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**THE POLITICS OF SOCIALIST ATHLETICS IN THE PEOPLE'S
REPUBLIC OF CHINA, 1949-1966**

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ABSTRACT

THE POLITICS OF SOCIALIST ATHLETICS IN THE PEOPLE'S REPUBLIC OF CHINA, 1949-1966

Amanda Shuman

This dissertation traces the political significance of sport to the Chinese socialist state between 1949 and 1966 by examining state-sponsored *tiyu* (loosely translated into English as “sports and physical culture”) and the connection between its two intertwined goals: *tiyu* for every citizen, and the development of elite sports programs. In these years Chinese leaders began to use international sport to carve out for China a different position in the world, while at the same time developing general *tiyu* and competitive training programs for ordinary citizens. China’s athletic and political performance at international events was intended to showcase the emergence of a successful socialist state peopled by healthy, fit citizens and capable of international leadership.

A diverse group of *tiyu* experts helped usher in a new organizational and institutional structure for *tiyu* in the early 1950s. Inspired by the Soviet model, this included introducing the Soviet “Ready for Labor and Defense” system in China (known in Chinese as the *laoweizhi*) as the centerpiece of the government’s efforts to use mass *tiyu* in order to cultivate the ideal socialist citizen. Chinese leaders also signaled their deference to Soviet leadership in the international socialist movement by participating in socialist bloc delegation visits.

By the late 1950s, work unit sports associations, spare-time sports schools, and the *laoweizhi* effectively blurred the lines of mass and elite sport because they included ordinary citizens while also providing ways to identify those with more athletic potential. As the Sino-Soviet relationship deteriorated in the latter half of the 1950s, Chinese officials turned away from relying on Soviet models, but continued to promote basic socialist ideals, such as collectivism, serving the motherland, and internationalism, as part of larger domestic efforts to build a superior Chinese brand of socialism. This included a massive increase in competitive sports programs during the Great Leap Forward and the mainstream emergence of socialist *tiyu* popular culture, which included sports films and reached an apex with the First National Games.

Beginning in 1961, however, recovery from the post-Great Leap Forward economic disaster required tightening the belt in *tiyu*. Mass *tiyu* and elite sport became separate, increasingly distinct entities, and most state funding went to the latter. By the mid-1960s, mass *tiyu* consisted primarily of paramilitary activities, workplace calisthenics, and inexpensive sports like ping-pong, basketball, and swimming. Elite sport meanwhile prospered and nearly all state-level funding went to training an elite cadre of internationally competitive athletes.

In the years between the Great Leap Forward and the Cultural Revolution, elite sport helped open up new transnational networks and establish foreign relations that reconfigured China's place in the world following the Sino-Soviet split. Sport served as a way to showcase and promote Chinese socialism and China as the

exemplary socialist model for others to follow, particularly those in recently decolonized Third World nations. The height of these efforts came with the first Games of the New Emerging Forces (GANEFO), a sports mega-event that took place in Jakarta in 1963, which China and Indonesia promoted as an alternative to the Olympics. The turn in high politics during the early Cultural Revolution isolated China in most of its foreign relationships, and subsequently, put a temporary halt to all sport.

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Introduction

On July 16, 1966, 72-year-old Mao Zedong stood on a boat in the Yangtze in a simple bathrobe. He paused and waved at the local crowd watching, and to the many ordinary Chinese who would see the photograph later in the *People's Daily* [Figure 1]. Then, he jumped in and swam for an hour and five minutes, an act that has since been described as a display of the leader's good health and strength. It was not the first time the Chairman swam the river, but it was this event that also marked, in hindsight, the beginning of the most radical period of the Cultural Revolution. In subsequent years, Red Guards would commemorate Mao's famous swim by also jumping in the river. Xujun Eberlein, whose own sister drowned in the 1968 commemorative swim, has described participation in it as an "act of faith."¹ Few at the time could have predicted that, even many decades later, some former Red Guards still continue the tradition.²

Although it may have indeed seemed like a radical act for someone his age, Mao's swim across the Yangtze was probably not much of a surprise for most Chinese who knew of his fondness for swimming, and who had experienced more than a decade of Communist Party rule that stressed participation in physical activity. Indeed, the words of Mao's famous slogan from 1952, "Develop sports and physical

¹ Xujun Eberlein, "Another Swimmer," in Angilee Shah and Jeffrey Wasserstrom, eds., *Chinese Characters: Profiles of Fast-Changing Lives in a Fast-Changing Land* (Berkeley: UC Press, 2012), 68.

² Eberlein, *Chinese Characters*, 71-72.

人民日报

1966年7月25日 星期一 1966年7月25日 星期一

“我们敬爱的领袖毛主席这样健康，这是全中国人民的最大幸福！是全世界革命人民的最大幸福！”

毛主席畅游长江



毛主席在快艇甲板上检阅正在同江水搏斗的游泳大军。

新华社武汉二十日电 长江风浪翻滚，毛主席畅游长江。毛主席畅游长江的消息，传遍大江南北，全国人民欢欣鼓舞。毛主席畅游长江的消息，传遍大江南北，全国人民欢欣鼓舞。毛主席畅游长江的消息，传遍大江南北，全国人民欢欣鼓舞。

Figure 1. Front page of *People's Daily*, July 25, 1966.

culture, strengthen the People's physique,"³ resonated (and continue to resonate) in the minds of many Chinese citizens. They are also found in the fading paint along the walls of numerous sports gymnasiums and swimming halls across China, many of which were originally built in the early post-1949 period. Recent scholarship has argued that this slogan shows how the new regime concerned itself with “building

³ The slogan (in Chinese: “Fazhan tiyu yundong, zengqiang renmin tizhi”), attributed to Mao Zedong, was first recorded at the inaugural State Sports Commission meeting held in June 1952. “Feng Wenbin zhi kaimu ci” [Feng Wenbin's opening statement], *Renmin ribao*, June 22, 1952.

ideal citizens tempered by physical culture.”⁴ As early as his first publication, “A Study on Physical Education” (1917), Mao had claimed that the strength of the Chinese nation was based largely on the physical bodies of the populace: the (pre-Communist Party) nation, he argued, was weak because “The physical condition of the population deteriorates daily.” In order for the nation to gain strength, it was necessary that people “become conscious of physical education.”⁵ Mao’s famous 1952 slogan and his later swim were thus reflections of his own deep and long-held belief that good health and physical fitness strengthened the body, and that a nation of strong bodies was imperative for the success of revolution and the future of the Chinese socialist nation. The slogan also sheds light on the centrality of sports and physical culture (*tiyu*) in the early People’s Republic of China (PRC), indicating that the development of physical education and sports programs was necessary in order to strengthen the physique (*tizhi*) of every Chinese citizen.

This dissertation traces the political significance of sport to the Chinese socialist state between 1949 and 1966 by examining state-sponsored *tiyu* and the connection between its two intertwined goals: *tiyu* for every citizen, and the development of elite sports programs. Although these two goals complemented each other, a tension also existed between them throughout this period that, depending on overall policy goals and available state resources, meant one was usually prioritized

⁴ Lu Xiaoning, “Promote Physical Culture and Sports, Improve the People’s Constitution,” in *Words and Their Stories: Essays on Chinese Revolutionary Discourse*, ed. Wang Ban (Leiden: Brill, 2011), 171-184.

⁵ Mao Zedong, “A Study of Physical Education” in *Selected Works of Mao Tse-tung Vol. VI* (Secunderabad, India: Kranti Publications, 1990) and available online at: https://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/mao/selected-works/volume-6/mswv6_01.htm. Originally published as “Tiyu zhi yanjiu” in *Xin Qingnian* [New Youth], April 1917.

over the other. *Tiyu* is often translated simply as “sport,” “sports and physical culture,” or even “physical education,” but I have chosen to leave it untranslated for the most part. To be sure, *tiyu* fits all of those English definitions, but in the Mao years it also included general fitness, traditional exercise and martial arts (e.g., *taijiquan* and *wushu*), chess, folk dance, competitive and non-competitive paramilitary activities, collective games, and various kinds of broadcast calisthenics. As far as the leadership was concerned, participation in any *tiyu* activity encouraged by the state was seen as an important part of communist education, and key to transforming the population into an ideal citizenry. By encouraging people to take part in *tiyu*-related activities and programs at all levels, support internationally competitive athletes (or become one), and engage in the popular culture surrounding *tiyu*, officials in the early PRC aimed to cultivate ordinary Chinese citizens who were healthy, strong, and self-aware socialist subjects.

Sports programs in the Mao years also aimed to build a corps of elite athletes who could represent the Chinese socialist nation in international competition. The 1959 film *Two Generations of Swimmers*, produced at the height of the Great Leap Forward, follows several model athletes who work hard to break national and world records in swimming. In one scene, they gather around and sing, “We are swimmers, under the red flag we exercise and grow...and strive for greater glory for the motherland.”⁶ The film speaks to the official role that elite sport and athletes played

⁶ *Shuishang chunqiu* [Two Generations of Swimmers], directed by Xie Tian (1959; Beijing: Zhongguo aolinpike weiyuanhui chu pin, Guojia tiyu zongju tiyu wenhua fazhan zhongxin bianzhi, Zhongying

in showcasing the success of the Chinese socialist state through athletic achievements. Elite sport, as a whole, became a tool through which PRC officials sought to strengthen, at various times, socialist bloc and Afro-Asian ties, and promote the transnational visibility of a successful socialist state. International sports competitions, delegation visits, and exchanges in the Maoist period provided opportunities to gain or share athletic skills, while also fostering improved foreign relations, and advocating a particular brand of socialism. In this context, elite athletic achievements served as tangible proof of the triumph of Chinese socialism.

China during the Mao years is often described as preoccupied by domestic growth and political struggle, and increasingly isolated in foreign relations, particularly after the Sino-Soviet split and the beginning of the Cultural Revolution in 1966. Only in 1971, it is said, with the advent of ping-pong diplomacy and Nixon's subsequent visit to China, did the process of "opening" China to the rest of the world formally begin. But it was precisely during those pre-1971 years, as I show in this dissertation, that Chinese leaders began to use international sport to carve out for China a different position in the world, while at the same time developing general *tiyu* and competitive training programs for the participation of ordinary citizens. Although the spectacular opening ceremony of the Beijing Olympics in 2008 omitted any direct reference to the Mao years, China's recent Olympic achievement is built squarely on the foundation of Mao-era developments in sport.

yinxiang chubanshe chuban [Chinese Olympic Committee publisher, State Sports Commission Sports Cultural Development Center compilers, China Film and Audiovisual publishing house], 2008), DVD.

Several different literatures have touched on the subject of sport in the Maoist period, but none has used *tiyu* as a focal point of analysis. Current historical scholarship often documents the lives of Communist party leaders, political campaigns, and domestic economic and social policies.⁷ Literature on politics and international relations has primarily centered on the growing rift between the PRC and the Soviet Union, culminating with the Sino-Soviet split.⁸ What I show in this dissertation is that *tiyu* bridges the gap between high politics and the everyday lives of ordinary people, including those who were recruited and trained to become extraordinary athletes. Tracing *tiyu* through the Mao years illuminates how the state sought to link nation-building at the lowest level with individual socialist citizenship, and at the highest level with a reconfiguration of China's place in the world. By tracking the ways in which official policies were carried out and the rise and fall of various transnational networks in this particular realm, *tiyu* also suggests different kinds of timelines for understanding the Mao years.

National Humiliation and the Olympics: the Historiography of Sport in China

⁷ Roderick MacFarquhar, *The Origins of the Cultural Revolution, Vols. 1-3* (London; New York: Oxford University Press, 1974-1997); Edward Friedman, Paul Pickowicz and Mark Selden, *Chinese Village, Socialist State* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1991) and *Revolution, Resistance, and Reform in Village China* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 2005); Neil J. Diamant, *Revolutionizing the Family: Politics, Love, and Divorce in Urban and Rural China, 1949-1968* (Berkeley, Calif.: UC Press, 2000); Joseph Esherick, Paul Pickowicz, and Andrew Walder, eds., *The Chinese Cultural Revolution as History* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 2006); Ralph Thaxton, *Catastrophe and Contention in Rural China: Mao's Great Leap Forward Famine and the Origins of Righteous Resistance in Da Fo Village* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008).

⁸ Chen Jian, *Mao's China and the Cold War* (Chapel Hill: UNC Press, 2001); Lorenz Lüthi, *The Sino-Soviet Split: Cold War in the Communist World* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2008).

One of the permanent exhibits on display at the National Museum of China, since it opened in 2011, is “The Road of Rejuvenation,” which maps out the history of the Chinese nation according to the present-day Communist Party narrative.⁹ Beginning with the Opium War, an event that marks the starting point of what is commonly referred to as “100 years of national humiliation,” the exhibit traces national history up through the present. The war with the Japanese is depicted in dark, graphic detail, and the Communist Party is portrayed as savior of the nation, liberating the People. The Great Leap Forward and Cultural Revolution are downplayed into non-events, while the recent economic reforms take center stage. In the main hall of the exhibit a frieze wraps around the walls, illustrating the history chronologically and culminating in a final scene: modern skyscrapers and high-rise buildings standing below the Olympic rings [Figure 2].¹⁰

Recent scholarship on *tiyu* in the Republican period (1911-1949),¹¹ the Reform period (post-1976),¹² and China’s Olympic history¹³ has emphasized the long-term importance of *tiyu* to nation-making. For most countries, international sports competitions are often closely tied to nation-building and national pride. In China, sports competitions and state-sponsored *tiyu* have also carried the burden of

⁹ Ian Johnson, “At China’s New Museum, History Toes Party Line,” *New York Times*, April 3, 2011.

¹⁰ There is an image of the full frieze available on the museum’s website: http://fuxing.chnmuseum.cn/visit_atc_1.php [Last accessed November 18, 2014].

¹¹ Andrew Morris, *Marrow of the Nation: A History of Sport and Physical Culture in Republican China* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004); Yu Chien-ming, *Yundongchang neiwai: Jindai huadong diqu de nüzi tiyu (1895-1937)* [On and Off the Playing Fields: A Modern History of Physical Education for Girls in Eastern China (1895-1937)] (Taipei: Zhongyang yanqiuyuan jindaishi yanjiusuo, 2009); Gao Yunxiang, *Sporting Gender: Women Athletes and Celebrity-Making During China’s National Crisis, 1931-1945* (Vancouver, Toronto: UBC Press, 2013).

¹² Susan Brownell, *Training the Body for China* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995) and *Beijing’s Games: What the Olympics Mean to China* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2008).

¹³ Xu Guoqi, *China’s Olympic Dream 1895-2008* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2008).



Figure 2. “The Road to Rejuvenation” frieze at the National Museum of China.

repudiating a “sick man” legacy related to a national humiliation narrative that existed throughout the twentieth century.¹⁴ By the Mao years, the narrative portrayed a nation that had been victimized prior to 1949 and that now, under the leadership and tutelage of the Party, was victorious.¹⁵ Athletes represented strong socialist citizens who modeled and reflected domestic political change. China’s athletic and political performance at international events during the Mao years was intended to showcase the emergence of a successful socialist state peopled by healthy, athletic citizens and

¹⁴ In the 1920s, sports and physical culture (*tiyu*), and the development of various physical education and exercise programs, became a fundamental component of Chinese nationalism, a relationship that has continued until the present. In contrast to the Euro-American context, modern forms of sport in China grew in tandem with nationalism rather than developing from within it. For more on this, see Morris, *Marrow of the Nation*.

¹⁵ Peter Gries, “Nationalism, Indignation, and China’s Japan Policy,” *SAIS Review* 25:2 (2005): 105-114.

capable of international leadership. It also intended to showcase their ability to overturn the stereotype of a weak nation that had suffered “100 years of humiliation.”

Indeed, recent Chinese success at the Olympic games, and the hosting of the Beijing Olympics, is the often-told story about sport in China. In the western media, this success is often described as only possible because of a highly organized and draconian sports school system, run with the sole purpose of winning the gold, doping, or some combination of these. A journalist writing for the Guardian in 2004 described his visit to a Beijing sports school that regimented athletes from early childhood:

Huge rooms, each with a giant Chinese flag hanging across one end, filled with obedient kids learning to be champions of the future... It's a tough regime for the school's 500 pupils aged between five and 16, all of whom are boarders. They get up at seven in the morning and exercise for half an hour before breakfast. Then they do school work. After lunch, it's physical training from two to five. Then they shower, eat and do their homework before going to bed. They can go home on Saturdays for one night with their families, and the very youngest are allowed midweek visits by their parents, too... The Shishahai sports school is just one small cog in China's Olympic machine...¹⁶

The same article also laments that, as of 2004, accusations of doping have “certainly... been true in the past,” noting that “a number of sports doctors and

¹⁶ Sam Wollaston, “Going for gold,” *The Guardian*, November 10, 2004.

trainers from the old GDR [German Democratic Republic, or East Germany] went to work in China.” Finally, the article states that China’s Olympic focus has primarily been on the “so-called soft medals – in shooting, diving, and table tennis.”¹⁷ What this kind of story ignores is that the state-sponsored school system, sports connections with the GDR, and the development of elite programs in shooting, diving, table tennis, and numerous other sports, began during the Mao period when China was not part of the Olympic movement. As I show in this dissertation, although eventual participation in the Olympic games was on the minds of many PRC sports leaders and high officials in the early PRC, this was not the only, or even primary, purpose of sports programs throughout most of the period.

Like the exhibit in China’s National Museum, and much of the mainstream journalism on sports in China, most of the existing scholarship on *tiyu* in the Maoist period also focuses on elite international sport and approaches the topic from an Olympic angle.¹⁸ Scholars describe how the “two Chinas” (the PRC and the Republic of China (ROC)) issue led to PRC withdrawal from the Olympic committee in 1958 (only re-entering the Olympics in the 1980s).¹⁹ In this rendering, the PRC remained relatively isolated in the world of international sport until ping-pong diplomacy in the

¹⁷ Wollaston, “Going for gold.”

¹⁸ Allen Guttman, *Games and Empires: Modern Sports and Cultural Imperialism* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994); Christopher Hill, *Olympic Politics* (New York, NY: St. Martin's Press, 1996); Xu, *Olympic Dreams*; Susan Brownell, “Sport and Politics Don’t Mix,” in *East Plays West: Sport and the Cold War*, eds. Stephen Wagg and David Andrews (London; New York: Routledge, 2007). For an account of the “two Chinas” from the Republic of China (Taiwan) perspective, see Tang Mingxin, *Wo guo canjia aoyun cangsangshi 1949-1996 (xia bian)* [Recounting the History of Our Nation’s Olympic Participation 1949-1996 (second half of compilation)] (Taipei: Zhonghua taibei aolinpike weiyuanhui, 2000).

¹⁹ Xu, *Olympic Dreams*; Brownell, “Sport and Politics Don’t Mix.”

1970s. Some sports histories published in Taiwan look at the ROC in international sports during this time period,²⁰ while in most Olympic histories the PRC is only discussed in relationship to the “two Chinas” issue, and usually not at all after it withdrew from the committee.²¹ PRC scholarship on sport on this period often hews to the official Party narrative as found at the national museum. Most of this scholarship has been written since the PRC’s eventual return to the summer Olympics held in Los Angeles in 1984, where PRC athletes took home several gold medals and, as such, links recent Olympic success to the post-1949 Chinese Communist Party (CCP) victory narrative.²² These narratives privilege Olympic participation as the main criterion for assessing *tiyu* and whether Chinese athletes were internationally competitive. If sports only mattered for Olympic participation, however, then why did elite sports development accelerate - rather than decline - after the PRC voluntarily withdrew from the International Olympic Committee in August 1958?

The development and importance of *tiyu* in the Mao years extended beyond the goals of nation-making, the Olympics, and overturning the national humiliation narrative. By re-examining *tiyu* programs through the eyes of Chinese participants, commentators, and planners, rather than through subsequent Olympic and national narratives, I argue that *tiyu* served to mold ideal socialist subjects, while

²⁰ Tang, *Wo guo canjia aoyun cangsangshi*.

²¹ Guttman, *Games and Empires*; Hill, *Olympics Politics*.

²² Additionally, many scholars who write about PRC sport in Chinese (and even some of those who also write in English) have backgrounds in physical education or kinesiology, rather than history, and are located within those departments. As a result, there is little to no scholarly engagement with questioning the Party’s chronological narrative or the dominant Olympic narrative. This is problematic when looking at the early PRC because it tends to follow a contemporary national narrative rather than returning to official understandings of that narrative from the Mao years, or understandings of China’s global position in the world before the 1980s.

simultaneously using elite sport to challenge the western dominance of international sport, both before and during the years of China's exclusion from the Olympics. Chinese leaders offered their own, alternative models of sports development and competition. Through numerous non-Olympic international competitions, delegation visits, and exchanges, elite sport strengthened socialist bloc and Afro-Asian ties and promoted the Chinese socialist state. An examination of China's participation in international athletics also provides a window into how the PRC leadership envisioned and marketed its own brand of socialism to the world. This topic requires an exploration of state-sponsored *tiyu* beyond the "Two Chinas" controversy or the triumphal re-entry of China into Olympic competition and hosting.

