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Effect of Great Cultural Revolution upon Physical Education at Schools and Sports in Chinese People's Republic

*By Kohsuke Sasajima**

In the Chinese People's Republic, upsurging of Mao Tse-tung's thought came to be clamored for from early in 1966 onward. The Mao Tse-tung's faction conflicted with that led by Liu Shao-chi. Thus began the great Cultural Revolution, which was in substance a struggle for power. The August of the same year saw the emergence of the Red Guards of Defense subsidiary to the Mao Tse-tung's faction. They took part in the promotion of the Great Cultural Revolution. It is, however, to be noted that Mao Tse-tung's contest for recovery of power did not necessarily begin in 1966.

The "Great Leap Forward", which Mao Tse-tung advocated in 1958, having proved a failure Liu Shao-chi began to pursue an adjustment policy from about 1961 on. As a result, there started a struggle for supremacy between the Mao Tse-tung Faction and the Liu Shao-chi Faction.

The readjustment policy, which had been mapped out by Liu Shao-chi, succeeded in changing for the better the economic conditions of the Chinese People's Republic, which had been on the verge of Catastrophe. Nevertheless, Mao Tse-tung thought that the foregoing would lead the construction of the socialistic society to collapse. In view of Liu Shao-chi having come to have a large number of his supporters within the Chinese Communist Party's Central Committee, Mao launched the Great Cultural Revolution for the purpose of recovering the power.

On June 13, 1966, while the Great Cultural Revolution was in progress, State

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Ministry announced the postponement for half a year of the acceptance of applications for enrollment of students in universities and colleges. It was in 1970 that the acceptance of the enrollment applications was resumed. Furthermore, simultaneously with the emergence of the Red Guards of Defense in August, 1966, all the schools throughout the country from primary schools up to universities were closed down. In February, 1967, the Central Committee of the Chinese Communist Party issued a notification of the reopening of primary schools and high schools (both junior and senior). It was, however, in 1968 that they were all virtually reopened.

In reopening the schools, the school years were shortened (the primary school: five years; junior high school: two years; senior high school: two years; University: two to three years), in accordance with Mao Tse-tung's "five-seven instructions" and the decision made in August, 1966, at the 11th plenary session of the Chinese Communist Party's 8th-term Central Committee. Also, the number of subjects on the school curriculum was reduced (five subjects both at the primary and junior high school). On the other hand, greater importance came to be attached to labor.

At the reopened schools, what had formerly been known as physical education was converted into military physical education and guidance was given so as to link it directly with militia training.

It was in 1970 that the universities were reopened. Prospective newcomers to universities are chosen from those in the labor, farming, and military circles who have had actual experience in labor for three years or upward.

As regards sports, since Chairman Ho Lung and Vice-Chairman Yung Kao-tang of the Chinese People's Republic's Physical Education and Sports Committee were criticized on account of their affiliation with the Liu Shao-chi Faction, those who were connected with sports have been denounced scathingly. Those newspapers and magazines which specialized in dealing with sports were suppressed. Participation of Chinese delegates in the Asian GANEFO (Games of the New Emerging Forces) held in Cambodia in December, 1966, marked, for the time being, the termination of China's activities in the sporting world.

It was around 1968 that China resumed pursuance of sports. In 1970, an exhibition of various types of sports was held in Peking. In July China took part in an international sports contest. For some time from September of the same year,

China resumed the holding of goodwill sports contests in concert with friendly nations. The year 1971 witnessed China's participation in the 31st World's Ping-pong Championship Tournament with superior achievements. Furthermore, spare-time athletic schools, too, were reopened.

Subsequently to the Great Cultural Revolution, sports have been conducted on the basis of participation by the masses and of rendering service to the masses. The former practices of aiming at the acquisition of prize cups and championship and the idea of "technique first" have been replaced by the basic policy stressing "friendship first, contest second".

To all appearance, however, China's reversion to I.O.C. and I.F. will take some time for realization, in view of the existing state of the world's sports circles.

Although the Great Cultural Revolution may be said to have entered into the stage of termination, it has, as matters stand now, not yet ended completely. Such being the case, there is no asserting that no change will occur hereafter, resulting in the alteration of the idea as to the way that physical education and sports should be in China.