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Physical Education and Sports in China (Under
the Nationalist Government) During and After
(1937 to 1949) World War II

By *Kohsuke Sasajima**

With the outbreak of the Sino-Japanese incident on July 7, 1937, the Japanese armies marched rapidly into Mainland China, and captured Peking and Tientsin in the same month, Shanghai in November, Nanking in December, Suchow, Hankow, and Canton from May to October, 1938.

In March, 1938, the Nationalist Government proclaimed the Resistance and State Founding Program, and threw all its energies into the war. In March, 1939, it publicly announced the National Spirit General Mobilization Program designed to give the top priority to military affairs for a victory, and guided the Chinese people. In keeping with the programs, school education was reformed to furnish a wartime footing.

Most of the universities, colleges, and junior colleges in the regions placed on a wartime footing were moved to interior China, but their facilities and equipment were not sufficient. In October, 1938, the Government established minimum standards on the construction of school buildings by proclaiming the Higher Than Junior College Buildings Construction Interim Rules in an attempt to maintain the educational standards. Rules were laid down also on scholarships for students in the schools that had been moved to interior China. From 1941, students were drafted in succession, and in 1944, in response to an appeal for serving for the war, many students went into military service.

Primary and secondary school pupils evacuated the regions under the occupation of the Japanese armies, but the schools in the new regions where they took refuge were not able to admit all of them because the school facilities were limited, and an expedient was devised to let them study for themselves, to test them for achieve-

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ments of self-study, and to regard those having passed the test as school finishers.

After taking the emergency educational measure, the Government started the enactment and reform of educational laws and ordinances to meet wartime needs.

With the Pacific War terminated in August, 1945, there arose such problems as the reinstatement of the schools having been moved to interior China in their original places as well as the handling of the students having been in military service and the teachers and students of the schools in the regions that had been occupied by the Japanese armies, and the Government tried to resolve the problems by proclaiming new laws and ordinances.

Under a wartime footing, the emphasis was naturally laid on physical training at school. It was no easy task to expand and intensify the facilities of physical education at school under the extraordinary circumstance of war. In March, 1940, the Interim Minimum Standards on the Facilities of Physical Education at School were established, indicating the minimum standards to be maintained on the facilities and equipment to be used at primary and secondary schools. Even so, with the spread of war flames, it became difficult to maintain even the minimum standards, and lessons were given by using various devices.

Concerning the reform of school curricula, it was arranged that physical education should be provided for two hours each week with effect from October, 1937, by vocational schools that had not given physical education lessons. In 1940, physical education at various schools was reinforced by formulating physical education policies to be implemented by them. Further, according to the reforms made after the year in the standards on physical education curricula, the hours designated for physical education and military training were increased, and it was arranged that primary school teachers eligible to physical education should complete the nonregular physical education course provided to the normal school.

With the Pacific War coming to an end in August, 1945, the standards on school curricula were again reformed, and some schools restored to normal the hours designated for physical education, and abolished military training. Among the university, college, and junior college students, those having been in military service were excused from physical education, depending on the types of courses in which they had participated.

With the wartime invigoration of physical education at school, extramural physical education was also strengthened, and several types of legislation were enacted, but

how they were enforced is not clear.

During the war, the Chinese people suffered from want of foods, and their standard of living deteriorated, but in the view of enhancing the fighting spirit and promoting the national morale, the people were encouraged to hold athletic meetings. It is not clear, however, to what extent such meetings were actually held because it was a time of war. For promotion of the friendship with aliens then residing in China for the provision of military aid, international athletic meetings were held in Chungking and other places. It is surmised, however, that to hold such meetings in the regions bordering on the battle front would have been impossible.

In June, 1942, the Main Points of Celebrating the Physical Education Day (September 9 or the so-called Double Nine Day) were publicly announced, prescribing the types of games to be played and those responsible for meeting costs. The types of games were those concerning Chinese traditional martial arts as well as racing, mountaineering, swimming, equestrian, rowing, cycling, weightlifting, ball, track and field games.

In September, 1945, the Rules Concerning the Sponsoring of Athletic Meetings by the State, Provinces, Cities, and Prefectures were established. According to the rules, the seventh national athletic meeting was held in May, 1948, in Shanghai after a lapse of 13 years. In this meeting participated champions from Taiwan that had long been a Japanese territory and also from Manchuria that had been occupied by the Japanese.

Athletic meetings were held also under the auspices of provinces, cities, and prefectures, but with the intensification of the civil war between the Nationalist Party and the Communist Party, such meetings gradually ceased to be held.

Under the rule of Mainland China by the Nationalist Government from 1937 to 1947, various policies were taken to foster physical education and sports, but the fact may be that the policies failed to achieve the desired end because the period was during and after the war, followed by a civil war.