Tiyu programs and their domestic significance fluctuated quite a bit in the Mao years, as did the role of elite sport in China's geopolitical position. Whereas in the first half of the 1950s, for example, elite sport helped China nurture a close connection with the socialist bloc and demonstrate allegiance to the Soviet Union, by the 1960s the Chinese leadership was far more interested in showcasing athletic achievements as part of a Chinese-led socialism. Thus the humiliation narrative, so closely tied in sport to the Olympics, cannot easily explain the continued development of elite sports programs and international sports exchanges in the years prior to the Cultural Revolution. Although the narrative did continue to inform an ideological belief in the necessity of *tiyu* for the masses, even this also gradually began to slip away as leaders privileged state-sponsored elite international sports programs over all else beginning in the 1960s. In other words, national humiliation is

a concept dating to the early twentieth century that cannot fully explain the changing relationship of *tiyu* in the Mao years.

***Tiyu* Tensions: For the Masses or the Elite Few?**

A central issue explored in this dissertation is the emergence in the Mao years of an often unspoken tension between mass *tiyu* and elite sport. Recent scholarship on the Republican period has shown that prior to 1949 many elite sports training programs remained structurally weak and decentralized, with most elite athletes training in specific college programs or with their own coaches.²³ In the 1950s, however, the distinction between mass *tiyu* programs aimed at creating a healthy and strong populace, and those designed exclusively for elite athletes, became increasingly fuzzy. The introduction of Soviet-inspired programs through the new Chinese work unit system, such as the “Ready for Labor and Defense” *tiyu* system (*laoweizhi*) discussed in Chapter 2, encouraged everyone to become a competitive athlete on a level appropriate to their age and ability. The *laoweizhi* promoted all-around training of the body, patriotism, and, through the work unit, rewarded those who passed various fitness tests with badges and certificates. By the late 1950s, the

²³ For example, Andrew Morris has noted that the majority of Chinese athletes sent to the 1936 Olympics held in Berlin were chosen at a summer camp sponsored by the Chinese National Amateur Athletic Federation (CNAAF) and held in Qingdao, Shandong in July-August 1935 (Morris, *Marrow of the Nation*, 171-173). The CNAAF invited some athletes, while others “were recommended by regional sporting bodies” (171). The final selections were made in “pressure-filled training sessions in Shanghai in May-June 1936” (174). In any case, the athletes that made up the final team roster seem to have come from a variety of different places, such as the army, collegiate, or local teams and associations. In any case, most funding for these athletes and teams came from private donors or similar sources. Recent work by Gao Yunxiang on successful female athletes, such as the famous swimmer Yang Xiuqiong and basketball coach Lu Lihua, also shows how elite athletes and teams in the Republican period relied on their own means or private donations, and that in all cases they remained separate from state-sponsored programs designed for mass participation (Gao, *Sporting Gender*).

work unit was also connected to spare-time sports schools and the new athletic ranking system, and any previous divisions between mass and elite *tiyu* programs became further blurred. In theory, anyone could participate in competitive programs through his or her school, work unit, spare-time sports school, or village cooperative and, if good enough, rise through the ranks and become a nationally or internationally competitive athlete.

However, as anyone who has ever been involved in competitive sport knows, running sports programs takes a substantial amount of time and financial or other resources to hire coaches, purchase equipment and uniforms, and pay for transportation to send players to competitions. When the Great Leap Forward ended, officials reneged on their calls for everyone to participate in competitive sports programs because the state could not afford it. The leadership chose to channel limited state resources into the very best athletes and sports schools – a move that, for the first time since the establishment of the PRC, clearly demarcated elite sport from programs for the masses.

This relationship between elite and mass *tiyu* thus hinged upon the best use of scarce resources. On the one hand, the Maoist approach to national development required the masses to be strong and healthy in order to further the production goals of a successful socialist state and defend it. On the other hand, elite athletes could fulfill political desires of the state globally, by helping solidify China's geopolitical position, while demonstrating to the rest of the world the success of Chinese socialism. The trick was finding a balance between these two. Before the Cultural

Revolution, accusations that elite athletes, coaches, or sports leaders were engaging in “trophyism” was a complaint occasionally found in the pages of official publications like *Xin tiyu* magazine, but rarely was anyone publicly named for doing so. Indeed, more common by the late 1950s were profiles and articles about athletes, as well as photographs of them holding trophies, medals, or flowers; laughing, smiling, or shaking the hands of foreign athletes; shaking the hands of prominent leaders; or posing for the cover of *Xin tiyu*. To be sure, these were interspersed with accounts and photographs of non-elite competitions, with the emphasis shifting along with domestic policies. For example, during the Great Leap Forward official publications focused on everyone becoming competitive athletes, while afterwards articles shifted away from this inclusion of the masses to focus on elite athletes and teams, international competitions, and sports exchanges.

Placing “China” on the World Stage and Marketing Chinese Socialism Through Sport

The development of sport in the Mao years was closely connected to the oscillations of official understandings of Chinese modernity and China’s geopolitical position in the world. Chinese Communist Party leaders understood China as belonging to a global community made up of other nations and peoples with similar historical backgrounds, all engaged in a struggle against colonialism and imperialism – a community often described in secondary literature as the “Third World.”²⁴ This

²⁴ Alexander Cook, “Third World Maoism” in *A Critical Introduction to Mao*, ed. Timothy Cheek (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2010) (especially pages 288-289) and Arif Dirlik, “Spectres of the Third World: Global Modernity and the End of the Three Worlds,” *Third World Quarterly*, vol.

was especially true after the 1955 Bandung conference in which Zhou Enlai propagated the Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence, but the origins of this understanding predate the founding of the PRC.²⁵

As early as 1940, Mao Zedong advocated in “On New Democracy” for finding a “third state” of development that could serve former (Third World) colonial and semi-colonial states in their transition to socialism.²⁶ This transitional “new democratic” state would differ from that found in the Soviet Union by skipping the bourgeois or capitalist dictatorship stage, and moving into a society headed by a proletarian-led, joint dictatorship of all the revolutionary classes. Mao also argued, however, that the Chinese revolution needed the assistance of the Soviet Union in order to succeed. Thus in the first few years of the PRC, the CCP carried out a program of New Democracy at the same time that it also promoted “learning from the Soviet Union” under the policy of “leaning to one side.” The development of Chinese sports programs and sports exchanges in the first half of the 1950s sought to fulfill the

25, no. 1, *After the Third World?* (2004): 131-148. Dirlik notes that the term “Third World” seems to have outlived its Cold War counterpart, the “Second World” (which disappeared with the “triumph of capitalism over socialism” in the 1980s), largely because although “the idea may have been an invention [of the Cold War]... the invention pointed to certain realities that endowed the concept with substance” (Dirlik, 135). Specifically, the use of the term “Third World” during the Cold War was the product of ideological restructuring based on the teleology of capitalism, where the first world was capitalism, the second world was socialism, and the third world was everything else – set on a path towards reaching the first and second world. The problem with the Cold War use of such a term, according to Dirlik, is that it did not take into account a “third world” concept that consisted of a “complex history of the search for potential ‘third worlds’ as developmental and utopian projects” (136). The result was that the term itself marginalized and discounted these searches for alternatives by presuming all societies “had to be headed towards either capitalism or socialism as it existed” (136).

²⁵ Cook, “Third World Maoism,” 289.

²⁶ Mao Zedong, “On New Democracy,” in *Selected Works of Mao Tse-tung* (Beijing: Foreign Languages Press, 19 and available online at https://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/mao/selected-works/volume-2/mswv2_26.htm [Last accessed September 1, 2014].

goals of New Democracy, while also adopting Soviet-inspired sports programs in China.

PRC leaders wanted these state-sponsored sports programs to strengthen the masses of Chinese bodies and Chinese athletes for the purposes of national goals. However, they also envisioned Soviet-inspired sports programs as the correct path to becoming a socialist state, within the context of Soviet-led international socialism. Most Soviet sports programs had their roots in the 1930s under Stalin, and aimed to simultaneously build both mass and elite sport. By the 1950s, most socialist bloc countries had adopted the Soviet sports structure in some form, and they regularly participated in sports exchanges and competitions with one another. China became a member of this socialist world of sport when PRC leaders decided to follow the lead of the Soviet Union in sports development at home, while also participating in regular competitions and exchanges with the socialist bloc under the banner of international socialism. Sport thus helped the PRC establish a geopolitical position in the 1950s as a legitimate member of the Soviet-led socialist bloc.

In the late 1950s, *tiyu* in the PRC shifted away from following the Soviet Union and towards creating a Chinese socialist model in the world of *tiyu*. After Stalin's death in 1953, Mao had become increasingly disillusioned with Khrushchev's policies of de-Stalinization, and in April 1956 he stated that, "we mustn't copy everything indiscriminately and transplant mechanically."²⁷ In June, he further added

²⁷ Mao Zedong, "On the Ten Major Relationships," in *Selected Works of Mao Tse-tung*, vol. V (India: Kranti Publications, 1990) and available online at

that, “Stalin was basically correct and had great meritorious achievements, but he also committed very big mistakes and did many things wrong.”²⁸ PRC sports leaders subsequently toned down calls to adopt Soviet models in *tiyu*. By the time of the Great Leap Forward, which began in earnest in mid-1958, Soviet-inspired sports models remained, but PRC leaders decided to forge their own socialist path in *tiyu* without the help of the Soviet Union.

Parallel to these developments, the Bandung conference held in 1955 was slowly giving voice to an emergent global community of recently decolonized and Third World nations. United primarily (and sometimes only) through a sense of a shared historical struggle against imperialism and colonialism, leaders of these nations sought to create new organizations for themselves, such as the Non-Aligned Movement and the Afro-Asian Peoples’ Solidarity Organization. The PRC leadership professed an early interest in these developments. By 1960, the world of international sport served as one way of forging new relations with leaders and nations, and the PRC leadership began to use sports exchanges and competitions as a means to showcase Chinese socialism. Just as PRC leaders had learned from the Soviet-led socialist world earlier, sports exchanges and competitions could be used to strengthen a particular geopolitical position, conduct foreign relations within an international community, and even market China’s own brand of socialism. The height of these

https://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/mao/selected-works/volume-5/mswv5_51.htm [Last accessed September 1, 2014].

²⁸ Originally from Mao Zedong, “Do not Blindly Believe that Everything Is Good in a Socialist Country,” in Mao Zedong, Waijiaobu and Zhonggong zhongyang wenxian yanjiushi, ed., *On Diplomacy* (Beijing: Foreign Languages Press, 1998), 185-86. As quoted in Lüthi, *The Sino-Soviet Split*, 52.

efforts came with the first Games of the New Emerging Forces (GANEFO), a sports mega-event that took place in Jakarta in 1963, which China and Indonesia promoted as an alternative to the Olympics. Understanding Chinese sports development in the Mao years thus requires readjusting the focus away from a narrative in which China moves along a linear and well-tread path towards socialist modernity and Olympic recognition, and towards one that makes room for a different and less continuous developmental path, particularly after the Sino-Soviet split.

By tracing international sports exchanges and competitions into the 1960s, this dissertation provides a window into how the Chinese Communist Party conceived of, and propagated, its own unique path to modernity within the larger global community. I argue that the state-sponsored development of elite competitive sport existed almost solely for this purpose. The world of sport became part of a major official effort by the PRC leadership to project Chinese socialism, as an alternative (non-Soviet) path to modernity, to decolonized nations. This brand of socialism professed, among other things, Chinese non-interference in a nation's affairs, as well as a commitment to continuous revolution and armed struggle, and it could be successfully adapted in those nations with similar historical backgrounds. Sports exchanges and competitions served as the sites where Chinese leaders would specifically try to foster a shared sentiment between Chinese and non-Chinese leaders and athletes based on common historical backgrounds and struggles against colonialism and imperialism.

Chinese modernity is also built on a narrative that sees China as perpetually underdeveloped, and in the Mao years this was true in the sense of economic scarcity in global capital and material goods. This was especially so in the world of sports, as precious state resources were poured into state-sponsored competitive sports programs for an increasingly small cadre of elite athletes. Duanfang Lu has argued that scarcity also became part of the narrative arc of modernity – in other words, PRC leaders understood Chinese modernity as “a perpetual scarcity not only as a social reality but also as a national imagination.”²⁹ Chinese leaders did indeed promote Chinese socialism to other nations as a good developmental path for those who similarly lacked all kinds of resources. Elite programs and athletes served as the shining beacons for the Chinese nation, and also as examples that the underdeveloped Third World could strive to emulate.

A Note on Chronology

This dissertation covers the early Mao years of the PRC, the 17 years prior to the Cultural Revolution, but it begins with a backward glance at the Republican era. I aim to challenge the common assumption in the secondary literature on sport that 1949 marked a “new China” and thus a “new” world of *tiyu*. On the one hand, 1949 did mark the beginning of Communist rule in Beijing and Shanghai, two centers of sport, and it did mean that some institutional changes took place right away, such as the formation of a preparatory committee to create a future national sports

²⁹ Duanfang Lu, *Remaking the Chinese Urban Form: Modernity, Scarcity and Space, 1949-2005* (London; New York: Routledge, 2006), 10.

organization that ran centralized programs. On the other hand, in these early years, the face of *tiyu* looked much the same as it previously had: many committee participants had played important roles in the pre-1949 period. Most concrete planning and action began in the mid-1950 (for example, in sending a group of representatives to the Soviet Union to study their programs, or beginning to publish *Xin tiyu* magazine), and the first major *tiyu* campaign – broadcast calisthenics – took place in late 1951. The State Sports Commission was established in June 1952. If formal institutionalization was the only focus, or if changes to programs for ordinary citizens were considered, a better date to choose the start of a narrative about state-sponsored *tiyu* in the PRC would be 1951 or 1952. In other words, consistent with other recent research on the early PRC,³⁰ the year 1949 does not mark a single moment or event, but rather a range of changes and events spanning several years.

Moreover, what I show in this dissertation is that tracing *tiyu* in the subsequent 17 years can offer new timelines for thinking about this period as a whole. *Tiyu*, as a topic that spans both high politics and the everyday, provides a window into how official policies played out domestically in one social realm, and thus redirects our attention away from timelines marked exclusively by major political campaigns and foreign policy. Furthermore, tracking elite sport in these years sheds light on the dismantling and building of various transnational networks not often discussed in the secondary literature. These networks suggest that certain years or

³⁰ See, for example: Jeremy Brown and Paul Pickowicz, eds., *Dilemmas of Victory: The Early Years of the People's Republic of China* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 2007). Scholars in this volume intentionally trace their subject matter through the year 1949, arguing that not very much changed in the first few years of the PRC.

periods of time – such as the years between the Sino-Soviet split in 1962 and the start of the Cultural Revolution in 1966 – played a significant role in competitive sport and, by extension, foreign policy.

The reason for choosing 1966 as an endpoint in this dissertation is twofold. With the start of the Cultural Revolution, officially sponsored programs of earlier years came to a halt as official understandings of the purpose of *tiyu* took a dramatic turn away from state-sponsored sport of any kind. Secondly and related to this, from a practical point of view as a historian, the early years of the Cultural Revolution are mostly a void when it comes to archival and secondary sources. As I discuss in this dissertation, competitive sport by 1966 was reserved for the elite, composed primarily of sports leaders, coaches, and elite athletes. With the advent of the Cultural Revolution many of them were sent off for reeducation to the countryside, were put out of work when the system shut down or, in some cases, committed suicide. Very few leaders and athletes have discussed their experiences during these years, and the archives remain largely closed to the public. Mass sport by this point consisted primarily of paramilitary skills training, although these were mostly local activities that did not entail using state resources. In this realm as well, the archives for this time period suggest that either not much happened formally in the world of *tiyu*, or the structure changed such that formal documentation doesn't seem to exist after 1966 or, also likely, these records are still unavailable to the public. Once archival documentation resumes in 1970 and 1971, the official scene had changed once again, and so had China's place in the world. Most sports programs do not seem to have

varied greatly – there was always broadcast calisthenics in the Mao years and elite sport continued to serve national and official goals – but there no longer seems to have been interest in promoting an alternative model to rival the Olympics, and there was no more debate over whom *tiyu* programs should serve. In other words, the Cultural Revolution was relatively short in the world of sport, and by 1971 elite sport looked much as it did in 1966. The clear separation of mass *tiyu* from elite sport was accepted as a given, and central state resources remained squarely committed to top athletes and the next generation of prospects, hand-picked and recruited from around the country.

Chapter Descriptions

Chapter 1 examines the rise of “new” *tiyu* after the establishment of the PRC in 1949, and traces legacies of *tiyu* in the pre-1949 period. *Tiyu* constituted a central pillar of socialist construction and citizenship in the new state. This chapter follows *tiyu* before and across 1949 in order to show that between 1949 and 1952, “new” *tiyu* was built on legacies of the past but also developed plans for the future modeled on the Soviet system. A combination of Communist revolutionaries, experts from the earlier Republican period, and a handful of Soviet *tiyu* specialists directed *tiyu* in this transitional period.

Chapter 2 traces the Soviet and socialist bloc influence on *tiyu* programs in the PRC up until the mid-1950s, focusing on the role of sports exchanges and the adoption in China of the Soviet-inspired “Ready for Labor and Defense” *tiyu* system (abbreviated as *laoweizhi*). The *laoweizhi*, with its focus on an individual’s character

formation, patriotic education, and all-around physical development, became the centerpiece of the government's efforts in the 1950s to use mass *tiyu* in order to cultivate the ideal socialist citizen, who put the socialist collective ahead of individual needs. By striving to pass the fitness standards of the *laoweizhi*, each person could become physically fit and a more efficient worker, which led to better production for the benefit of socialist construction.

Chapters 3 and 4 follow the development of a Chinese-led socialist *tiyu*, which included programs designed for Chinese-specific socialist goals, such as the emphasis on continuous revolution and adhering to the mass line. Officials turned away from relying exclusively on Soviet *tiyu* models, but continued to promote basic socialist ideals, such as collectivism, serving the motherland, and internationalism. Chapter 3 follows the proliferation of *tiyu* activities in everyday life as the state geared prepared for the Second Five Year Plan in 1956. The official definition of *tiyu* broadened to include activities as diverse as daily exercises, ball games, ice-skating, folk dancing, chess, and martial arts. Programs for ordinary citizens received an official boost when *tiyu* associations began to be established nationwide in work units.

Chapter 4 discusses the height of the inclusivity of *tiyu* activities during the Great Leap Forward, with the buildup of competitive sport that culminated in the 1959 National Games. State-sponsored competitive sports programs encouraged everyone to take part, and athletic participation in the first National Games surpassed 10,000. Popular culture around *tiyu* also flourished, as people read *tiyu* magazines,

attended competitions, and watched sports newsreels and films (*tiyu pian*). Through these methods, the government sought to teach people that their active participation in *tiyu* would enable them to become ideal socialist subjects. The second half of Chapter 4 closely examines several films in order to shed light on how official understandings of *tiyu* permeated ordinary peoples' lives through this popular form of entertainment.

Chapter 5 investigates *tiyu* in 1961-1963, beginning with the aftermath of the Great Leap Forward when Chinese leaders, faced with economic disaster, diverted funds away from mass *tiyu* and to elite training programs aimed exclusively at top athletes. National directives promoted centralized elite sport and decentralized mass *tiyu* in a move that for the first time firmly distinguished elite from mass *tiyu*. The masses were envisioned as a reserve army only in need of training in national defense *tiyu* activities. Meanwhile, elite athletes, who now were the only ones to receive precious state resources, served as model socialist citizens at home and abroad, and they became important tools of the state for helping cultivate friendly international and diplomatic relations after the demise of the Sino-Soviet relationship. The second half of Chapter 5 covers the role of elite athletes leading up to and during the first GANEFO. With participation of over 2,200 athletes from nearly fifty nations, these Games challenged the Olympic monopoly while helping PRC leaders position China as the Afro-Asian and socialist leader.

Chapter 6 looks at how Chinese officials used foreign sports delegation visits and elite athletes in the years 1964-1966 as opportunities to propagate a worldview that recognized China as leader of a growing Afro-Asian bloc and the exemplar of an

alternative socialist modernity. Meanwhile, the domestic political situation became increasingly radicalized in the years leading up to the Cultural Revolution. The late 1964 visit of the Japanese women's volleyball team, which had just won the Olympic gold, highlights the Chinese attempt to simultaneously extract the best sports techniques out of their guests while also promoting a morally superior Chinese socialism. Showcasing the spirit and ideals of the Afro-Asian movement to the public through friendly competition, the visits of several African delegations to China in 1966 also included Chinese socialist messages delivered through cultural performances, meetings between leaders, and trips to historic sites, communes, and factories.

These final two chapters challenge the bipolar framework of most Cold War histories by showing how PRC leaders used international sport to assert China as leader of a third bloc of Afro-Asian nations unified around anti-imperialist, anti-colonialist struggle. They also offer insight into how Chinese leaders imagined China within this global community, and how they tried to promote an increasingly radical Chinese socialism to the rest of the Third World.

Chapter 1

Legacies and Transitions: the Institutionalization of *Tiyu*, 1949-1952

“[Under] the Guomindang [Nationalist] reactionaries *tiyu* served only the few, [was] enjoyed by only the few, [and was] cut off from the majority of people. Our *tiyu* will be universal and widespread among the masses [and] serve the people, so that *tiyu* becomes the people’s *tiyu* movement.”

