on December 7, 1935, and made a declaration to oppose the Berlin Games. His "letter to the editor" succeeded in creating a sensation among

the people, both foreign and domestic, who were engaged in the Fair Play movement, but it was not enough to influence the people who were virtually responsible for leading the Olympic movement in Britain. Once the British Olympic Association (BOA) determined that the judgment made by the International Olympic Committee (IOC) was absolute, it was impossible for Noel-Baker, who was not an IOC member, to reverse the IOC judgment, even if he was able to prove the discriminatory treatment of Jewish contestants by Nazi Germany.

Accepting this Situation, Noel-Baker Sent an open letter to Count Baillet-Latour, who was the president of IOC, and also clarified the problems of the Berlin Games in his letter to the *Manchester Guardian*. For Noel-Baker, the principle of equality in the Eligibility Code stated in the two articles of the Olympic Charter was something that could not be given up and should be given the highest Priority.