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Physical Education and Sports in China during the Years under Japanese Occupation and Administration of Chinese Communists (1931 ~ 1949)

By *Kohsuke Sasajima**

Under Japanese Occupation

On 7 July 1937 the Japan-China accident occurred, and the National Government, as the Japanese army made advancement, escaped to Hankou (December 1937) and then to Chungching (October 1938).

The moving of the Nationalist Government to the interior resulted in producing two puppet governments in North China and Central China which were under the occupation of Japanese army. A puppet Nationalist Government was established in Nanking by Wang-Chaoming who escaped from Chungching in March 1940, and this government unified the said two governments.

Although the Japanese army occupied nine provinces, the actuality was that the whole areas of such provinces were not under the power of the army, just occupying large cities and their surrounding areas. Starting in the last half of 1942 when Japan began taking a defensive position in the Pacific War, excellent Japanese army corps were sent in succession to the south Pacific from China in order to restore the falling fortunes. Due to the reduced force of arms, the Japanese army, facing difficulties to secure the occupied points and lines, had to make a retreat, and to the abandoned areas, the Communists made advancement.

The two puppet governments established under the occupation of Japanese army worked out new educational policies respectively and rejected the policy and anti-Japanese education adopted by the Nationalist Party. The puppet Wang Government adopted an educational policy against Communism but supporting peace. Since universities and colleges which had been in the areas occupied by the Japanese army had mostly moved to the interior, some universities and colleges were established in

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place of the moved ones. Among the newly established educational institutes, schools for physical educators were included.

The puppet government decided on a new guiding principle for physical education. The Chinese associations of Sports had all moved to the interior, therefore, association of sports were established newly amid the occupation of the Japanese army, and athletic meets were held by such new bodies. Since 1942, the public peace became worse because of the reduction in force of Japanese arms, gradually making holding of athletic meets difficult. During such time, athletic meets in which foreign athletes participated were only held between Japan and puppet Manchukuo.

Areas under control of Chinese Communists

The Communist Party which terminated the first agreement on Nationalist-Communist cooperation in July 1927 organized an army and came to have Soviet political powers in various areas, and finally the Party, by unifying such political powers, established an Emergency China-Soviet Republic Government at Juichin in Chianghsi Province in November 1931. The Nationalist Party had been attacking the areas under the Soviet control, and the Communist Party, unable to stand attacks, abandoned Juichin in November 1934 and began movement and established a government in northern Shanhsi Province in October 1935.

With the occurrence of Japan-China accident, a cooperative agreement was concluded for the 2nd time between the Nationalist Party and the Communist Party, and the areas under Soviet control became remote areas, and in such areas a remote area government was established. The development of the Communist Party's power put the Nationalist Party in uneasiness and the party placed the remote areas under its siege. The Japanese army's attacks inflicted a great damage on the communist areas, however, the Communist Party, by overcoming difficulties, expanded its control.

After the end of the Pacific War, battles between the Nationalist Party and the Communist Party became intensified over requisition of the areas which had been under the control of the Japanese army; the battle came to an end through American mediation. However, since March 1946, the relations between both parties were aggravated again, and the two parties rushed into a full-scale war when America gave up its mediating effort in March 1947.

For some time immediately after the war was started, the Nationalist Party was in a superior position and Yen'an was even turned over to the hand of the party,

however, the situation was reversed beginning in later half of 1947; the Communist Party occupied areas one after another, and established liberation areas, and finally the People's Republic of China was established on 1 October 1949.

The policy for education adopted by the Communist Party was to reconstruct thought, and this policy was pushed forward strongly.

The Emergency China-Soviet Republic Government poured efforts into eradication of illiteracy and established many schools. An educational system was established in January 1934. Lessons were given for physical education, however, equipment and tools were not available fully as areas were under the siege of the Nationalist Party's army. Encouragement was given to sporting, however, due to scant data, details are not known. According to the existing data, athletic meets of various kinds were held on May 1933 such as soccer, volleyball and others.

While as to the educational policy in the remote areas, the policy which had been adopted by the Soviets was first used with no change, however, a School Law was enacted afterward, by which educational policies were established. The policy was amended in 1943 so that education would be given according to the circumstances in respective areas.

According to the School Laws enacted by remote governments, physical education was to be given at primary schools, however, it was not included in the curricula for middle school boys and girls. In the remote areas sports were played actively as recreation. It is known from the existing materials that field and track and basketball meets and others were held in Yen'an on 1 September 1942.

As to the liberated areas, they were areas which came under the control of the Communist Party which won the battle with the Nationalist Party, therefore, no consideration was given to education immediately after the liberation of such areas. The meeting held for education for the first time in the liberated areas was the meeting which was called in August 1947 by the Northeast China People's Government. As for the North China People's Government (established in August 1948), it convened a meeting in May 1949, at which regulations for education for primary school children and for primary school teachers were laid down.

The regulations enacted by the North China People's Government had provisions to give daytime primary school children physical education, however, as for children in two shifts or on a half-day system, no lessons were given on physical education. By the way, the regulations had no provisions concerning contents of teaching.

As for the liberated areas other than North China, the People's Republic of China came into existence before regulations for education were enacted in such areas.

During the time when the areas were liberated, the Communist Party was very busy in fighting the Nationalist Party, therefore, holding any athletic meeting was quite impossible.