Feng Wenbin, speech at the first preparatory meeting for the national tiyu committee, October 26, 1949¹

“October 1, 1949 marks the birth of the People’s Republic of China [when] the Chinese people gained great victory in the New Democratic revolution. From then, China entered a new period of socialist revolution and construction [and] a new chapter in history was also opened for Chinese *tiyu*.”²

Since the founding of the People’s Republic of China, PRC leaders as well as *tiyu* experts, scholars, and historians have discussed *tiyu* in the terms of the broader Chinese Communist Party (CCP) Liberation narrative. There was *tiyu* before 1949 and then there was *tiyu* since 1949; there was *tiyu* in “old” China, under the Guomindang, and then there was *tiyu* in “new” China, under the leadership of the

¹ “Xin minzhu zhuyi de guomintiyu – Feng Wenbin zai quanguo tiyu zonghui choubeiyi shang de baogao” [New Democratic National *Tiyu* – Feng Wenbin’s report at the National *Tiyu* organization’s preparatory meeting], *Renmin ribao*, October 27, 1949.

² Xiong Xiaozheng and Zhong Bingshu, *Xin Zhongguo tiyu 60 nian* [60 Years of New China’s *Tiyu*] (Beijing: Beijing tiyu daxue chubanshe, 2010), 1. The title of Chapter 1 is “Laying the Foundation of New China’s *Tiyu*.”

Communist Party. In these accounts, *tiyu* in “new” China is always juxtaposed with and fundamentally surpasses that of “old” China in every way. Sixty years later, the Liberation narrative remains strong in PRC histories on *tiyu*. In these histories, before “new” China there was only “semi-colonial” *tiyu* run by “old *tiyu* personnel,” a situation that was (and could only have been) reversed with the establishment of the PRC. As one recent account states, an entirely new *tiyu* system was created in the first ten years after the founding of the PRC. Over the ten years that followed China “rapidly completed the reform of old *tiyu* personnel” by constructing a system anew that achieved “a shift from semi-colonial *tiyu* to new democratic *tiyu*, [and] in turn, a gradual transition to socialist *tiyu*.”³ The year 1949 marks, in other words, the crucial turning point at which *tiyu* became “new.”

In this chapter I examine “new” *tiyu* in an attempt to “bridge the 1949 divide”⁴ that often exists in most secondary accounts on sport in the early PRC, and shed light on the multiple actors and jumbled nature of the *tiyu* world during the first few years of the PRC. Efforts by the early PRC leadership to quickly centralize *tiyu* in the transitional “New Democracy” period of 1949-1952, including planning a robust national structure that would extend to every “liberated” area, indicates that “new” *tiyu* did constitute an important pillar of socialist construction and citizenship in a new state that emphasized mass *tiyu*. Nevertheless, *tiyu* in this transitional period was far more complex than labels of “new” and “old” indicate because it was built on

³ Xiong and Zhong, *Xin Zhongguo tiyu 60 nian*, 1.

⁴ Jeremy Brown and Paul Pickowicz, eds., *Dilemmas of Victory: The Early Years of the People’s Republic of China* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 2007), 6.

legacies of the past, plans for the future, modeled on the Soviet system, and was directed by Communist revolutionaries, a variety of experts from the earlier Republican period, and a handful of Soviet *tiyu* specialists.

Top *tiyu* leaders in these years worked quickly to establish control over *tiyu* activities and mark *tiyu* under the new regime as different from the previous regime – even while *tiyu* goals, programs, and activities continued, in many ways, to resemble those of their Republican predecessors. As Andrew Morris has previously argued, conceptions of *tiyu* in the PRC stemmed from the “almost unquestionable national logic” of the *tiyu* model built during the Republican period,⁵ which the CCP embraced rather than shunned. In other words, the CCP, like the Guomindang (GMD, the Nationalists), understood *tiyu* as an important connection between “the modern, competitive nation-state... and a self-disciplining, healthy population that is physically, mentally and morally fit to be a proper citizenry.”⁶ Indeed, “new” *tiyu*, just as under the Republican government and the CCP in Yan’an, was closely tied to nationalism and citizenship, as well as health, hygiene, and the strengthening of citizens’ bodies. Actual *tiyu* activities on the ground between 1949 and 1951 also continued to resemble those from the earlier Republican and wartime periods: competitions and meets were held in urban areas for popular sports like basketball, and one-time meets (which often included various sports competitions) were held to celebrate holidays or shore up patriotic support (for example during the Korean War).

⁵ Andrew Morris, “Cultivating the National Body: a History of Physical Culture in Republican China” (PhD diss., University of California, San Diego, 1998), 602.

⁶ Morris, “Cultivating the National Body,” 602.

Tiyu workers, experts, professors, and athletes who remained on the mainland after 1949 also played vital roles in the development of “new” *tiyu*, including training the next generation of athletes and leaders. Some became or remained leaders in national *tiyu* organizations. In other words, so-called “new” *tiyu* in the early 1950s retained some of the characteristics of “old” *tiyu*.

Continuities aside, most *tiyu* discourse centered on how to learn from and implement Soviet *tiyu* in the PRC, rather than encouraging a locally built system, and its ideological importance extended beyond the nation-state. Throughout most of the 1950s, the PRC followed the policy of “leaning to one side” – i.e., the Soviet side – both domestically and in foreign relations. The policy accepted the Soviet Union as the leader of the international socialist movement and included a Sino-Soviet alliance in foreign policy, but it also extended deep into numerous Chinese domestic policies related to the arts, culture, education, and sciences, all of which stressed “learning from the Soviet Union” (*xuexi Sulian*).⁷ Beginning in 1949, PRC leaders sought Soviet expertise and advice in building a centralized state structure that resembled that of the Soviet Union. What followed between 1949 and 1956 was an intensive study of Soviet methods and models, which sometimes entailed direct participation of

⁷ Thomas P Bernstein and Hua-Yu Li, eds., *China Learns from the Soviet Union, 1949-present* (Lanham, Md.: Lexington Books, 2011). In February 1950, Chinese and Soviet leaders signed the Sino-Soviet Treaty of Friendship, Alliance and Mutual Assistance, which included a \$300 million loan to the Chinese in order to help economic reconstruction in the country following the devastation of the wartime period. The treaty was part and parcel of the larger Sino-Soviet partnership during these years that included economic relations and also aimed to solidify the PRC’s place in the Soviet-led international socialist movement as well as provide the PRC with a military ally and aid against U.S. imperialism in Taiwan, Korea, and Vietnam. Lorenz Lüthi, *The Sino-Soviet Split: Cold War in the Communist World* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2008), 31-33. Under this strategic partnership more than 12,000 nonmilitary Soviet experts went to China between 1949-1960. Shen Zhihua and Li Danhui, *After Leaning to One Side: China and Its Allies in the Cold War* (Washington, D.C. and Stanford, Calif.: Woodrow Wilson Center Press; Stanford University Press, 2011), 118.

Soviet experts. In many fields, including *tiyu*, deference to the Soviet Elder Brother meant that Chinese leaders copied Soviet models without significant adaptation.

Following a brief introduction to the state of *tiyu* prior to 1949, this chapter thus traces the organizational development and planning that took place over the next three years to institutionalize and promote “new” *tiyu*, which emphasized learning from the Soviet Union in order to build a similarly robust and centrally controlled national structure for *tiyu* in the PRC. Soviet influence also extended to elite *tiyu* at the national and international levels and PRC involvement in international sport during this period primarily consisted of friendly competitions with other members of the socialist bloc. This chapter also discusses how Chinese *tiyu* leaders in this period relied heavily on the advice of Soviet leaders and experts in matters concerning international sport.

Republican *tiyu* and “Red” *tiyu*

Since the early twentieth century in China *tiyu* has been associated with overcoming a narrative of national humiliation in which China has suffered from “victimization” by foreigners.⁸ In Republican China, as elites further developed this narrative that placed China behind that of other nations,⁹ the “sick man of Asia” also helped spur much of the early Chinese interest in developing a modern *tiyu*. Chinese

⁸ Peter Gries, “Nationalism, Indignation, and China’s Japan Policy,” *SAIS Review* 25:2 (2005): 109-110.

⁹ Chapter 2, “The Burden of National Humiliation: Late Qing and Republican Years,” in Paul A. Cohen, *Speaking to History: the Story of King Goujian in Twentieth-century China* (Berkeley, Calif.: University of California Press, 2008). Cohen traces how the basic structure from the ancient story of King Goujian served as a method for elites in the first half of the twentieth century to discern “China’s contemporary experience” (86).

intellectuals in the 1920s participated in a “liberal, democratic *tiyu*” in which they contributed to and shared an international discourse that recognized *tiyu* as a scientific discipline.¹⁰ They also promoted physical education as an important part of teaching individuals how to become modern citizens. Within the national discourse, however, the “sick man of Asia” remained a ubiquitous phrase for describing national humiliation that could be cured through *tiyu*. The inside cover of a 1929 handbook for the *National Humiliation Gymnastics*, for example, stressed the connection between the sick, Chinese body(ies), the humiliation of the nation, and the necessity for gaining physical strength through western science and training methods. A western, muscular man faces a frail, weak Chinese man and says: “Model yourself on my body and who will dare bully or humiliate you? My pharmacist, my physician and I tirelessly worked together to achieve this body, which is the result of vigorous physical training.” The Chinese man replies: “I not only get sick from having a weak body; I also suffer bullying and humiliation. Even little dogs can bully and humiliate me.”¹¹

By the late 1920s and early 1930s, the humiliation narrative and the representation of the national body as a “sick man” had become part of the official discourse of both the Nationalists and Communists.¹² Chinese *tiyu* experts and officials under the Nationalists, most of who had studied at YMCA-affiliated colleges, including the International YMCA college in Springfield, Massachusetts,

¹⁰ Andrew Morris, *Marrow of the Nation: A History of Sport and Physical Culture in Republican China* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004), 47-48.

¹¹ William A. Callahan, “Trauma and Community: The Visual Politics of Chinese Nationalism and Sino-Japanese Relations,” *Theory & Event* 10, no. 4 (2007).

¹² Morris, *Marrow of the Nation*, 125-126.

fundamentally believed that strengthening Chinese bodies and the nation through *tiyu* would eventually help overturn this narrative. Both parties placed physical fitness and sports high on their agendas as ways to strengthen the nation. The Nationalists' New Life Movement (1934) promoted a combination of what they characterized as "Confucian" virtues – propriety, honesty, duty, and a sense of shame – alongside bodily practices of physical fitness and hygiene.¹³ Although the Nationalists officially ruled in the cities and the Communists had retreated to rural areas by the mid-1930s, both parties introduced mass physical education programs across the school system and labor organizations.¹⁴

Although the Nationalists and Communists both encouraged similar military training and mass *tiyu* activities, they differed significantly in their ideological reasoning and adopted models. Nationalists justified *tiyu* in fascist terms. They emphasized the necessity of developing a strong, disciplined *tiyu* program that would cultivate a racial sense of national spirit (*minzu*).¹⁵ For these reasons, many Nationalist *tiyu* experts recommended adopting militarized *tiyu* education programs like those found in Germany and Japan. Cheng Dengke, a professor at Nanjing Central University and the leading proponent of militarized *tiyu* in the 1930s, had spent four years studying *tiyu* in at German National Sports Institute in Berlin before

¹³ Peter Zarrow, *China in War and Revolution, 1895-1949* (London; New York: Routledge 2005), 257; Morris, *Marrow of the Nation*, 122.

¹⁴ Chapter 5, " 'We Can Also Be the Controllers and Oppressors': Social Bodies and National Physique," in Morris, *Marrow of the Nation*, 100-140.

¹⁵ Morris, "Cultivating the National Body," 330. *Minzu* is a term often translated loosely as "race-nation" and stood for an extreme form of nationalism promoted by the state in the 1930s that contributed to the development of many fascist-style programs carried out under the Nationalists in the 1930s.

returning to China in 1933.¹⁶ He argued that for too long “aristocratic *tiyu*” had deprived “the common people” of participation in *tiyu* activities and focused too much on “foreign sports” and “foreign goods” at the expense of an “innate national-essence *tiyu*.”¹⁷

Achieving the national spirit and recognizing an inherent Chinese *tiyu* required *tiyu* programs where people would “connect emotionally” (*ganqing lianluo*)¹⁸ with the military leaders running the programs. For youth, physical education programs included activities such as martial arts, calisthenics, swimming, and gymnastics, as well as wrestling, boxing, and target shooting; advanced training would include further military drills, such as hand grenade throwing, jumping over ditches, and hauling ammunition.¹⁹ These kinds of military-style physical education programs increasingly became popular following the encroachment of Japan and growing anti-Japanese nationalism.²⁰ Liu Shenzhan from the Southwestern Physical Education school in Chengdu, and later a Sichuan Province *Tiyu* inspector,²¹ explicitly argued for a Chinese *tiyu* revolution, led by a strong leader, in the name of

¹⁶ Morris, “Cultivating the National Body,” 318-319.

¹⁷ Originally from Cheng Dengke narration, edited by Chen Weilin, “Sanshi niandai wo tichu ‘*tiyu junshihua*’ yinqi de yi chang lunshan” [The war of words brought about by my promotion of ‘The militarization of physical education’ in the 1930s], *Sichuan tiyu shiliao* 7 (June 1984), p. 7. As quoted in *Ibid.*, 318.

¹⁸ Morris, “Cultivating the National Body,” 331.

¹⁹ Morris, “Cultivating the National Body,” 337. These are part of a list of 12 activities that Cheng enumerated.

²⁰ Morris, “Cultivating the National Body,” 320. Ironically, the Japanese *bushido* tradition and cultivation of national spirit was seen as a model to emulate because *tiyu* experts believe that there was a close connection between Japan’s national and international sporting successes, which included medals at the Olympic games. Morris, “Cultivating the National Body,” 327.

²¹ Morris, “Cultivating the National Body,” 324, 327.

national defense and the *minzu* struggle against “foreign control and oppression.”²²

The ideal citizen coming out of these Nationalist-sponsored *tiyu* programs, it was thus hoped, would be one who not only adored China but who would also successfully defend it in a struggle on the world stage.

Communists understood military training and mass *tiyu* in different terms from their Nationalist counterparts. Andrew Morris has argued that in this period the only difference between GMD and CCP *tiyu* organizations was that “the activities and the balance of commitment” differed rather than “the nature of the activities.”²³ While there were differences in the extent of commitment, framing the red *tiyu* movement as merely part of Chinese nationalism may be too simplistic. For Chinese Communist Party leaders in the Republican period, *tiyu* was not an obsession with building up the race-nation, but rather part of the larger international movement for solidarity among communist countries. The ideal citizen coming out of a Communist-sponsored *tiyu* program would be one who was patriotic but also thought beyond the nation-state – a socialist citizen willing to join other communists in a worldwide class struggle. For example, the stated goals of the Chinese Soviet Republic Red *Tiyu* Committee, established in June 1933 in Ruijin, included joining the Red Sport International and under its leadership oppose both “the reformist Lucerne Sport International” as well as China’s own “bourgeois *tiyu* organizations.”²⁴ Furthermore, the Red Army was

²² Originally from Liu Shenzhan, *Tiyu geming* [The *tiyu* revolution] (Nanjing: Zhongguo ribao, 1933), p. 40. As quoted in Morris, “Cultivating the National Body,” 323.

²³ Morris, “Cultivating the National Body,” 541.

²⁴ The Red Sport International was the Comintern-associated organization founded in 1921 in opposition to the Lucerne Sport International that was founded the previous year by the Socialist International. Originally published in *Qingnian shihua* 2.18 (1 June 1933) and quoted in Zeng Biao,

heavily involved in *tiyu* in its base areas, and not just for the purposes of soldier training. Part of its mission included holding *tiyu* activities and competitions that incorporated students, workers, and peasants from the local population, as well as setting up local clubs at every level of society.²⁵

To be sure, many *tiyu* activities in communist-controlled areas, such as calisthenics and physical education in schools and recreational ball sports, did resemble those found in Nationalist areas. Physical education classes in Lenin elementary schools, for example, looked remarkably similar to those found in Nationalist areas under the New Life Movement. With classes to be held three times per week, the curriculum included such activities as calisthenics, running, and various games.²⁶ Communist base area universities, such as that at Yan'an, looked somewhat like those in Nationalist-controlled areas, in that they offered physical education classes, held athletic meets, trained future teachers, offered students paramilitary training, and even included some athletic teams that traveled between base areas.²⁷

But the focus of this early red *tiyu* movement was on building a strong socialist citizenry as much as it was about building a strong Chinese citizenry, and Soviet-inspired *tiyu* models dominated the landscape. Children in base areas were to receive a patriotic and communist education that would contribute to the

“Gongchandang lingdao xia de zaoqi tiyu zuzhi” [Early CCP-led *tiyu* organizations], *Tiyu wenshi*, no. 2 (1995): 29. See also Morris, “Cultivating the National Body,” 542.

²⁵ Morris, “Cultivating the National Body,” 548-550.

²⁶ Morris, “Cultivating the National Body,” 543-544.

²⁷ Morris, “Cultivating the National Body,” 545-546.

“revolutionary struggle.”²⁸ As part of the communist children’s movement, the central communist bureau resolved in June 1931 to use *tiyu*, along with singing, painting, entertainment, and stories, as methods for educating and raising the political enthusiasm of all children.²⁹ *Tiyu* meets to be held as part of the Lenin School Student Inspection over twenty days in December 1933, for example, included ball sports and calisthenics as well as contests in political knowledge and creating wall posters.³⁰ As at the university level, training for children also included paramilitary components. Mao Zedong, as early as January 1931, advocated *tiyu* activities for boys aged eight to fifteen that included calisthenics and rifles, so they could “stand guard” (*fangshao*), “inspect opium and gambling” (*jiancha yandu*) and “eliminate superstition and fight Buddha (*da pusa*).”³¹ These and similar kinds of *tiyu* activities were carried out by communist youth organizations like the Young Pioneers.³²

Thus, in the 1930s there were similarities in the types of mass *tiyu* activities offered under Nationalists and Communists, in the general structure of their programs (which aimed to centralize all *tiyu*), and in a mutual understanding by both parties concerning the importance of *tiyu* for building a strong citizenry. Nevertheless, ideological differences in their understandings of Chinese nationalism and the position of China in the world, as well as their chosen athletic models, methods of

²⁸ Zeng Biao, “Suqu ertongtuan de tiyu jiaoyu [Soviet Area Children’s Corps Physical Education],” *Tiyu Wenshi*, no 5 (1993): 38.

²⁹ Zeng Biao, “Suqu ertongtuan de tiyu jiaoyu,” 38.

³⁰ Morris, “Cultivating the National Body,” 544-545.

³¹ Originally published in *Xingguo diaocha*, January 1931, quoted in Zeng Biao, “Su qu ertongtuan de tiyu jiaoyu,” 38.

³² Morris, “Cultivating the National Body,” 551.

dissemination, and propaganda, separated the foundations and development of their respective *tiyu* programs.

Elite *tiyu* was not a possibility for the CCP in these years because they did not have the resources to even consider it. The Nationalists, however, had the resources for and continued to show interest in developing elite *tiyu* and sending athletes to international sports competitions. Founded in 1924, the China National Amateur Athletic Federation (CNAAF), with the backing of the Nationalist government, had sponsored several National Games and sent more than 200 Chinese athletes to the 1936 Berlin Olympics.³³ Participation in the Olympics, as well as the Far Eastern Championship Games throughout the Republican era, helped Nationalist Chinese leaders and many Chinese citizens imagine China as part of Asia and within a “world of respected modern nations.”³⁴ But at the Olympics, where Chinese athletes failed to win a single medal, some Chinese leaders concluded that the endeavor was a waste of time and money and only served to demonstrate that China was still a weak nation. A Shanghai newspaper mocked the failure of the Chinese athletes when it published the picture of a giant “goose egg” which represented the “0” medals won by Chinese athletes at the games [Figure 3].³⁵ A frail Chinese man, clearly meant to signal China’s weak status at the games, sits on the egg.

³³ Morris, *Marrow of the Nation*, Chapter 6.

³⁴ Morris, *Marrow of the Nation*, 141.

³⁵ Morris, *Marrow of the Nation*, 180-181. Andrew Morris mentions this image through an interview with a former athlete. I found this copy of the image in Yu Chien-ming, *Yundongchang neiwai: jindai huadong diqu de nüzi tiyu (1895-1937)* [On and off the playing fields: a modern history of physical education for girls in Eastern China (1895-1937)] (Taipei: Institute of Modern History, Academia

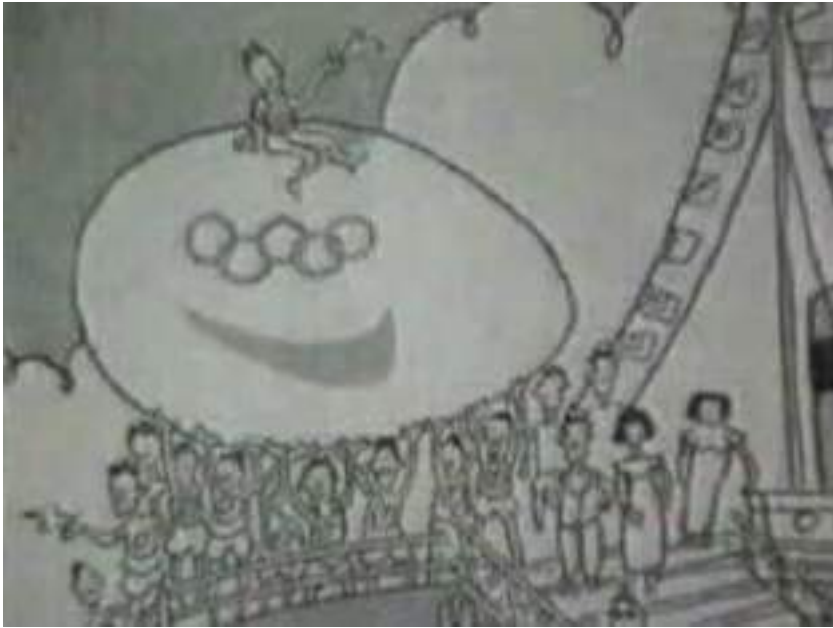


Figure 3. Goose egg cartoon. *Shanghai manshu*, issue 5, September 1936.

Others felt that the Chinese presence in Berlin served simply to show the world that the Chinese nation could compete internationally. Nevertheless, the general wisdom held that the poor athletic performances could be attributed to the sickly Chinese body. Top performances by Japanese athletes – who were seen as racial brothers – seemed to spur hope for some that in the future Chinese athletes could erase the “sick man” image.³⁶

***Tiyu* in the Wartime Period**

With the onset of total war with Japan in 1937, elite sports programs began to decline as attention and resources turned to wartime mobilization. Andrew Morris has

Sinica, 2009), 279 (image 71). Original found in *Shanghai manshu*, issue 5, September 1936. This image of a goose or duck egg is ubiquitous for describing China’s lack of medals at the Olympics during the Republican period.

³⁶ Morris, *Marrow of the Nation*, 181–2.

suggested that a growing Nationalist interest in non-elite *tiyu* began around the time of the failure of the Chinese athletes at the 1936 Olympics.³⁷ Nevertheless, state goals of building mass *tiyu* focused on building stronger bodies in order to create better elite athletes, rather than creating patriotic citizens (as some of their compatriots over the course of the previous decade had wished). Central *tiyu* efforts thus continued to direct financial resources toward elite sport, as suggested by the 300,000 *yuan* plan for the 1937 Seventh National Games (which never took place because of the Japanese invasion in July) at a time when, as Morris notes, *tiyu* leaders “managing public athletic grounds in inland China” were expected to make do on five to ten *yuan* per year.³⁸

Outside of elite sport, it seems that local work places held most of the responsibility for *tiyu* activities during the wartime period. Recent scholarly research on the official work unit (*danwei*) system, built in the 1950s under CCP leadership, suggests that many work unit social services in state-owned enterprises had been built much earlier and expanded in the wartime period.³⁹ In the case of *tiyu* specifically, a Bureau of Ordnance program adopted in June 1939 to “stabilize workers’ lives” called for factories to promote *tiyu* activities and buy *tiyu*-related equipment in order to offer physical training that would build up their workers’ strength.⁴⁰ These sports facilities seem to have been created in some cases so as to attract potential workers. By the end of 1945, sports ground were counted as part of a report from the Ministry

³⁷ Morris, “Cultivating the National Body,” 426-427.

³⁸ Morris, “Cultivating the National Body,” 347-348.

³⁹ Morris L. Bian, *The Making of the State Enterprise System in Modern China: The Dynamics of Institutional Change* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2005), 127.

⁴⁰ Bian, *The Making of the State Enterprise System in Modern China*, 141-142.

of Social Affairs on social and welfare institutions, which covered nearly 1,000 state-owned enterprises in seventeen provinces and Chongqing.⁴¹ During the Civil War, *tiyu* was even used for partisan purposes. For example, mechanics at the Shenxin Number Six textile mill in Shanghai established sports teams as part of a *tiyu* association, which included certain privileges and benefits (it “was said to be a guarantee of future employment at the mill”), as one way of recruiting Nationalist supporters.⁴²

The CCP meanwhile continued to encourage the development of mass *tiyu* activities in their base areas, the height of which appears to have been a sports meet in Yan’an in 1942.⁴³ But the Party placed more emphasis on national defense and building military skills than previously. In part this was because of the war with Japan; by the end of the 1930s the Japanese controlled many major Chinese cities. The turn towards more militarized *tiyu* activities was, however, largely a result of significant changes in Party leadership and an alliance between CCP and GMD leaders that, although it began in 1937 and lasted in name through the end of the war with Japan, spelled the premonition of a future Civil War. Soviet encouragement for Communist leaders to work with Nationalists in the 1920s had also backfired with Chiang Kai-shek’s purge of communists in 1927 and subsequent campaigns to eliminate them altogether. The Long March in 1934-1935 following the collapse of the Jiangxi Soviet gave rise to the leadership of Mao Zedong and, under his rule, CCP

⁴¹ Bian, *The Making of the State Enterprise System in Modern China*, 150.

⁴² Mark W. Frazier, *The Making of the Chinese Industrial Workplace: State, Revolution, and Labor Management* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 88–89.

⁴³ Morris, “Cultivating the National Body,” 548.

leaders at Yan'an turned decidedly away from direct Comintern advice while Mao encouraged the strengthening of guerrilla-based tactics and the Red Army.⁴⁴ Beginning in 1941, many prominent Party members also suffered during the rectification movement when they were accused of having blindly followed the Soviets in the previous decade, thus causing earlier communist failures. Rectification, as one scholar has noted, effectively “suppressed the globalization and internationalizing strain in communism.”⁴⁵ Mao Zedong Thought came to the fore in these same years, key tenets of which included adapting Marxism-Leninism to the situation in China, the glorification of practice over theory, and the need for armed struggle.

The types of *tiyu* activities offered at Yan'an reflected all of these changes and the reality of a situation in which military training and the disciplining of soldiers were the most important goals. In 1937 army troops regularly participated in calisthenics, running, and mountain climbing. When the Yan'an *tiyu* committee was set up in 1939 it focused on militarized *tiyu* activities, including shooting, grenade throwing, steeplechase running while carrying a pack, and horseback riding.⁴⁶ According to Edgar Snow, the average day for a soldier at Yan'an included an hour of exercise each morning, followed by two hours of military drill after breakfast and

⁴⁴ Zarrow, *China in War and Revolution*, 286-287.

⁴⁵ Hans J. van de Ven, “War, Cosmopolitan, and Authority: Mao from 1937 to 1956,” in *A Critical Introduction to Mao*, ed. Timothy Cheek (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 99–100.

⁴⁶ Zi Qi, “Sports Activities in Yenan During the Anti-Japanese War,” *China's Sports*, 1966, No. 6. Quoted in: Jonathan Kolatch, *Sports, Politics, and Ideology in China* (New York, Jonathan David Publishers, 1972), 83.

another two hours of “games and sports” before dinner.⁴⁷ The Party especially encouraged activities like jumping, wall scaling, rope climbing, rope skipping, grenade throwing, and shooting. Snow also noted that Lenin Clubs formed a central part of soldiers’ social and cultural lives, including for *tiyu*. Besides proudly displaying pennants they had won, each club owned ping-pong tables – which apparently also served as dining tables and were often used for play after dinner.⁴⁸ Prominent Party leaders Zhu De and He Long helped administer *tiyu* activities and promoted *tiyu* by setting their own examples. He Long was a basketball enthusiast and Zhu “frequently rose early, climbed the hills around his home, engaged in calisthenics, and from time to time shot baskets.”⁴⁹ Even Zhou Enlai, who had broken his right arm in a horse riding accident in 1939, took up ping-pong –often playing Mao.⁵⁰

Meanwhile, across the country, organized and Nationalist government-supported elite sport largely disappeared. During the wartime period most competitive athletes probably continued to receive some form of training in GMD-run schools and universities, many of which had retreated to the southwest in 1937. In Japanese-controlled areas, such as Manchukuo and later Beijing and Shanghai, elite sports competitions were occasionally held under the puppet and collaborationist

⁴⁷ Edgar Snow, *Red Star Over China: The Classic Account of the Birth of Chinese Communism*, Revised edition (New York: Grove Press, 1968), 279-280.

⁴⁸ Snow, *Red Star Over China*, 280-282.

⁴⁹ Kolatch, *Sports, Politics, and Ideology in China*, 83-84.

⁵⁰ Nicholas Griffin, *Ping-Pong Diplomacy: The Secret History Behind the Game That Changed the World* (New York: Scribner, 2014), 56.

governments and some elite athletes competed in the name of these regimes.⁵¹ Even after the war with Japan ended in 1945 and the Civil War began in full force in 1946, mass *tiyu* took precedent as many Nationalist *tiyu* experts returned again to their fascist ideas of an ordered and disciplined citizenry, pressing for emphasis on activities such as calisthenics at the expense of elite sports competitions.⁵²

During the Civil War, the extent to which elite international sport had fallen from its previous importance in the central government was obvious in the events that transpired at the 1948 National Games and China's near-disastrous participation in the 1948 London Olympics, where the athletes again won no medals. The National Games, held in Shanghai with the participation of 2,677 athletes from 29 provinces (including overseas Chinese), included much fanfare and drew many local spectators. However, even disregarding injuries following the collapse of bleachers at the opening ceremonies, organizers couldn't hide rampant inflation problems that influenced ticket sales, their budget, and the business of local vendors who had rented stadium stalls.⁵³ The Chinese delegation attending the London Olympics, which included just 32 male athletes,⁵⁴ didn't fare much better. Funding for the delegation, which likely came mostly through fundraising, was doomed because of inflation,⁵⁵ and prevented the Chinese delegation from lodging in the Olympic village. The

⁵¹ Morris, "Cultivating the National Body," 558-561, 564. One of these athletes was Li Shiming, a track and field athlete who had competed for Manzhouguo in the early 1930s and was the former teammate of Liu Changchun, the sole athlete sent to the 1932 London Olympics. Li moved to Beijing in 1937 and was shortly thereafter once again under Japanese rule.

⁵² Morris, "Cultivating the National Body," 571-572 and 575-576.

⁵³ Morris, "Cultivating the National Body," 587-589.

⁵⁴ Morris, "Cultivating the National Body," 595.

⁵⁵ Morris, "Cultivating the National Body," 593-594.

delegation also had to prepare their own meals and borrow money to fund the return trip home.⁵⁶

Moreover, the Civil War made it increasingly difficult just to maintain international elite sport relations. Following the 1948 London Olympic Games, G.D. Sondhi, a member of the Indian Olympic Committee, invited Olympic committee members from Asian countries that had taken part in the Games to attend an organizational meeting about forming an Asian Games Federation (AGF).⁵⁷ Modeled on the International Olympic Committee's structure and mission, and with its unofficial endorsement as a regional championship, the AGF would unite members of the former Far Eastern Games (which had disbanded following the Japanese invasion of China in the early 1930s) and the former Western Asiatic Games (which took place once, in 1934, but because of turmoil in Palestine and the second World War never took place again).⁵⁸ Hao Gengsheng, one of the leaders of the Olympic delegation to London (and Secretary General of the China National Amateur Federation under the Guomindang government) attended this first organizational meeting. By the time of the second organizational meeting, however, held in February 1949 and at which the final constitution and details were approved, Hao had fled the mainland for Taiwan. The consolidation of Communist rule over mainland China, which had already begun

⁵⁶ Xu Guoqi, *Olympic Dreams: China and Sports, 1895-2008* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 2008), 48 and 283fn41. Andrew Morris points out that this included "selling the team's leftover food to a Chinese restaurant in London" and "small donations from British well-wishers." Morris, "Cultivating the National Body," 597.

⁵⁷ "The Asian Games: A short history," *Bulletin du Comité International Olympique (Olympic Review)*, November 1966, no. 96: 39-41.

⁵⁸ "History of Other Asian Games Organizations," *Bulletin du Comité International Olympique (Olympic Review)*, January 1951, no. 25: 24-25.

and continued through the official establishment of the PRC on October 1, 1949, meant that no Chinese representative attended the meeting.

***Tiyu* Experts and Trustworthy Cadres: Organizing and Learning From the Soviet Union**

With the establishment of the PRC, Party leadership immediately and officially recognized the development of national *tiyu* as an important goal under the new regime. The Cultural Educational Policy in the “Common Program of the Chinese People’s Political Consultative Conference,” ratified on September 29, 1949, stated that *tiyu* should be part of universal education because it was important to the health of both mothers and children.⁵⁹ At the end of October, the Beijing Youth League and Municipal Education Bureau hosted the first official *tiyu* meet as “new China.”⁶⁰ In order to showcase the “new” in “new China,” the meet focused on the masses (*qunzhongxing*) and included students, workers, peasants, and the People’s Liberation Army, as well as cadres who worked in office settings. It also focused on collective activities, ethnic programs, and every performance aimed to “as much as possible have politics in it” in order to provide “thought education.”⁶¹ Bringing together approximately 30,000 people (including the audience) in Xiannongtang stadium over three days, the meet included exhibition track and field events, basketball, soccer, and women’s softball, in addition to thirty-nine “collective performance programs” (such as calisthenics, dance, and *wushu*). Top leaders, such as

⁵⁹ Shi Ming Hu and Eli Seifman, *Toward a New World Outlook: A Documentary History of Education in the People’s Republic of China, 1949-1976* (New York: AMS Press, 1976), 9-11.

⁶⁰ Yang Zhengyan, “Xin Zhongguo de diyici yundonghui” [New China’s First Sports Meet], *Tiyu wenshi*, 1984/Z1: 24-25.

⁶¹ Yang, “Xin Zhongguo de diyici yundonghui,” 24-25.

Zhu De, Peng Zhen, Ma Xulun and Liao Chengzhi, gave speeches and visiting groups from around China, as well as Soviet experts and Soviet embassy personnel, attended. From the beginning it was thus clear that under the new leadership Beijing was to serve as the center of PRC *tiyu*.

The first preparatory meeting for the creation of a national *tiyu* federation (*qianguo tiyu zonghui choubenhui*), held in late October 1949 in Beijing following the meet, brought together approximately 180 people to discuss the future of *tiyu* organization under the new regime. Both Zhu De and Feng Wenbin spoke about the role of *tiyu* in the new state – both its general goals of creating healthy people, and its centrality in building the new socialist state. Feng, secretary of the Communist Youth League and a former Yan'an *tiyu* leader, stated in an oft-republished report that the CCP and the new regime placed utmost importance on *tiyu*.⁶² The new government would officially regulate the promotion of national *tiyu* with the intention of developing “New Democratic *tiyu*” everywhere in the nation. As part of Mao’s vision of culture under New Democracy, *tiyu* policies would be “nationalistic, scientific, and for the masses.”⁶³ *Tiyu* was explicitly connected to strengthening the quality of physiques (*tizhi*) of “the people” for the purposes of production and national defense.

⁶² “Xin minzhu zhuyi de guomintiyu – Feng Wenbin zai quanguo tiyu zonghui choubeyi shang de baogao,” *Renmin ribao*, October 27, 1949.

⁶³ “Xin minzhu zhuyi de guomintiyu – Feng Wenbin zai quanguo tiyu zonghui choubeyi shang de baogao.” Mao’s vision for New Democracy was first outlined first in January 1940 in “On New Democracy.” Essentially, he believed that democracy in China would follow its own path based on unique national characteristics, and that China should ignore the path of western nations. According to him “new democratic culture” was national, opposed to imperialist oppression, and upheld “the dignity and independence of the Chinese nation.” Mao Zedong, “On New Democracy,” in *Selected Works of Mao Tse-tung Vol. II* (Beijing: Foreign Languages Press, 1977) and available online at https://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/mao/selected-works/volume-2/mswv2_26.htm [last accessed July 24, 2014]).

“Old” *tiyu*, claimed CCP leaders, had catered to the few and ignored the masses while *tiyu* would now serve the people by improving their health and hygiene and thus should grow to be as inclusive as possible. Only after having healthy bodies and a “happy spirit,” stated Zhu De, would it be possible to engage in both production work and the construction of new China.⁶⁴ These goals were outlined in a constitution that declared the mission of the centralized organization to “unite the national *tiyu* community, assist the government in promoting New Democratic national (*guomin*) *tiyu* in order to serve national defense and production” while also investing it with the power to make all formal reports and decisions regarding *tiyu*, including final say over membership and choosing a chairman.⁶⁵ A standing committee of twenty-five, including a chair, four vice-chairs, and a secretary would administer all meetings and deal with all daily business; membership in the committee would be based on appointments submitted through the secretary.⁶⁶

As in other cultural realms, improving the PRC’s position vis-à-vis the rest of the Soviet-led socialist world was also a goal and meant that the development of “new” *tiyu* included significant learning from Soviet *tiyu*. Feng Wenbin noted at the first preparatory meeting that, although Chinese *tiyu* should have “national characteristics”, it also needed to progress alongside advances in *tiyu* in other countries. In order to do so, China should “study the successful experiences of the

⁶⁴ “Zai quanguo tizong choubei huiyi shang Zhu De fu zhuxi jianghua quanwen” [Speech by Vice-Premier Zhu at the Preparatory National *tiyu* federation meeting], *Renmin ribao*, October 27, 1949.

⁶⁵ “Zhonghua quanguo tiyu zonghui choubei weiyuanhui zhangcheng” [National *tiyu* commission preparatory committee meeting constitution] in *Xin minzhu zhuyi de guomintiyu*, comp. Zhonghua quanguo tiyu zonghui choubei weiyuanhui and mishuchu (Beijing: Qingnian chubanshe, 1950), 19-20.

⁶⁶ “Zhonghua quanguo tiyu zonghui choubei weiyuanhui zhangcheng,” 19-20.

Soviet Union's *tiyu*, [so that] China's *tiyu* is a part of the new world sports movement."⁶⁷ Learning from the Soviet *tiyu* experiences was thus not just about creating a better nationalist *tiyu* at home – it was also about creating an appropriately socialist *tiyu*, in the spirit of Soviet-led international socialism, that would help China's position in the world.

Learning from the Soviet Union required face-to-face interaction. In a *People's Daily* article published less than a week prior to that first preparatory meeting in October 1949, Qinghua professor of physical education Mou Zuoyun reported on his recent visit to the Soviet Union. Mou, who had been an elite basketball player in the previous era and represented China at the 1936 Berlin Games,⁶⁸ helped lead the first PRC basketball delegation to Budapest in August 1949 for the second World Festival of Youth and Students and the tenth World University Summer Games. He insisted in the article that China needed to study Soviet *tiyu*. Mou wrote that in the Soviet Union *tiyu* was “very serious” and included a highly centralized, planned, and organized system of implementing of *tiyu* education as “a part of communist education.”⁶⁹ He explained that connected to national goals of “labor and national defense,” all *tiyu* in the Soviet Union, including *tiyu* management,

⁶⁷ “Xin minzhu zhuyi de guomintiyu – Feng Wenbin zai quanguo tiyu zonghui choubeyi shang de baogao.”

⁶⁸ Li Lingxiu, “Mou Zuoyun mengxi wuhuanqi” [Mou Zuoyun dreams of the Olympic flag], *Yanhuang chunqiu*, June 2002.

⁶⁹ Mou Zuoyun, “Wo chuguo lanqiudui lingdui baogao Sulian tiyu qingkuang” [My report of Soviet *tiyu* while going abroad as leader of the basketball team], *Renmin ribao*, October 27, 1949.

construction, education, propaganda, production of sporting goods, organization, and personnel, was directly controlled by a ministry-level council.⁷⁰

Mou was struck by the popularity of *tiyu* within society, and of amateur “spare-time” (*yeyu*) *tiyu* associations such as Dynamo, a well-known sports association based in Moscow, but he was especially impressed by *tiyu* in the Soviet school system. Eleven universities in the Soviet Union served exclusively to cultivate “*tiyu* workers,” including Stalin University (located in Moscow), which had 3,000 students enrolled.⁷¹ Additionally, the Soviets boasted forty *tiyu* colleges, three *tiyu* science institutes, three *tiyu* “guidance” schools, many schools with physical education departments, many two-year *tiyu* instructor training courses, and numerous military *tiyu* schools. But most important, Mou emphasized, was the practical training a student received through these schools – there were many opportunities “outside the classroom” where one could “summarize and study his work experience, in order to further improve and enhance his work.”⁷² Schools at all levels required physical education classes, had their own sports grounds (*yundong chang*), and organized sports groups (*xiaozu*). More than 500 well-equipped public sports grounds “help resolve problems of inadequate equipment in schools.” In addition to holding frequent competitions, schools also offered students a way to gain *tiyu* prestige by passing

⁷⁰ Mou, “Wo chuguo lanqiudui lingdui baogao Sulian tiyu qingkuang.”

⁷¹ Mou, “Wo chuguo lanqiudui lingdui baogao Sulian tiyu qingkuang.”

⁷² Mou, “Wo chuguo lanqiudui lingdui baogao Sulian tiyu qingkuang.”

certain *tiyu* standards in order to earn the coveted “for labor and national defense” (*wei laodong yu guofang*) medal.⁷³

In the early PRC, learning *tiyu* from the Soviet Union took a variety of forms. The most common method was the dissemination of general information about Soviet *tiyu* through newspapers and magazines, the most prolific of which was *Xin tiyu* [New *tiyu*] magazine. *Xin tiyu* published its inaugural issue in July 1950 and often dedicated 25 to 50 percent of each monthly issue in the early 1950s to topics such as the structure of the Soviet system, Soviet *tiyu* theory, Soviet training methods, and successful Soviet athletes. These publications emphasized the importance and centrality of *tiyu* to communism, as they also introduced the central structure of *tiyu* organization in the Soviet Union and Soviet training methods, all the while praising Soviet successes. An article by Mou Zuoyun, which mostly reiterated the same points from the *People’s Daily* article published following his visit less than a year earlier to the Soviet Union, this time included organizational charts that detailed the position of the *tiyu* ministry in the government as well as committees under its leadership.⁷⁴ Details of what each committee’s responsibilities included – for example, the propaganda committee was responsible for promotion of *tiyu* through publishing films, books, and magazines – helped clarify how the Soviet *tiyu* system delegated a range of *tiyu*-related tasks and duties.

⁷³ Mou, “Wo chuguo lanqiudui lingdui baogao Sulian tiyu qingkuang.” This award is further discussed in Chapter 2 of this dissertation.

⁷⁴ Mou Zuoyun, “Jinri Sulian de tiyu” [Soviet *tiyu* today], *Xin tiyu*, July 1950, 12-15.

Earlier successes of Chinese *tiyu* were not entirely ignored in these publications. Ma Yuehan (also known as John Ma), a professor at Qinghua University, and perhaps the most prominent representative of an older generation of *tiyu* experts to remain on the mainland, reminded readers that China had already promoted *tiyu* for fifty years.⁷⁵ Given his many years at Qinghua and deep knowledge of *tiyu* in China, Ma was well known and respected within the *tiyu* community long before 1949. In addition to Ma's own athletic participation in the First National Games held in 1910 in Nanjing, he had studied at St. John's University in Shanghai, twice in the 1920s at Springfield College, Massachusetts (at the time known as the International YMCA College and more famously as the birthplace of basketball⁷⁶), served as chair of the physical education department at Qinghua, and had even been one of the leaders of the Chinese delegation to the 1936 Berlin Olympics.⁷⁷ Ma had already imparted his knowledge to subsequent generations of students and was familiar to many. Basketball expert Mou Zuoyun not only knew Ma from training for the Berlin Olympics; he also later married Ma's daughter and followed Ma's advice to attend Springfield College, which he did in 1947.⁷⁸ It was likely a combination of personal connections and Ma's decades of experience in promoting *tiyu* at all levels

⁷⁵ Ma Yuehan, "Women dui tiyu yingyou de renshi" [Our knowledge of *tiyu*], *Xin tiyu*, July 1950, 18-20.

⁷⁶ Springfield College Library, "Time of Springfield College History" <http://www3.spfldcol.edu/homepage/library.nsf/EB4F2767C562479445256BE5002DAE84/A60C8E94D0B28758852570740071F844> [last accessed November 2013].

⁷⁷ Qinghua daxue Ma Yuehan jinian wenji bianjizu, ed., *Ma Yuehan jinian wenji* [Ma Yuehan Commemorative Collection of Works] (Beijing: Zhongguo wenshi chubanshe, 1998), 339-340.

⁷⁸ Li Lingxiu, "Mou Zuoyun mengxi wuhuanqi."

that contributed to his being chosen as a vice-chair for the preparatory committee for the new national *tiyu* organization, the All-China Sports Federation (ACSF).

Ma introduced nothing particularly new in his article when he reiterated connections between *tiyu*, science, and education that had been taken for granted by many Chinese experts since at least the 1920s. According to Ma, *tiyu* was vital because it used scientific methods of exercise so as to bring about the healthy physiques of people and “cultivate a person’s outstanding quality.”⁷⁹ Science was, for him, the foundation of all *tiyu*, the principles of which were intrinsically related to those found in biology, physiology, psychology, sociology, biology, chemistry, and other sciences. *Tiyu* promoted the growth and development of bones and muscles of the body (*shenti*), as well as strengthened the overall health of all internal organs and nerves. Finally, *tiyu* was also a crucial part of education because it could help people become accustomed to certain types of actions and movement, raise their spirits and develop a collective mindset. *Tiyu* competitions were useful for teaching youth cooperation and courage, and the difficult training necessary to participate would help youth develop a “revolutionary spirit” by learning “not to fear [and] not cower.”⁸⁰ In other words, Ma’s views on the significance of *tiyu* did not stray far from ones that had been around for decades that emphasized physical education as a means to develop healthier, stronger, and collective-minded citizens.

Ma certainly wasn’t the only member of the older generation sharing his *tiyu* knowledge in these early issues. Xia Xiang, another Qinghua professor, wrote an

⁷⁹ Ma, “Women dui tiyu yingyou de renshi,” 18.

⁸⁰ Ma, “Women dui tiyu yingyou de renshi,” 20.

article in the first issue of *Xin tiyu* concerning “the influence of movement on physiology.”⁸¹ Xia was a former pole vault athlete who had served as assistant coach of the track and field team at the Berlin Olympics alongside Ma, who was the head coach. Xia received his master’s degree in the 1940s from Springfield College and spent time at the University of Iowa and Columbia University before returning to China during the Civil War.⁸² Xia explained to *Xin tiyu* readers in technical terms the physiological connections between bodily movements as found in *tiyu* activities and the effect this movement had on muscles, breathing, circulation, and other parts of the body.⁸³

Older generation *tiyu* experts also made up most of *Xin tiyu*’s editorial board, including Yanjing University professor Lin Qiwu and Peking University professor Guan Yushan, both of who had studied at Columbia in the late 1930s, and Beijing Normal University assistant professor Su Jingcun. Prior to 1949, Lin and Guan had each separately coached famous basketball teams and, in the early issues of *Xin tiyu*, they each contributed articles. Lin, for example, teamed up with Mou Zuoyun to produce a series of articles on basketball regulations,⁸⁴ and Guan wrote about the knowledge and value of basketball.⁸⁵ Su was a specialist in school physical education who primarily wrote articles about how to reform *tiyu* in middle and primary schools.

⁸¹ Xia Xiang, “Yundong duiyu shengli de yingxiang [The influence of movement on physiology],” *Xin tiyu*, July 1950, 21-22.

⁸² Zheng Jisheng, “Xia Xiang,” *Xuexiao tiyu*, May 1988, 79.

⁸³ Xia Xiang, “Yundong duiyu shengli de yingxiang,” *Xin tiyu*, July 1950, 21.

⁸⁴ For example: Lin Qiwu and Mou Zuoyun, “Lanqiu guize shili jieda” [Basketball rules, examples and answers], *Xin tiyu*, July 1950, 38-39, and “Lanqiu guize shili jieda (xu)” [Basketball rules, examples and answers (continued)], *Xin tiyu*, August 1950, 37-38.

⁸⁵ Guan Yushan, “Lanqiu yundong de jiazhi he renshi” [Basketball’s value and knowledge], *Xin tiyu*, August 1950, 11-13.

In 1940 he had graduated from and then subsequently taught in Beijing Normal University's Physical Education department, as well as at the National Martial Arts *Tiyu* College, during the wartime period on subjects ranging from physical education theory and sports history to statistics and exercise physiology.⁸⁶

This older generation of experts penning most of the articles often couched their expertise within Party-approved language and narrative.⁸⁷ Ma's article opened with "When we think about it, what have been the results of promoting *tiyu* over the last fifty years?" To which he rhetorically answered, "To serve only a few people. Naturally there have been some advances in skills, but [these] also advanced slowly due to the limitations of old society's reactionary rulers [and] at the same time also because we did not have the thought to serve the people."⁸⁸ At the very end of the article he also added that "the Soviet Union and other New Democratic countries, in enthusiastically developing the peoples' *tiyu* have gained great achievements" and that *tiyu* workers should "make efforts to learn from Marxism-Leninism [and] Mao Zedong Thought."⁸⁹

Xu Yingchao, who had studied at Springfield College in the 1920s and served as a delegation leader to the Berlin Olympics, and was now vice-chair of the ACSF alongside Ma, similarly argued in favor of criticizing "old" *tiyu*. The very nature of

⁸⁶ Re Xue, "Su Jingcun," *Xuexiao tiyu*, June 1988, 79. BNU was known as Beiping Normal in 1939-1940 and from 1940-1943 as Xibei (Northwest) College.

⁸⁷ This use of Party-approved language stemmed from Thought Reform campaigns in the early PRC. For more on Thought Reform, see Aminda Smith, *Thought Reform and China's Dangerous Classes: Reeducation, Resistance, and the People* (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2012). By using such language to discuss *tiyu*, intellectuals and experts contributed to the Party's efforts to try and transform them "into members of the People" (6).

⁸⁸ Ma, "Women dui tiyu yingyou de renshi," 18.

⁸⁹ Ma, "Women dui tiyu yingyou de renshi," 20.

old *tiyu*, he stated, was problematic because it had been built primarily under the auspices of Chinese students who had studied at YMCA schools and in Japan, and later in the 1930s by students who had studied in Germany or – the vast majority – in the United States. As a result, nearly all modern *tiyu* had been built on ideas coming from the U.S., an “imperialist country” whose politics, economy, military, and education, including *tiyu* education, “served the capitalist classes.”⁹⁰ Clearly, according to Xu, U.S. imperialism in Chinese *tiyu* had “not hoped to make Chinese people’s bodies healthy [but] on the contrary, *tiyu* was a tool of [the U.S.] cultural invasion (*wenhua qinlve*), causing Chinese people to only know that American equipment was good, [American] athletes the fastest, [American] basketball number one in the world, [and that America has] the greatest strength...as a result, [the Chinese believed that] all of America is good [and] willingly accepted their enslavement (*nuyi*).”⁹¹ The Guomindang, according to him, had only served to further these beliefs. Xu insisted that new *tiyu*’s development had to be built on the “correct reform” (*zhengque gaizao*) of this old *tiyu*, and criticism of old *tiyu*’s problems was a necessary and important component of this process for all *tiyu* workers regardless of age. Xu also called on all old *tiyu* workers to intensively study Marxism-Leninism and Mao Zedong Thought and, while acknowledging the “very rich” legacies of physical exercise in China (by which he meant pre-modern *tiyu* activities like shadowboxing and wrestling), he advocated drawing upon the “advanced experiences

⁹⁰ Xu Yingchao, “Lun gaizao jiu tiyu de liangge wenti” [Discussion of two issues concerning the reform of old *tiyu*], *Xin tiyu*, July 1950, 10.

⁹¹ Xu, “Lun gaizao jiu tiyu de liangge wenti,” 10.

and help of the Soviet Union and the New Democratic fraternal countries (*xiongdì guojia*)” for further guidance.⁹²

Yet although these *tiyu* experts of the older generation were relied upon for their decades of experience and knowledge, and many had been present at the preparatory meeting in 1949, they were also seen in the eyes of some Party leaders as less trustworthy than fellow cadres and thus requiring supervision. Ma, Xu, and Wu Yunrui were chosen as vice-chairs of the ACSF. Wu, considered an important *tiyu* expert in the 1920s and 1930s, had been a part of the Shanghai YMCA Physical Education Training Program in 1919 and written for the YMCA journal *Association Progress*.⁹³ He had also studied anatomy and physiology at the University of Chicago and gone to Columbia University, where he graduated from the Physical Education Department with a master’s degree in early 1927.⁹⁴ At the first preparatory meeting Wu’s fellow representative from Nanjing, Zhang Huilan, was one of the most prominent female *tiyu* experts from the Republican period. Zhang had worked for many years in various higher education positions and physical education departments in Republican China, wrote prolifically about the importance of *tiyu* for women, and received a Ph.D. from the University of Iowa in the 1940s.⁹⁵

⁹² Xu, “Lun gaizao jiu tiyu de liangge wenti,” 11.

⁹³ Morris, *Marrow of the Nation*, 51.

⁹⁴ Xie Lingyu, “Wu Yunrui,” *Xuexiao tiyu*, February 1987, 79. After his master’s, Wu headed to Europe for nine months.

⁹⁵ “Zhang Huilan (1898-1996): The ‘Mother of Women’s Modern Physical Education’” in Gao Yunxiang, *Sporting Gender: Women Athletes and Celebrity-Making during China’s National Crisis, 1931-1945* (Vancouver, Toronto: UBC Press, 2013), 17-57. According to Gao, Zhang’s fate in post-1949 China was relatively good primarily because during the Republican period she frequently negotiated a position for herself that worked to her advantage and female *tiyu* professionals in general, in what at the time was a largely male-dominated profession. She remained in top leadership positions

Hierarchically above vice-chairs Ma, Xu, and Wu in the Federation, however, sat the chair and loyal Party member Feng Wenbin, and alongside them was fellow vice chair and secretary general of the new Federation Rong Gaotang. Rong was likely chosen for his loyalty as a communist cadre rather than his somewhat limited *tiyu* experience as a basketball player in the late 1920s and early 1930s. Born in Hebei in 1912 to “a peasant family,” Rong had attended Qinghua’s foreign languages department, became a member of the basketball team in 1932, and a year later entered the Communist Youth League.⁹⁶ At a time when Chiang Kai-shek carried out regular communist purges, this move landed him in a Hebei jail for two and a half years on accusations of treason. But jail time only served to provoke him more: when he was released in 1936 he became a Party member and the following year became secretary of the Party’s grassroots branch.⁹⁷ Rong spent a year at Yan’an University in 1938, and joined the Eighth Route Army in 1941 – where he spent the next five years working alongside Zhou Enlai as Organization Department Secretary of the Party’s Nanfang Bureau. During the Civil War Rong was given other top administrative positions – including first superintendent of education for the Central Communist Youth League – and in April 1949 he became Secretary-General of the New

after 1949 because “her liberal nationalism and alienation from the militaristic party state made her choice [to remain on the mainland] easier” (54).

⁹⁶ Rong Gaotang, *Rong Gaotang tiyu wenlun xuan* [Selections from Rong Gaotang's *tiyu* literature and theory] (Shanghai: Huadong shifan daxue chubanshe, 1992), 327–330.

⁹⁷ Rong, *Rong Gaotang tiyu wenlun xuan*, 327–330. Rong kept a low public profile by traveling with a drama troupe until they reached Xi’an in summer 1938, whereupon he was introduced to the Eighth Route Army and sent to Yan’an for study at the Marxism-Leninism Institute. Rong served in several prominent posts in youth branches of communist “special committees” in Sichuan after Yan’an.

Democratic Youth League. Well-versed in *tiyu* he may not have been, but by 1949 Rong was a decorated cadre and clearly held the trust of top Party leadership.⁹⁸

Some *tiyu* leaders chosen by the Party had no experience in the world of *tiyu* at all. The older generation of professors on *Xin tiyu*'s editorial board (Ma, Ling, Guan, and Su) certainly had enough combined *tiyu* expertise, but vetting content was instead left to editor-in-chief Hao Keqiang, a twenty-year-old Party member with no prior knowledge or experience in *tiyu*. Hao had been the editor of an underground anti-GMD publication as a student at Jiaotong University in Shanghai prior to the Communist victory. In 1950 he was sent to study at the Central Communist Youth League school. Hao was approached by Rong Gaotang in 1949 to take on the role as editor of *Xin tiyu*, but he was apparently unenthusiastic about this appointment and years later bluntly stated that he was “unhappy” and “didn't understand *tiyu*.”⁹⁹ Nevertheless, he dutifully moved to Beijing and accepted the position.

Soviet *tiyu* experts also became involved, following Chinese leaders' requests to send Soviet experts and advisers from many fields to China.¹⁰⁰ The Beijing municipal *tiyu* committee reported in June 1950 that they had already invited Soviet expert Da-la-suo-fu to hold a presentation and two seminars, and were requesting him

⁹⁸ Rong, *Rong Gaotang tiyu wenlun xuan*, 327-330.

⁹⁹ Tang Lei, “‘*Xin tiyu*’ muji zhongguo tiyu de suxing” [‘*Xin tiyu*’ raises the awakening of China’s *tiyu*], *Zhongguo xinwen zhoukan* [China Newsweek], February 25, 2008, 53-54.

¹⁰⁰ For a summary of Soviet experts in China in the early 1950s (including request made and numbers), “Chapter 5: Helping-Hand Diplomacy: Soviet Experts in China” in Shen and Li, *After Learning to One Side*, 117-134.

to give frequent lectures.¹⁰¹ When the Chinese Changchun railway administration (*Zhongchang tielu guanli ju*) was established in May 1950, the Soviet Union provided eight *tiyu* experts to help establish activities for it. Over the next year, these experts helped organize sports meets and teams at the central and local grassroots levels, as well as led training sessions and introduced Soviet *tiyu* models. This included a cadre training session held in January 1951 during the workers' production leave in which workers, through both classroom and practical training, received an introduction to Soviet *tiyu* and studied military *tiyu*, the Soviet "Ready for Labor and Defense" system,¹⁰² ball sports, and track and field skills.¹⁰³ The eighty-nine students who graduated from this session became the backbone of *tiyu* cadres and directors of grassroots activities for the bureau, and helped organize spare-time cadre training sessions in Shenyang, Harbin, Dalian, Mudanjiang (Heilongjiang), and Haila'er (Inner Mongolia).¹⁰⁴ Soviet experts also introduced a "1, 2, 3" elimination system model for holding competitions in which athletes and teams competed at the lowest local level ("1") and only the best proceeded to the next level. By December 1951

¹⁰¹ BMA 185-001-00002: Beiti fenhui changweihui siwu yue fen gongzuo jiankuang [Beijing *tiyu* standing committee April and May work briefing], May 31, 1950.

¹⁰² This was a comprehensive system for all-around physical training and patriotic education that is discussed in detail in Chapter 2 of this dissertation.

¹⁰³ Li Ji, "Zai Sulian tiyu zhuanjia de reqing bangzhu xia Zhongchang tielu tiyu yundong pinbo fazhan" [Under the enthusiastic help of Soviet *tiyu* experts, the Chinese Changchun railway's sports work hard to develop], *Xin tiyu*, December 1951, 31.

¹⁰⁴ Li, "Zai Sulian tiyu zhuanjia de reqing bangzhu xia Zhongchang tielu tiyu yundong pinbo fazhan," 31. According to the articles, the graduates of these district level cadre training sessions then held training sessions at a local level and so on and so forth.

more than 5,200 athletes and 85,000 spectators had participated in competitions through this system.¹⁰⁵

Most importantly perhaps, Vice Minister of Culture and Education for the Chinese Changchun railway district council Li Ji credited Soviet experts as having finally brought concrete plans instead of just “doing whatever” (*xiang sha zuo sha*) as had been done in the past.¹⁰⁶ This included detailed plans for the year and each season, which included specific objectives such as aiming to use the locomotive (*huochetou*) sports grounds to train between 30 and 40 *tiyu* directors each month. Furthermore, these experts impressed Chinese colleagues with their work ethics and dedication – and it probably helped that at least one of them “very quickly understood common customs of the Chinese people [and] learned a lot of Chinese.”¹⁰⁷

Delegations of Chinese *tiyu* officials and athletes also traveled between the Soviet Union and the PRC and served to boost interest in emulating Soviet *tiyu* models. In late August 1950 the first official Chinese *tiyu* delegation, a group of twelve *tiyu* experts and leaders, was sent to the Soviet Union to study *tiyu* organizations, training, schools, and structure.¹⁰⁸ Led by Xu Yingchao, the delegation spent three months attending athletic events and visiting Moscow Sports University, the Central Sports Research Center, factories in Leningrad and Kiev, schools, and

¹⁰⁵ Li, “Zai Sulian tiyu zhuanjia de reqing bangzhu xia Zhongchang tielu tiyu yundong pinbo fazhan,” 32.

¹⁰⁶ Li, “Zai Sulian tiyu zhuanjia de reqing bangzhu xia Zhongchang tielu tiyu yundong pinbo fazhan,” 32.

¹⁰⁷ Li, “Zai Sulian tiyu zhuanjia de reqing bangzhu xia Zhongchang tielu tiyu yundong pinbo fazhan,” 32.

¹⁰⁸ “Fu su tiyu fangwentuan qicheng” [The *tiyu* delegation visiting the Soviet Union sets off], *Xin tiyu*, September 1950, 5.

public sports facilities.¹⁰⁹ Wang Ke, the vice chair of the delegation sent to the Soviet Union and representative for the PLA, highlighted the central importance of Soviet-style *tiyu* to socialist construction and protecting the country. The Chinese *tiyu* delegation reportedly felt warmly welcomed by the Soviet people, who shouted slogans of support, such as “Long live the eternal friendship of the Soviet and Chinese people!” and “Long live Mao Zedong!” representing a “great spirit of internationalism” (*weida de guojizhuyi jingshen*).¹¹⁰

More importantly, once the Chinese delegation returned home, they shared what they had learned with local *tiyu* workers and committees. The representative group briefed the Beijing municipal *tiyu* committee both on the importance of everyone participating in exercise, as well as the necessity of having a large sports stadium with the capacity for 100,000 and an indoor sports arena with a capacity of 10,000.¹¹¹ Such advice was taken seriously; a plan from the Beijing Municipal Education Bureau in mid-1952 proposed spending nearly 23 billion *yuan* to build or renovate sports stadiums, fields, and equipment for children and adults.¹¹² The plan for children’s sports fields included building between three and five in each district of the city and eight in the suburbs for a total of thirty-two fields at approximately 3,000 square meters each. Larger stadiums and fields were planned for adults, such as a

¹⁰⁹ “Zhongguo fu su tiyu fangwentuan huiguo dijing” [The Chinese delegation that visited the Soviet Union arrives in Beijing], *Xin tiyu*, December 1950, 4.

¹¹⁰ “Fangsu guangan” [Impressions from visiting the Soviet Union], *Xin tiyu*, December 1950, 13-14.

¹¹¹ Zhang Qing, “Huiyi Beijingshi tiyu fenhui de chujian” [Remembering the beginnings of building the Beijing municipal *tiyu* committee], *Tiyu wenshi*, 1984(Z1), 13-14.

¹¹² BMA 002-004-00126: Shi jiaoyuju guanyu xiujian ertong he chengren tiyu chang de baogao ji shifu de pifu [Municipal Education Bureau report on the construction of children and adult sports stadiums and city approval], September 23-October 4, 1952.

15,000 square meter one in Xidan, and 25,000 square meter ones in Dongdan, Chongwen, and Xuanwu districts. This included an ambitious proposal to turn Ditan park or the Lama Temple into a 25,000 square meter public sports grounds – a proposal that, without any explanation, was obviously (and probably thankfully in retrospect, given the historic and cultural significance of the two sites) turned down.

Foundations for the Future: Mass *Tiyu* at the Local Level

The general aim of new *tiyu* was to build a central structure that improved and supported programs for everyone. To carry out such a feat, leaders aimed to more permanently adopt the organizational structure of the Soviet *tiyu* system in which the national committee would oversee all development through the help of leaders and local *tiyu* committees (*tiyu weiyuanhui*, often abbreviated *tiwei*) at various organizational, regional, and municipal levels. A nomination list for membership to the ACSF from the second meeting of the standing committee held in January 1950 included fifteen representatives from the Peoples' Liberation Army, sixteen from various central committees and bureaus (including education, women, and youth), six “special” representatives from *tiyu* circles (professors and teachers), two from *wushu*, one “biology and hygiene expert” (a biologist from Peking University), and five or six members from each of the big regions (government and committee officials from Huadong, Dongbei, Xibei, etc).¹¹³ The preparatory committee also sent out applications to help find reporters for the magazine *Xin tiyu*, whose purpose would be

¹¹³ SMA B126-1-1: Zhonghua quanguo tiyu zonghui weiyuanhui timing [Nominations for the All-China Sports Federation], October? 1949.

to report on all kinds of *tiyu* activities in their localities, as well as introduce *tiyu* organizations and the service and experiences of *tiyu* workers in each area and reflect on general opinions towards the publication as a whole.¹¹⁴

Municipal and provincial *tiyu* committees, directly under the guidance of the administrative regional areas, ideally would be responsible for carrying out centralized programs and standards at the lower levels. A chart published in the first issue of *Xin tiyu* reported that between November 1949 and July 1950 branches or preparatory branches of the national *tiyu* committee had been officially organized in ten municipalities and six provinces, as well as in the Lüda administrative region (with headquarters in Dalian) and Inner Mongolia.¹¹⁵ An annotation at the bottom of the chart noted that five additional preparatory committees had also just been established and another was in the midst of doing so.¹¹⁶ Within these committees, the structure also mirrored that at the national level, with specific subcommittees responsible for holding competitions, propaganda and teaching (*xuanjiao*), coaching and advising (*fudao*), and research work.¹¹⁷

¹¹⁴ SMA B126-1-1: Zhonghua quanguo tiyu zonghui chouweihui xintiyu chubanshe tongxunyuanyuan gongzuo jianyue [All-China Sports Federation preparatory committee *Xin tiyu* press correspondent work], October? 1949. These applications also reflect an effort to find reporters who had writing experience, a “cultural” level (*wenhua chengdu*) as well as political experience (*canjiaguo shenme zhengzhi zuzhi*).

¹¹⁵ “Zhonghua quanguo tiyu zonghui choubei weiyuanhui geji zuzhi tongjibiao” [Statistics of all levels of organization of the All-China Sports Federation preparatory committee], *Xin tiyu*, July 1950, 37. The ten municipalities: Beijing, Tianjin, Harbin, Xi’an, Shanghai, Jinan, Qingdao, Suzhou, Wuhan, and Changsha. The six provinces: Shanxi, Songjiang, Chaha’er, Liaodong, Hubei, and Jiangxi.

¹¹⁶ “Zhonghua quanguo tiyu zonghui choubei weiyuanhui geji zuzhi tongjibiao.” These were: Zhongnan administrative area, Qiqihar, Jilin, Xinjiang, Lanzhou, and Dongbei administrative area (in the process of being established).

¹¹⁷ BMA 185-001-000002: Zhonghua quanguo tiyu zonghui Beijingshi fenhui zhixing zhangcheng [All-China Sports Federation Beijing branch temporary constitution], June 4, 1950.

As at the national level, older generation *tiyu* personnel and Party cadres comprised the leadership of municipal committees. The Beijing municipal committee was officially established in April 1950 under the leadership of chair Hou Junyan, a cadre who had attended the Party school at Yan'an but who does not appear to have had any previous experience in *tiyu*. However, one of four vice-chairs on the committee, Li Fenglou, a soccer coach and former Republican period elite soccer player who had participated in the 1933 National Games, graduated from Beijing Fu ren (Catholic) University, traveled with the national team to Japan in 1936, and become a professor at Fu ren in 1941. Meanwhile vice chairs included long-time *tiyu* activists and experts Liang Zhaoan and Wu Bangwei. Liang, a Guangdong native and graduate of Dongwu (Soochow) University, was also a graduate of Springfield College in the 1920s and had been physical education, or P.E., director of the Shanghai YMCA for four years. Wu had been an even more prominent *tiyu* leader in the Republican period. As a graduate of Nanjing Normal University, Wu had gone on to serve as P.E. director at schools in Fujian and Nanjing as well as St. John's, Guanghua, and Jinan universities in Shanghai.¹¹⁸ In 1930 he had been named as director of the Jiangsu Provincial Athletic Grounds at Zhenjiang and given a substantial amount of money by the Nationalist government for their upkeep.¹¹⁹

As part of larger efforts to organize, plan, and centralize a nationwide *tiyu* system in these first few years, two of the primary goals for these more local-level

¹¹⁸ SMA B126-1-3: Shanghaishi dazhuan tiyu jiaoshi lianyihui huiyuanlu [Shanghai Federation of College Physical Education Teachers membership directory], September 1949.

¹¹⁹ Morris, *Marrow of the Nation*, 107.

tiyu organizations included gathering information on the current programs in place and increasing opportunities for training *tiyu* workers and cadres – and especially in schools. In Shanghai, local schools completed surveys about their current administration, physical education course content and frequency, and other types of *tiyu*-related activities that took place outside the formal course setting.¹²⁰ Although the results of these surveys suggest that school programs and athletic meets had not yet changed significantly in the first few years, nor were they necessarily following a common curriculum, the act of sending out the surveys does nevertheless show an effort to gather information for more centralized purposes.

Meanwhile, as the seat of power for the new regime, Beijing became the experimental and model city for *tiyu*. The Beijing municipal *tiyu* committee benefitted from the fact that it was in the capital city – and thus an important symbol of the new state – as well the city’s plethora of *tiyu* experts. Ma Yuehan, Xu Yingchao, and Mou Zuoyun, among others, lived and taught at universities in Beijing. Nevertheless, any attention to decentralized *tiyu* activities in Beijing during these years, such as work units that may have had sports clubs or other kinds of leisure activities for workers, was often overshadowed by leaders’ efforts to position Beijing as the center for national *tiyu* programs. When the national preparatory committee began to formulate directives for implementing new national standards and programs, such as with the exercise standards in 1951, which were modeled on the Soviet

¹²⁰ SMA B126-1-12: Xuexiao tiyu zongjie [School *tiyu* summaries], June 1950.

Union's "Ready for Labor and Defense" *tiyu* system, leaders called on Beijing universities and middle schools to carry out trials.¹²¹

Being at the center of attention during these early years did not mean, however, that the Beijing municipal *tiyu* committee had it easy. Reports on school *tiyu* activities in 1951 note that "some people" still thought exercise should primarily be an "extracurricular" (*kewai*) activity or only important so as to avoid getting sick, while some students complained that because their nutrition was lacking, *tiyu* activities made them tired and (negatively) influenced their ability to study.¹²² Other problems included the lack of well-trained leaders, lack of research, few concrete teaching methods to follow, and the lack of proper equipment and facilities. For example, out of eighty schools, only three had 400-meter tracks, while others lacked full basketball courts and many could "not even hold calisthenics."¹²³ Much of this stemmed from budget issues: if there were no money, coaches, or teachers, it would be difficult to carry out ambitious plans.

Meanwhile, outside of schools, workers and other urban citizens participated in *tiyu* activities through their work unit, but these continued to be decentralized in these first years, much like they had been in the earlier period. In both Beijing and Shanghai, citywide athletic meets and competitions often included students and factory workers in various industries, schools, and offices, but in those years the new local *tiyu* municipal committees did not seem to have been involved in the running

¹²¹ BMA 185-001-00004. Beijingshi 1951 nian dongji tiyu yundong jihua [Beijing's 1951 winter *tiyu* movement plan], December 21, 1951.

¹²² BMA 185-001-00004: Muqian Beijingshi xuexiao tiyu huodong yu qingkuang wenti [Current Beijing school *tiyu* activities situation and issues], n.d., December? 1951.

¹²³ BMA 185-001-00004: Muqian Beijingshi xuexiao tiyu huodong yu qingkuang wenti.

the meets. Beginning in 1950 charts recording the number of local athletic meets and competitions, collected by the newly formed municipal committees, suggest that factories, labor unions, and local clubs sponsored many basketball, volleyball, ping-pong, and track and field events.¹²⁴ These events often attracted a fair number of athletes and sometimes also a large crowd. A ping-pong competition held by the Finance Labor Union (*caijin gonghui*) in April 1950, for example, attracted approximately 600 participants and 10,000 spectators; a soccer and basketball meet held in May by the Shanghai west club (*Huxi julebu*) included 1,160 athletes in fifty-seven basketball teams and forty-eight soccer teams, and attracted a crowd of 40,000.¹²⁵ Nothing indicates that the local *tiyu* committee was at all involved in many of these events, although they did also begin to sponsor their own events in 1951. A citywide basketball competition held in April to “welcome [1951’s] International Labor Day” included the participation of 1,500 athletes and a crowd of 70,000.¹²⁶

As this last example hints, officials found mass *tiyu* activities in these years particularly useful for rallying behind national and patriotic goals that would help consolidate the new regime’s power, and no truer was this than for the Resist America Aid Korea campaign that began following China’s entry into the Korean War in October 1950. Previous scholars have noted that the new government entered the war in part because it was interested in finding ways to extend its power and reach

¹²⁴ SMA B126-1-12: Zhigong tiyu tongji [Workers’ *tiyu* statistics], 1950-1954. Hudongqu tiyu huodong tongjibiao (yi jiu wu ling nian) [Hudong (Shanghai) district *tiyu* activities statistics], 1950 nian Shanghai zhigong tiyu huodong tongji [1950 Shanghai workers’ *tiyu* activities statistics], and 51 nian Shanghai zhigong tiyu huodong tongji [1951 Shanghai workers’ *tiyu* activities statistics].

¹²⁵ 1950 nian Shanghai zhigong tiyu huodong tongji in SMA B126-1-12: Zhigong tiyu tongji.

¹²⁶ 1951 nian quanshixing de Shanghai zhigong tiyu huodong [1951 Shanghai’s citywide workers’ *tiyu* activities] in SMA B126-1-12: Zhigong tiyu tongji.

across China,¹²⁷ and in part motivated to enter the war out of a fear of U.S. encroachment that would support a GMD invasion of the mainland.¹²⁸ In the world of *tiyu*, leaders were interested in strengthening national defense through militarized activities and training the average citizen in paramilitary skills. This was certainly not new, nor was the idea of a patriotic campaign to instigate change in *tiyu*: both Nationalists and Communists, as described earlier, argued that *tiyu* was necessary for building strong citizens and soldiers in the war against Japanese aggression. Additionally, in the first years of the PRC People's University in Beijing, which served as the Soviet model for a university and the main training grounds for cadres, students continued to engage in morning exercises and military drills as part of the CCP military tradition carried over from Yan'an. Indeed, there was relatively little interest in other types of *tiyu* activities at Renda until 1952.¹²⁹

¹²⁷ For example: Gary Rawnsley, "'The Great Movement to Resist America and Assist Korea': how Beijing sold the Korean War," *Media, War & Conflict* 2:3 (2009): 285-315. Rawnsley primarily uses posters and newspaper articles to argue that this massive propaganda campaign worked "to strengthen and consolidate [the Chinese Communist Party's] domestic programmes" (304). However, such propaganda only went so far and depended heavily on locality. See, for example: Jeremy Brown, "From Resisting Communists to Resisting America," in *Dilemmas of Victory*, 105-129. Brown argues that in places like "rugged Guizhou" (107) the Chinese Civil War had not yet ended when the Korean War began, and, in fact, continued through 1950 and 1951. However, the new regime implemented harsh measures in which former PLA resisters in Guizhou "were allowed to repent and then fight against the world's most powerful army in Korea" (108). In other words, at least in this case and in this area, the new regime decided to consolidate rule through leaving a "legacy of terror and war" (129).

¹²⁸ Chen Jian argues both points: that it was an issue of domestic security as well as consolidation of power. Chen Jian, *Mao's China and the Cold War* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2001), 87 and Chen Jian, *China's Road to the Korean War: The Making of the Sino-American Confrontation* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994), 127-128. Chen contends that what worried CCP leaders was Truman's decision to position the Seventh Fleet in the Taiwan Strait – "the United States had virtually reentered China's civil war on the GMD's behalf" (Chen, *China's Road to the Korean War*, 127).

¹²⁹ Douglas Stiffler, "Building Socialism at Chinese People's University: Chinese Cadres and Soviet Experts in the People's Republic of China, 1949-57" (PhD diss., University of California San Diego, 2002), 383.

Nevertheless, the importance of the Resist American Aid Korea campaign to consolidating the Party's power cannot be understated as, in hindsight, it laid the basis for China's long-term transformation "into a new socialist society."¹³⁰ *Tiyu* leaders thus used mass *tiyu* activities in late 1950 through the middle of 1951 to explicitly make a connection between *tiyu* and the campaign. Increased female participation in *tiyu* as well as support for the Resist America Aid Korea campaign were the goals of a large, citywide women's *tiyu* meet held in Shanghai in late November 1951.¹³¹ A published statement by the Shanghai Federation of Trade Unions welcomed the meet as taking place in just a little over a year post-Liberation, at a time when "the imperialist invasion that aroused the whole nation's people to resist America and aid Korea" had reached a highpoint and "every factory warmly carried out patriotic production competitions (*aiguo zhuyi shengchan jingsai*)."¹³² The preparatory committee of the Shanghai Municipal *tiyu* committees further added that people everywhere "one after another are volunteering to take action to resist America, aid Korea [and] protect the country" and that the purpose of this meet was to attract women citywide to participate in *tiyu* because "women in new China need exercise to strengthen [their] physiques [and] cultivate [their] revolutionary spirit."¹³³ The Democratic Women's Federation and the national *tiyu* division of the education bureau also chimed in with similar rallies to participate in *tiyu* in the name of the campaign. The meet, with the participation of nearly 400 students and 140 workers,

¹³⁰ Chen, *China's Road to the Korean War*, 129.

¹³¹ SMA B126-1-4: Shanghaishi nüzi tiyu dahui huikan [Proceedings of the Shanghai women's *tiyu* meet], November 26, 1950.

¹³² SMA B126-1-4: Shanghaishi nüzi tiyu dahui huikan.

¹³³ SMA B126-1-4: Shanghaishi nüzi tiyu dahui huikan.

included on its schedule track and field events and a softball competition, as well as an elaborate opening ceremony schedule with patriotic performances that included a “navy dance” (*haijun wu*), “collective dance,” “Red army dance,” and performances based around the themes “when the country needs me” (*dang zuguo xuyao wo de shihou*) and “unity is strength” (*tuanjie jiushi liliang*).¹³⁴

Tiyu leaders also used the campaign as nationwide motivation for centralized efforts. A *Xin tiyu* editorial published in March 1951 claimed that the campaign had already increased an interest in *tiyu* among students, raised the political consciousness of *tiyu* workers, and delivered a “big blow” to the “worship of American *tiyu* thought” as many *tiyu* workers now recognized its “true nature” of imperialist aggression.¹³⁵ Students increasingly enrolled at military cadre schools but unfortunately, the editorial claimed, many of these students were simply not in good enough physical shape to participate in national defense training. Nor were their teachers well prepared in how to guide them because although extracurricular *tiyu* activities had increased in schools, there was still no unified system for *tiyu* research or regulations post-Liberation. The editorial called upon *tiyu* workers in schools to seize this opportunity to focus on programs that would simultaneously raise the health of students and provide them with a patriotic education.¹³⁶ This included beginning to build a set of diverse *tiyu* activities for maximizing participation. Schools with good facilities could develop many types of activities right away, including basketball and

¹³⁴ SMA B126-1-4: Shanghaishi nūzi tiyu dahui huikan.

¹³⁵ “Shelun: Gongu he fazhan xuexiao tiyu, zai kangmei zhuchao yundong zhong de shouji” [Editorial: Consolidate and development school *tiyu* to benefit the Resist America Aid Korea campaign], *Xin tiyu*, March 1951, 12.

¹³⁶ “Shelun: Gongu he fazhan xuexiao tiyu, zai kangmei zhuchao yundong zhong de shouji,” 12.

volleyball; those with poor facilities could start with activities like cross-country running, calisthenics, exercise with single and parallel bars, hand grenade throwing, and swimming, while also mobilizing their students to “overcome difficulties” and use their “hands and heads” to build sports fields and facilities.¹³⁷ But this was only the beginning of a more comprehensive plan to also provide knowledge of hygiene, anti-American patriotic education, and develop propaganda methods that could also be used with the broader masses. In summary, the editorial used the Resist America Aid Korea campaign as the impetus for arguing in favor of creating better mass *tiyu* programs because these programs would both raise the health of ordinary people and provide them with a patriotic education – both necessary prerequisites to a stronger national defense.

“Everybody Does Broadcast Calisthenics”: *Tiyu* for Everyone

The most significant new development in mass *tiyu* during these early years was the first nationwide mobilization campaign to promote broadcast calisthenics (*guangbo ticao*), which began in late 1951. This campaign that set the precedent for future mass *tiyu* campaigns by demonstrating how a centralized and massive propaganda effort could successfully instill a new *tiyu* program geared towards the masses.

Broadcast calisthenics are sets of exercises broadcast on loudspeakers and designed for ordinary people to perform on a routine basis. As discussed earlier, the first half of the twentieth century witnessed the introduction of *tiyu* alongside

¹³⁷ “Shelun: Gonggu he fazhan xuexiao tiyu, zai kangmei zhuchao yundong zhong de shouji,” 12.

nationalism and the rise of modernity, demonstrating the ongoing interest of modern Chinese leaders in the general health of the overall population. Mass *tiyu* programs—especially daily calisthenics—were promoted to improve health and hygiene under both the Nationalists in urban areas and the Communists in Soviet base areas. Daily calisthenics in China have almost always referred to coordinated stretching and exercise routines performed by a group of people, more or less in sync with each other’s movements, for a short period of time. The basis behind performing calisthenics – that the movements were easy and good for everybody’s health – can be traced back at least to the Nationalist-sponsored New Life Movement in the 1930s. These earlier activities, however, did not have nearly the scope or state investment of the campaign for broadcast calisthenics in the 1950s and never took off on a grand scale. Indeed, the large-scale development of a centralized, institutionalized *tiyu*, supported and funded by the government, was unprecedented in China prior to the 1950s.¹³⁸

The campaign to promote broadcast calisthenics began in schools and the workplace. The campaign encouraged large groups of people to collectively perform officially prescribed calisthenics routines, following broadcast instructions on a loudspeaker, for a period of 10-15 minutes every day. In theory, anyone could participate because the exercises were simple, required no equipment, and took very little space; one could more or less stand in one place and complete the entire routine.

¹³⁸ Andrew Morris basically says that *tiyu* institutions were weak in the Republican period in part because they lacked institutional support and funding. While Nationalists and Communists did not significantly differ in their understandings of *tiyu* in this earlier period, Morris does find that “Red *tiyu*” provided a “new geographical and institutional source of its dissemination.” Morris, *Marrow of the Nation*, 127-129.

An official booklet published in 1952 explained that people of “different ages, different sexes, and different health [levels]” could all participate in broadcast calisthenics as a form of exercise.¹³⁹ The exercises were good for “those who labor with their brains (*naoli laodongzhe*) or bodies (*tili laodongzhe*)” and thus best performed in the mornings, before work or study.

The goal of broadcast calisthenics extended beyond simple exercise: officials hoped that the calisthenics would gradually encourage participation in other *tiyu* activities. Ideally, increasing numbers of people would want to “pour into ball courts, sports venues, and swimming pools” as well as participate in military *tiyu* activities such as hand grenade throwing, horseback riding, shooting, rowing, and parachuting. Exercise would bring them “physiques like iron and steel” (*gangtieban de tige*) and this would, in turn, better serve the construction of the nation’s economy, culture, and national defense.¹⁴⁰ Calisthenics thus had a goal of teaching people how to cultivate their bodies as part of the socialist collective.

The campaign to promote broadcast calisthenics was part of larger state-led initiatives to regiment daily life in urban areas. The state prioritized *tiyu* institutionally in a way that had never existed before: *tiyu* was made a special committee directly under the central bureau¹⁴¹ and top communist cadres were put in charge of early *tiyu* efforts. Furthermore, as the first major *tiyu* program to be rolled

¹³⁹ Xin tiyu she, ed., *Dajia dou lai zuo guangbo ticao* [Everybody does broadcast calisthenics] (Beijing: Qingnian chunbanshe, 1952), 2-3. The article in this booklet was originally printed November 26, 1951 in *Renmin ribao*. The first publication of this booklet was October 1952, with a first print run of 10,000 copies.

¹⁴⁰ Xin tiyu she, ed., *Dajia dou lai zuo guangbo ticao*, 2-3.

¹⁴¹ Franz Schurmann, *Ideology and Organization in Communist China* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1968), 185.

out in the new Party-state, broadcast calisthenics tested the new state's propaganda machine¹⁴² in the realm of *tiyu*. Nationwide directives, a large-scale propaganda campaign in newspapers and magazines, and broadcasts on loudspeakers in work units all promoted collective calisthenics according to an officially approved routine. In the Mao era, work units served as urban-based social organizations that employed people in state enterprises, while controlling most aspects of their social lives.¹⁴³ Workers came to depend on their work units to fulfill many of their life needs, including leisure activities like organizing team sports and leading broadcast calisthenics.¹⁴⁴ The program also fit well into larger movements to encourage hygiene and bodily care as daily practices. Led by designated work unit leaders and aided by loudspeakers, broadcast calisthenics thus gradually became a disciplined part of people's daily lives.

Daily calisthenics also became a standard part of the school day. Surveys taken from Shanghai in 1950-1951 show that although physical education classes existed in most urban schools, there was variation in schedule, time, and types of activities.¹⁴⁵ Furthermore, not everyone had daily calisthenics. For example, St. John's Youth Middle School in Shanghai had 20 minutes of daily morning calisthenics (*zaocao*) for all students, but physical education administrators at

¹⁴² Timothy Cheek, *Propaganda and Culture in Mao's China: Deng Tuo and the Intelligentsia* (Oxford; New York: Clarendon Press; Oxford University Press, 1997), 14-15. Cheek argues that propaganda was a popular form of spreading information in the Maoist period and, in particular, was envisioned by the leadership as a way to help people transform themselves (from uneducated to educated).

¹⁴³ Michael Dutton, ed., *Streetlife China* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 55.

¹⁴⁴ Duanfang Lu, *Remaking Chinese Urban Form: Modernity, Scarcity and Space, 1949-2005* (London, New York: Routledge, 2006), 99, 145.

¹⁴⁵ B126-1-12: Xuexiao tiyu gongzuo zongjie, June 1950.

Nanyang model middle school (*Nanyang mofan zhongxue*) claimed that the sports grounds weren't large enough to accommodate everyone at the same time for calisthenics, so some grades only held them twice per week.¹⁴⁶ Official directives in 1951 set out to correct the situation by mandating limits on time spent in non-*tiyu* classes, and to include daily calisthenics.¹⁴⁷ The campaign for broadcast calisthenics thus began in urban schools, like many other *tiyu*-related activities and programs. Although localities may have differed slightly in scale or implementation of broadcast calisthenics, the overall simplicity of the exercises meant that the program worked well in many settings. They took relatively little space to do, and they could be adapted or modified for different age groups. Specific routines were designed for nearly all subsequent exercise programs in the PRC, including morning calisthenics (*zao cao*), workplace calisthenics (*gongjian cao*) and those as part of the "Ready for Labor and Defense" system (*laowei cao*).¹⁴⁸ By 1955, government-recommended calisthenics routines had apparently become so mainstream in urban areas that a simple set was even developed by the Beijing women and children's health protection institute experimental nursery for babies, to be performed with adult assistance. A *Xin tiyu* article, accompanied by sixteen photographs for the prescribed routine, recommended performing the exercises once or twice daily, starting between six and

¹⁴⁶ B126-1-12: Xuexiao tiyu gongzuo zongjie, June 1950.

¹⁴⁷ "Zhongyang renmin zhengfu zhengquyuan guanyu gaishan geji xuexiao xuesheng jiankang zhuangkuang de jue ding (zhailu)" [Decision from the Central government concerning improving the health situation of all levels of school students] (excerpts), in *Tiyu yundong wenjian xuanbian 1949-1981* [Selected sports documents 1949-1981], comp. Guojia tiwei zhengce yanjiushi (Renmin tiyu chubanshe: Beijing, 1982), 269-271.

¹⁴⁸ Even today, after years of decline, this style of exercise has remained or returned as a part of the daily lives of many students, factory workers, and office workers in China, reflecting the legacy of these earlier mass campaigns.

eight weeks old [Figure 4].¹⁴⁹ The article noted that such tiny infants required lots of special care and advised the adult performing the routine to place the baby on a table with a cotton-padded mattress, dress the baby in clothes comfortable for the movements, monitor the temperature of the room so it was comfortable (the room temperature was never to be below twenty degrees Celsius), keep one's hands clean and warm, and perform the routine a half-hour before the baby ate or wait for an hour after eating to do it. The article authors claimed that a year of trials had already produced positive results in four areas: babies weighed more, ate more, were happier (while doing calisthenics they were all “very happy, dancing and laughing”), and grew faster (a fact ascertained by how frequently they needed a larger clothing size). All of this was important, the article declared, because for “children to have good health, strong physiques, and to become effective constructors and protectors of the motherland, in addition to paying attention to their daily nutrition and hygiene, [we] also need to pay attention to creating the conditions for [their future] activities.”¹⁵⁰

A Soviet-led Socialist World: the PRC and International Sport, 1950-1952

Although *tiyu* programs had not yet changed dramatically on the ground in these early years, sports exchanges and competitions with the Soviet Union and other socialist bloc countries did begin—especially in two sports that already had established a solid foundation under the GMD, basketball and volleyball. Chinese leaders, however, had few resources and little desire to send athletes abroad in these

¹⁴⁹ Beijing fuyou baojian yuan shiyan tuersuo [Beijing women and children's health protection institute experimental nursery], “Ying'er de ticao” [Baby calisthenics], *Xin tiyu*, June 6, 1955, 14-15.

¹⁵⁰ Beijing fuyou baojian yuan shiyan tuersuo, “Ying'er de ticao,” 14-15.



Figure 4. Baby calisthenics. *Xin tiyu*, June 6, 1955.

early years and there was almost no interaction with sports delegations outside the socialist bloc or with international sports organizations. In part this was because some international sports leaders had fled the mainland following the end of the Civil

War,¹⁵¹ and in part because Communist leaders tended to be more interested in—and, as shown earlier, familiar with—mass *tiyu* activities (e.g., calisthenics, paramilitary drills, ping-pong and basketball), than the world of international sport.

Sports competitions with socialist bloc countries – or “friendly” learning experiences, as they were often called – were also considered vital towards bettering China’s position in the international socialist movement as they emphasized the unilateral nature of the Sino-Soviet relationship. The point of these early exchanges was explicitly to study Soviet (or Soviet-inspired) *tiyu* models and to begin to use sports activities as a way to foster stronger friendly relations with other countries. Chinese sports leaders also claimed that working with their Soviet comrades in international sport matters further helped relations between the countries. This attitude extended to athletes and leaders in the rest of the Soviet-led world, who Chinese publications portrayed as comrades-in-arms seeking to achieve worldwide peace together through international socialism.

Before the end of 1950, representative PRC basketball and volleyball teams had already visited Hungary, Czechoslovakia, Romania, and the Soviet Union. Volleyball team member Li Ange described the volleyball team’s visit in August to Czechoslovakia in glowing terms, expressing the overwhelming generosity that the team had experienced over the course of the visit in and out of competition. A large

¹⁵¹ For example, of the three Chinese Olympic committee members from the earlier Republican period, only one, Dong Shouyi, remained on the mainland following the establishment of the PRC. The other two, Wang Zhengting and Kong Xiangxi, were ardent Nationalist leaders who fled the country during the Civil War. Hao Gengsheng, another sports leader and Nationalist, fled to Taiwan where he subsequently became the main representative for the Republic of China (ROC) in international sports organizations. For more on this issue, see Xu, *Olympic Dreams*, especially pages 80-82.

contingent of people had met them at the Ostrava airport and thrown them a welcoming party before then escorting the delegation downtown – along with the Soviet delegation – in a motorcade that included a broadcasting vehicle at the front and “three very new Czech cars” for the Chinese athletes.¹⁵² News discussed the Chinese team for a week, people greeted them everywhere they went and sometimes shouted “Stalin, Gottwald, Mao Zedong!” and there were even banners with Chinese characters that said “Welcome Chinese Youth” and “The people have fanshen’ed (*Renmin fanshen*).”¹⁵³ The team played their competitions in a brand-new building built by the labor of Czech youth group members. Li seemed especially impressed by the Czech youths’ “high level of internationalist warmth towards us” as well as their “labor spirit” – both of which he stated the Chinese team had learned from.¹⁵⁴ As far as volleyball itself was concerned, the team gained the most valuable playing experience against a factory team in the industrial city of Su-Ke-Wei.¹⁵⁵ After a grand welcoming ceremony that included a band playing and over a thousand people waiting to watch, the Chinese team lost to the Czech factory workers. Nonetheless, they received a banquet complete with song and dance and well wishes from the factory head, along with photos to take home as souvenirs. Although the fanfare of

¹⁵² Li Ange, “Zhongguo xuesheng lanpaiqiu daibiaodui zai jieke” [Chinese student basketball and volleyball delegations in Czechoslovakia], *Xin tiyu*, November 1950, 17.

¹⁵³ *Fanshen* is a difficult word to directly translate as it encompassed altering one’s basic circumstances. Though it is literally translated as “to turn over,” or “to turn the body,” it is also often translated as a call for the People “to stand up.” However, William Hinton wrote in his seminal work that *fanshen* meant far more: “It meant to throw off superstition and study science, to abolish ‘word blindness’ and learn to read, to cease considering women as chattels and establish equality between the sexes...to enter a new world.” William Hinton, *Fanshen* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1967), xiv.

¹⁵⁴ Li, “Zhongguo xuesheng lanpaiqiu daibiaodui zai jieke.”

¹⁵⁵ My best efforts (and those of a Czech friend) to locate this city based on the transliteration have so far been unsuccessful.

such a visit may have seemed over the top to some, these delegation visits, and the way they were presented to a domestic audience in such publications as *Xin tiyu* and *People's Daily*, served to teach Chinese about what Soviet-led international socialism entailed.

Li's account also shed light on how sports delegations could serve more directly tangible diplomatic goals. Before the competition held in Budejovice,¹⁵⁶ Chinese and Czech team members issued a joint telegram to the United Nations Security Council chair at the time, Yakov Malik of the Soviet Union, that stated their support for peace work concerning the "shameless attacks" on Korea that had included "bombing hospitals [and] murdering people without the ability to resist."¹⁵⁷ They also requested the adoption of methods to quickly resolve the situation and "punish American aggressors." This telegram, for Li, was an important display of confidence at the international level. The Czech and Chinese, although separated by vast geographical distances, held similar views on opposition to imperialist aggression and were "close comrades in arms of the world peace camp."¹⁵⁸ Such acts of solidarity in these early visits set an important precedent for the future role of international sports delegations in which Chinese athletes and sports leaders served as representatives of both China and Chinese socialism.

Chinese athletes and leaders expressed feelings of solidarity, warmth, and friendship with their Czech comrades, but it was the Soviets whom they revered

¹⁵⁶ This is my best guess for the Chinese transliteration in the text: Bu-du-re-wei.

¹⁵⁷ Li, "Zhongguo xuesheng lanpaiqiu daibiaodui zai jieke."

¹⁵⁸ Li, "Zhongguo xuesheng lanpaiqiu daibiaodui zai jieke."

above all others. In fact, the first official sports delegation to visit the PRC was a Soviet contingent of twenty-seven *tiyu* representatives - mostly well-known basketball athletes¹⁵⁹ - from December 1950 to January 1951. The main purpose of the visit, according to the Chinese, was to study “advanced Soviet *tiyu*, especially [their] basketball experience.”¹⁶⁰ For the Soviets, sports leader Romanov stated that the goal was simply to “establish and consolidate Sino-Soviet athletic contact” and exchange *tiyu* experience, with the hopes that it would also contribute to “friendship and close cooperation.”¹⁶¹ Nonetheless he followed these broad statements with a brief outline of how the Soviet *tiyu* began with the “Ready for Labor and Defense” system in schools and set the pace for the “scientific” development of *tiyu* across society. Nor was he modest as he noted that top Soviet athletes had set new 485 new records in 1950 alone, broken 21 world records, and won major European and international championships in a variety of disciplines.¹⁶²

The visit itself proved to be quite the learning experience for Chinese basketball athletes as the hotshot Soviet players stomped them in nearly every game. Following Comrade Liao Chengzhi’s opening ceremony speech about the need to study Soviet *tiyu* achievements and Sino-Soviet solidarity, the Soviet team beat the

¹⁵⁹ “Sulian lanqiudui jieshao” [Introducing the Soviet basketball team], *Xin tiyu*, January 1951, 4-5. These players included those who from the gold medal winning team at the 1947 European basketball championships and the Second World Festival of Youth and Students held in 1949.

¹⁶⁰ “Huanying Sulian tiyu daibiaotuan” [Welcome the Soviet *tiyu* delegation], *Xin tiyu*, January 1951, 3.

¹⁶¹ “Luomannuofu tongzhi guangbo jiangyanci quanwen” [The full text of Comrade Romanov’s broadcast], *Xin tiyu*, January 1951, 3.

¹⁶² “Luomannuofu tongzhi guangbo jiangyanci quanwen,” 4.

Beijing United team 55:43 in front of an impressed audience.¹⁶³ No other match between the Soviets and any Chinese teams came this close – with final scores like 21:60 (the united team of *tiyu* workers), 13:90 (a united school team), and 17:91 (again with the Beijing united team) it seemed obvious to Chinese basketball athletes and leaders alike that they could learn something from the Soviet team. Guan Yushan argued that although the Soviet team had better techniques and skills, such as each the ability to flexibly adapt styles of play, they benefited more generally from their “robust physical strength” and ability to move around quickly on the court.¹⁶⁴

Furthermore, although basketball already had a rich history in China and was arguably by far the most popular in sport at the time, Soviet basketball was praised as the model of the future. A vice minister of the Xibei *tiyu* preparatory committee was also impressed by the team’s technical ability, noting that they did not “rigidly adhere to established methods” but were rather “clever and flexible.”¹⁶⁵ But more importantly he found the team’s general attitude favorable because they didn’t purposely foul players, play rough, or seize every opportunity to pull out a trick, and they seemed to work collectively rather than individually. According to him, the long-term influence of American imperialism and Guomindang reactionaries on Chinese basketball was the main problem that caused these traits to be commonplace. Su Jingcun likewise found much to like about the Soviet team. He argued that the practical lessons from the visit were not confined to the players’ physical strength or

¹⁶³ Guan Yushan, “Ji Sulian lanqiudui zai shoudu de youyi bisai” [Report on the Soviet basketball team’s friendly competitions in the capital], *Xin tiyu*, January 1951, 8-9.

¹⁶⁴ Guan, “Ji Sulian lanqiudui zai shoudu de youyi bisai.”

¹⁶⁵ Wang ?dong [character smudged in original], “Canguan Sulian lanqiudui biaoyan hou de ganxiang” [Impressions after watching the Soviet basketball team’s performance], *Xin tiyu*, March 1951, 36.

outstanding technical ability. Instead, he contended, “We can see that first and foremost thirty years of Soviet socialist education in cultivating athletes: when they’re in a basketball game, from beginning to end they closely cooperate [and] without the slightest bit of expressing heroism of individualism.”¹⁶⁶ Every day they showed “patriotic thought and collective education and spirit” as well as the “superior morals” (*youliang de daode*) that Su saw as evident on the basketball court – they didn’t complain, never slacked off on hard work, and never purposely fouled other players.¹⁶⁷ Furthermore, their leaders had visited Beijing and other cities to share Soviet basketball training and tactics and address specific weaknesses of Chinese basketball, a true sign that they had a “high degree of international spirit.”¹⁶⁸ All of this was good reason to adopt Soviet *tiyu* models like the “Ready for Labor and Defense” system because, according to Su, they provided what Chinese citizens needed most: an internationalist, patriotic, and moral education that also paid attention to discipline and hygiene. The visit thus included a window into the potential benefits of adopting Soviet-style socialist *tiyu* across society as a whole.

PRC involvement in *tiyu* outside of the socialist bloc was in a state of flux during these first few years and primarily followed whatever was best for their position vis-à-vis the Soviets. When the first Asian Games were held in Delhi in

¹⁶⁶ Su Jingcun, “Cong Sulian lanqiu xuexi xianjin de Sulian tiyu” [From Soviet basketball study advanced Soviet *tiyu*], *Xin tiyu*, January 1951, 10.

¹⁶⁷ Su, “Cong Sulian lanqiu xuexi xianjin de Sulian tiyu,” 10.

¹⁶⁸ Su, “Cong Sulian lanqiu xuexi xianjin de Sulian tiyu,” 10.

1951, the PRC leadership sent a few observers,¹⁶⁹ but they did not send any athletes.¹⁷⁰ And when PRC leaders received an invitation in February 1951 sent by the Helsinki organizing committee for the upcoming 1952 Olympics, the All-China Sports Federation decided that, although they believed the PRC should participate, the decision hinged on whether or not the Soviet Union would also participate.¹⁷¹ Most likely this response was made because the Soviet Union, which had not yet officially participated in any Olympics Games, was also not yet part of the International Olympic Committee (IOC). In late April 1951 Soviet leaders, perhaps because of the IOC's decision to consider allowing "two Germanies" to join the IOC, finally decided they would participate in 1952 and sent a telegram to the IOC. In May the IOC voted to recognize their Olympic Committee.¹⁷² In order to remain in solidarity with their "Soviet elder brother" in the face of the IOC, it seems that PRC leaders waited for the outcome of these events.

Soon enough, however, PRC leaders also needed Soviet support in their own Olympic battle. IOC rules technically stated that each nation could have only one National Olympic Committee (NOC), but the PRC and the Republic of China (ROC)

¹⁶⁹ "Zhongguo tiyu guanguangtuan fu Yin cangan Yazhou yundonghui" [Chinese *tiyu* group visit India and observe the Asian Games], *Xin Tiyu*, March 1951, 7. Also, perhaps because of confusion or lack of organization, the Republic of China apparently did not receive an invitation from the organizing committee.

¹⁷⁰ Tang Mingxin, *Wo guo canjia aoyunhui sang shi 1949-1996 (xia bian)* [The History of our country's participation in the Olympics 1949-1996 (second half of compilation)] (Taipei: Zhonghua taipei aolinpike weiyuanhui, 2000), 2.

¹⁷¹ Chinese Foreign Ministry Archives (CFMA) 113-00097-01: Guanyu woguo shifou canjia shiwujie aolinpike yundonghui (zai fenlan) de youguan wenjian [Related documents concerning whether or not our nation participates in the 15th Olympic games (in Finland)], February 1-28, 1951.

¹⁷² Jenifer Parks, "Red sport, red tape the Olympic games, the Soviet sports bureaucracy, and the Cold War, 1952-1980" (PhD diss., University of North Carolina, 2009), 51-53.

in Taiwan each claimed to be the only “China.”¹⁷³ Sheng Zhibai, who was neither a *tiyu* expert nor familiar with how the IOC functioned, was hastily sent by the PRC to the IOC meeting held in Oslo in February 1952.¹⁷⁴ Representing the All-China Sports Federation, Sheng immediately presented the case for PRC recognition. He noted China’s historical relations with Olympic organizations and cited efforts made by PRC leaders over the previous two years to build amateur sport in China – as represented by numerous competitions and large circulations of sports publications. Sheng argued that as the only governing body of sports in mainland China, the ACSF by default also represented the only National Olympic Committee for China. He asked that all correspondence be sent to the ACSF in Beijing, and noted that the PRC was prepared to send teams to Helsinki in July.¹⁷⁵ IOC executive board members apparently viewed Sheng as inexperienced and unaware of formal IOC procedure; the IOC president, Sigrid Edström, informed Sheng on how to correctly proceed according to IOC rules and regulations.¹⁷⁶

Paying attention to this debacle was Dong Shouyi, the only official IOC member from China who had remained on the mainland following the Civil War. Dong was another member of the older generation of *tiyu* experts who had strong personal connections to the YMCA. In the 1910s, Dong had been captain of his

¹⁷³ Christopher Hill, *Olympic Politics* (Manchester, UK; New York: Manchester University Press; New York, NY: Distributed exclusively in the USA and Canada by St. Martin’s Press, 1996), 44-45.

¹⁷⁴ Xu, *Olympics Dreams*, 80-81.

¹⁷⁵ CFMA 113-00158-06: Sheng Zhibai chuxi shiyunhui de yanjianggao ji chuxi 1952 nian 2 yue aowehui baogao [Sheng Zhibai’s speech when attending the World Games and report on attending the February 1952 IOC meeting], March 22-May 8, 1952.

¹⁷⁶ International Olympic Committee Archives (IOCA): International Olympic Committee meeting minutes, 47th session in Helsinki, July 16, 1952, 9. The minutes also note in brackets that, following Edström’s response to Sheng that the IOC “takes all its decisions in complete independence [*sic*],” there were “Loud cheers from the Assembly.”

school's basketball team at the Tongzhou Xiehe Academy in Beijing, run by Christian missionaries from North America, and upon graduation he was invited to work in the Tianjin YMCA's Physical Education Department. Zhang Boling (then the director of Tianjin's YMCA and considered the first *tiyu* expert to advocate China's participation in the Olympics) subsequently invited Dong to teach at Nankai University, where he led morning exercises and helped coach several basketball teams.¹⁷⁷ He also coached and refereed basketball for the YMCA where, in 1919, one of the students who frequently came to play basketball was Zhou Enlai.¹⁷⁸ The YMCA sent Dong off to Springfield College in 1923, and when he returned two years later he simultaneously served as director of the Physical Education Department at the Tianjin YMCA and Nankai University. Dong also was sent as the basketball coach for the Chinese delegation to Berlin and, in 1941, became a member of the China National Amateur Athletic Federation (which organized the National Games and Olympic delegation, and which included members Hao Gengsheng, who later fled to Taiwan, and Ma Yuehan). At the 1947 IOC meeting in Stockholm Dong became the third elected Chinese IOC member.¹⁷⁹ Suffice it to say that Dong was no stranger to Ma Yuehan or many other leading *tiyu* experts in the early PRC.

Nevertheless, Dong apparently only first heard of the PRC leadership's problems with the IOC in early 1952 when he happened to read a newspaper article that published the telegram expressing the PRC's intention to participate at Helsinki.

¹⁷⁷ Sun Hailin, *The Man Who Brought the Olympics to China: The Story of Zhang Boling* (Beijing: New World Press, 2008), 172-174.

¹⁷⁸ Susan Brownell, "Sport and Politics Don't Mix," in *East Plays West : Sport and the Cold War*, eds. Stephen Wagg and David L Andrews (London; New York: Routledge, 2007), 256.

¹⁷⁹ Sun, *The Man Who Brought the Olympics to China*, 174-177.

He quickly realized that PRC leaders had no idea what they were doing and sent a letter to the newly formed ACSF that explained how the IOC worked, which was then forwarded directly to Zhou Enlai. Soon thereafter Zhou, who probably recognized Dong from Nankai, called Dong to Beijing, in a move that also was also praised by the Soviet embassy.¹⁸⁰

Just a few days before the opening ceremonies at Helsinki, the IOC decided to allow both PRC and ROC delegations to attend as “China.”¹⁸¹ The ROC withdrew in protest, while the PRC delegation, because of the late IOC decision, arrived six days after the start of the Games and only one swimmer was able to officially compete. Despite this, PRC leaders claimed that attending the Games had been very successful in raising the international status of the PRC in light of the ROC’s non-participation.¹⁸² Soviet athletic successes at the Olympics, the first in which they had ever participated, also impressed PRC leaders. Rong Gaotang, who at the time was leading the Chinese delegation, cited five things that the PRC needed to do: strengthen national sports leadership (and mimic Soviet sports organizational structure); centrally train outstanding athletes and create a program for future prospective athletes; hire five Soviet sports experts to come work in China; hold national games each year in every Olympic discipline; and build sports stadiums and facilities around the country.¹⁸³

¹⁸⁰ Brownell, “Sport and Politics Don’t Mix,” 256.

¹⁸¹ Morris, *Marrow of the Nation*, 238-39.

¹⁸² CFMA 113-00158-02: Wo canjia aowehui de jueding ji huihou baogao [Post-Games report on our decision to participate in the Olympic games], message sent from Rong Gaotang to Liu Shaoqi and the Central bureau, August 21, 1952.

¹⁸³ CFMA 113-00158-02: Wo canjia aowehui de jueding ji huihou baogao.

PRC leadership meanwhile instructed their Olympic delegates to rely on Soviet comrades in the IOC for advice on all matters. The Soviets gladly took on this role as part of an agenda to build their own position and influence in the IOC, promote the Soviet Union as the leader in sports development, and make the IOC more inclusive (especially of African and Asian nations) – all part of their effort to “democratize” sport.¹⁸⁴

Conclusion

The establishment of a permanent All-China Sports Federation in June 1952, which coincided with larger institutional and social changes in preparation for the First Five Year plan, marks the official end of this transitional “New Democracy” period. For three years, from late 1949 to mid-1952, *tiyu* officials had begun the process of centralizing *tiyu* organizations under the umbrella of “new” *tiyu* but the story is far more complex than the common PRC narrative suggest. The building up of a hierarchical and centralized network of *tiyu* committees, as well as research and publication efforts, would ensure that future *tiyu* directives and propaganda could be easily passed along to most areas, and by mid-1952, many municipal and provincial work units reported to *Xin tiyu* about their *tiyu* activities and competitions. *Tiyu* propaganda also made its way around urban centers, as students signed up in droves to participate in military *tiyu* activities and cadre schools. Work units and local *tiyu* committees received instructions for carrying out broadcast calisthenics. But many of

¹⁸⁴ Parks, “Red sport, red tape,” 105-107.

these *tiyu* activities, despite Party claims to the contrary, would not have happened had an older generation of *tiyu* experts and leaders not been involved in the process. Given this fact, it seems hardly surprising that the *tiyu* activities on the ground, especially those designed for the masses, tended to mirror activities found in the earlier Republican and wartime periods under both the GMD and the CCP. Thus, although the general importance of *tiyu* at the national level increased with the establishment of the PRC, 1949 cannot be considered a clear break between *tiyu* in a “new” China and an “old” China, as most *tiyu* literature in Chinese might have us believe, because in many ways “new” *tiyu*—as it was re-conceived and juxtaposed with the “old” *tiyu* of the pre-1949 period—grew out of and continued to retain many of the same characteristics and purposes of sports activities in the earlier period.

Nevertheless, the emphasis in the period 1949-1952 was on looking towards Soviet models and experts for guidance on all matters of *tiyu*. Party leadership firmly believed that Chinese *tiyu* was connected to a Soviet-led socialist world and did not stand on its own. “New” *tiyu* entailed a heavy emphasis on mass *tiyu* beginning with improving school programs and, along with international *tiyu* decisions, such as those involving the IOC, followed the Soviet lead. Mass *tiyu* would now be controlled centrally through propaganda campaigns that traveled down the new institutional structure—as evidenced by the national campaign to promote broadcast calisthenics, launched in 1951—and Soviet models, such as the “Ready for Labor and Defense” *tiyu* system (see Chapter 2), would help build the future of *tiyu* at all levels in the PRC.

Chapter 2

“Study the Advanced Experience of the Soviet Union”: Sports Exchanges and the “Ready for Labor and Defense” System in the Early PRC

The famous Mao-coined slogan “good body, good study, good work” (*shenti hao, xuexi hao, gongzuo hao*) can be traced to mid-1953 and implies that physically training one’s body would inevitably lead to good health, allowing a person to study well and become a good worker.¹ The slogan thus linked physical training to two central concerns of the leadership: education and socialist production, and it helped initiate a campaign to promote general all-around exercise for youth, especially in schools and universities. Through participation in physical education programs, the official goal was to have as many youth as possible strive for the “three goods” (*san hao*).

The slogan and accompanying campaign say little, however, about how one could achieve the goal of a physically fit “good body.” This chapter traces the nexus between how a citizen could reach this goal and the intense period of learning from the Soviet Union, when *tiyu* officials decided to implement the Soviet-inspired

¹ The slogan first appeared during celebration party of the July 1 holiday (the founding of the Chinese Communist Party) and directed at the National Youth League. “Dang he Mao zhuxi dui qingnian wuxian guanhuai, zhu qingnianmen shenti hao xuexi hao gongzuo hao, Hu Yaobang zai qingzhu “qiyi” wanhui shang xiang qingnian tuan quanguo daibiao zuole biaoda” [The Party and Chairman Mao show unlimited care for youth; wish youth good body, good study, good work; Hu Yaobang’s message to the National Youth League at the “July 1” celebration party], *Renmin ribao*, July 2, 1953. An October article in *Xin tiyu* written by Ma Xu, the Dean of the Beijing Medical college, stated: “A good body is the physical requisite for good study and good work” (*shenti hao shi xuexi hao, gongzuo hao de wuzhi qianti*). Beijing yixueyuan jiaowuchang Ma Xu, “Canjia tiyu yundong, duanlian hao shenti” [Participate in sport, exercise a good body], *Xin tiyu*, October 1953, 9. It is worth nothing that the public school system in the PRC continues to encourage and reward “three goods” students (*san hao xuesheng*). Part of the slogan has since been modified from “good work” to “good ideology and morality” (*sixiang pinde hao*), but “good body” and “good study” remain, as does the basic premise that one who gains such a title is an upstanding citizen.

“Ready for Labor and Defense” *tiyu* system (*zhunbei laodong yu weiguo zhidu*, often simply called the *laoweizhi*). The system, based on the Marxist-Leninist belief in “all-round body development,”² aimed to produce the strongest physiques and best bodies, and was intended to serve as the cornerstone for all current and future *tiyu* programs, at all levels, in the new socialist state. Through the *laoweizhi*, which included daily exercise along with paramilitary training, periodic fitness tests, and rewards, officials hoped to improve the general health and physique of the population while also transforming the masses into educated, patriotic socialist citizens with a sense of collective identity. Beginning with youth in schools and implemented first on a trial basis in some urban schools in 1951, between 1954 and 1956 the *laoweizhi* was promoted nationwide to all schools, factories, and workplaces through official directives and large-scale propaganda campaigns. The program was also part of larger institutional changes in daily urban life attendant upon the introduction of the work unit (*danwei*) system.

Implementing the *laoweizhi* was about cultivating a collective identity that extended beyond the borders of the nation-state to encompass the Soviet-led socialist world. Chinese leaders chose to adopt the *laoweizhi* program during the intense period of “learning from the Soviet Union.” But the Soviet Union was not the only nation from which Chinese sports leaders garnered new sports techniques and skills. Indirectly, through articles and other publications, and directly through delegation visits, the Chinese sports world studied and learned from the experiences of various

² Chen Mo, ed., *Tan tan laoweizhi* [Discussing the *laoweizhi*] (Beijing: Renmin tiyu chubanshe, 1956), 7-8.

socialist bloc nations. While encouraging the study of capitalist nations and their sports stars was officially off-limits, Chinese sports leaders could freely examine and interact with the best non-Soviet athletes and coaches in the socialist bloc. During these years, articles in *Xin tiyu* often covered the successes of athletes and teams from these nations. Delegation visits from Poland and Hungary, among others, served to promote friendly relations as well as the study of experiences and athletic skills of this “second world.”³

Likewise, the original Soviet “Ready for Labor and Defense” system had already been established in several other socialist bloc nations, including the GDR, Romania, and Hungary. The *laoweizhi*, as the main PRC *tiyu* program during these years, thus not only symbolized a strong Sino-Soviet relationship: it simultaneously acknowledged deference to Soviet knowledge on training the entire citizenry in how to be ideal socialists, and helped solidify the PRC as a modern, socialist nation in the larger, Soviet-led socialist world.

“Learning from the Soviet Union,” Socialist Internationalism, and the *laoweizhi*

“Learning from the Soviet Union” (*xuexi Sulian*) reached its height between 1952 and 1955. *Xin tiyu* often translated articles directly from Russian on topics ranging from *tiyu* theory and Marxism-Leninism, to examples in the Soviet Union of mass sport, to elite athletic achievements and international success. For example,

³ I use this term to refer primarily to socialist bloc nations and because I believe that it resonates well in this context – Chinese official publications often treated the athletic successes of these nations in a similar manner – even though I realize that the term is subject to much debate and has fallen out of favor in recent years.

several translated Russian articles in *Xin tiyu* from August 1953 covered the training of elite Soviet athletes in track and field, accompanied by photographs or hand drawings illustrating proper technique. One depicts the Soviet national record holder for the women's 80-meter hurdles event, Elena Gokieli, in thirteen still shots.⁴ Each issue of the magazine also included a section called "International Sports News in Brief" (*Guoji tiyu jianxun*) that mostly highlighted recent elite athletic events and achievements in the Soviet Union. When Soviet athlete Galina Zybina set a new world record in women's shot put in October 1953 at an event held in Romania, *Xin tiyu* published this information alongside the results of the All-Soviet soccer championship.⁵

In addition to this regular coverage in *Xin tiyu*, Soviet sports documentaries and books translated from Russian circulated in China during this period. The documentary *Gymnastics Athletes* (*Ticao xuanshou*) followed the performances of several Olympic gold medalist Russian gymnasts through competition.⁶ Books often provided more specific and detailed information about Soviet sports theory, physical education and exercise programs, or sports-related skills and techniques. For example, *Sports and Communist Education* (*Tiyu yu gongchanzhuyi jiaoyu*) covered Soviet

⁴ Ge Wu, "Ye-lin-na.Ge-ji-hao-li ba shi gongchi dilan de jishu" [Elena Gokieli's technique in the 80-meter hurdles], *Xin tiyu*, August 1953, 24-25.

⁵ "Sulian xuanshou Qi-bin-na you chuang shijie nüzi zhi touqiu xin jilu" [Soviet athlete Zybina creates new world record for women's shotput] and "Quan Su zuqiu guanjun sai jieshu" [All-Soviet soccer championship results], *Xin tiyu*, November 1953, 38. In the section "Guoji tiyu jianxun" [International Sports News Brief].

⁶ "'Ticao xuanshou' shuoming shu" ['Gymnastics Athletes' Synopsis], *Dianying xuanchuan ziliao* (1954 nian di wu ce) [Movie promotion information (Volume 5 1954)] (Beijing: Zhongguo dianying faxing gongsi zong gongsi xuanchuan chu bian, 1954), di 283 hao, October 22, 1954.

theory behind sports and physical culture,⁷ while *Sports and Exercise (Tiyu he yundong)*, written by the Russian Federation of Trade Unions, described the setup of programs for workers.⁸

Regular sports delegation visits between China and the Soviet Union also increased, aimed primarily at learning Soviet techniques and fostering friendly relations in the sports world. In September and October 1953 a group of twenty-two Soviet gymnasts, along with two delegation leaders, four coaches, a doctor, and the pianist that played their performance music, visited China,⁹ so that the Chinese could “study the Soviet advanced experience” and raise the nation’s gymnastics skill levels.¹⁰ Chinese sports leaders also wanted to take advantage of the visit to improve sports relations between the two countries, and the visit was timed to coincide with national track and field, cycling and gymnastics competitions held in Beijing so that these Soviet comrades could attend.¹¹ The delegation, which included quite a few from the gold medal winning teams at the 1952 Helsinki Olympics, held exhibition performances in Beijing, Tianjin, Shenyang, Nanjing, Shanghai, Guangzhou, and Wuhan.¹² Prior to their arrival on September 28, the State Sports Commission sent explicit instructions earlier in the month to municipal and regional *tiyu* municipal

⁷ Lu-ji-ke, *Tiyu yu gongchanzhuyi jiaoyu*, trans. Li Wuzheng (Beijing: Dazhong chubanshe, 1953).

⁸ Zhonghua quanguo zonggonghui e wen fanyi shiyi, trans., *Tiyu he yundong* (Beijing: Gongren chubanshe, 1952).

⁹ “Sulian tiyu daibiaotuan jieshao” [Introducing the Soviet *tiyu* delegation], *Xin tiyu*, October 1953, 20-21.

¹⁰ Shanghai Municipal Archives (SMA) B126-1-53: Zhongyang renmin zhengfu tiyu yundong weiyuanhui (han), tibanzi di liu san qi hao: tongzhi Sulian ticao daibiaodui jianglai Hua zhi gedi zuo ticao biaoyan shi [State Sports Commission (internal), sports committee #637: Notice on Soviet gymnastics delegation coming to Huadong (East China) for gymnastics exhibitions], September? 1953.

¹¹ SMA B126-1-53: tongzhi Sulian ticao daibiaodui jianglai Hua zhi gedi zuo ticao biaoyan shi.

¹² “Shelun: Xuexi Sulian ticao yundong de xianjin lilun he jingyan” [Editorial: Studying the advanced theory and experience of Soviet gymnastics], *Xin tiyu*, October 1953, 15.

committees regarding gymnastics apparatus standards for the visiting team. The Commission asked that each locality provide a detailed report to them before September 20 regarding whether or not such standards could be met.¹³ Such a visit, according to a Shanghai work plan, required “professional research” (*zhuanmen yanjiu*), preparing cultural activities and sightseeing for the guests, and organizing study groups to watch the gymnastic exhibitions, as well as for *tiyu* workers to participate in question-and-answer sessions with their Soviet comrades.¹⁴ Chinese sports leaders clearly wanted to please their esteemed guests while also getting the most out of an unprecedented sports visit.

Additionally, Soviet sports experts came to China for longer periods to work. In April 1953, an official directive from the Ministry of Higher Education called for the recruitment and hiring of Soviet specialists in many fields, including *tiyu*, at the university level. The Beijing *tiyu* research institute, established in 1953, hired a *tiyu* theorist named Igor Kalishov,¹⁵ who was joined later in the year by a specialist in physiology and another in athletics. By 1956, Soviet specialists had also taken up academic posts in soccer, gymnastics, swimming, anatomy, and hygiene.¹⁶

Studying and learning from athletes and sports leaders from other “fraternal countries” (*xiongdì guojia*) in the Soviet-led socialist bloc also reached its apex

¹³ SMA B126-1-53: tongzhi Sulian ticao daibiaodui jianglai Hua zhi gedi zuo ticao biaoyan shi. The parallel bars, for example, each had to be between 1.6 and 1.7 meters off the ground, 3.5 meters in length, and only 42-48 centimeters apart from each other.

¹⁴ SMA B126-1-53: Sulian tiyu daibiaotuan lai Hu biaoyan gongzuo jihua (cao'an) [Work plan for the Soviet *tiyu* delegation coming to Shanghai for exhibitions (draft)], October 7, 1953.

¹⁵ This is my best guess for the transliterated name in Chinese: Kai-li-she-fu.

¹⁶ Beijing tiyu xueyuan xiaozhi, comp., *Beijing tiyu xueyuan zhi* [Beijing *tiyu* research institute records] (Beijing: Beijing tiyu xueyuan xiaozhi bianxiezu, 1994), 176-177.

during this period. The “International Sports News Briefs” in *Xin tiyu* also covered their athletic accomplishments.¹⁷ Exceptional athletes sometimes merited extensive coverage. For example, Czechoslovakian athlete Emil Zátopek, widely considered one of the most famous runners of all time, was featured prominently in two articles in the January 1953 issue of *Xin tiyu*. Zátopek, a staunch Communist Party member, won three gold medals in track and field at the 1952 Helsinki Olympics.¹⁸ After setting the Olympic record in the 5,000-meter and 10,000-meter races he decided to enter the marathon, having never run one in his life. Zátopek beat the reigning British champion and set a new Olympic record in that race, too, becoming the only man to have ever won all three events in a single Olympiad.¹⁹ An article in *Xin tiyu*, translated from a Czech publication and accompanied by a photo of Zátopek in his military uniform, profiled his army background and loyalty to the Communist Party.²⁰ Immediately following this article on the next page was a photo of Zátopek in his running gear and an article describing his training and specialty: consistently incorporating changing speed intervals.²¹ The article, translated from the Russian, described how Zátopek would run, for example, 20 to 40 200-meter intervals, or 20 to 30 400-meter intervals, in a single training session of 40 minutes to an hour.

¹⁷ For example, when Hungarian Józef Sákovics (Yue-se-fu. Sa-ke-wei-qi) won first place at the world fencing championship: “Shijie jijian guanjun sai zhong Xiongyali yundongyuan huoju da chengjiu” [World fencing championship Hungarian athlete wins big], *Xin tiyu*, September 1953, 40. In section on “International Sports News Briefs.”

¹⁸ “Shijie wenming de changpao jianjiang Za-tuo-pei-ke” [World-famous long distance runner Zatopek], *Xin tiyu*, January 1953, 18.

¹⁹ Tim Noakes. *Lore of Running: Fourth Edition* (Champaign, IL: Human Kinetics, 2003), 382-385.

²⁰ Ma-he Ya-luo-mi-er, “Yi ge yisheng xinmu zhong de Za-tuo-pei-ke” [Zatopek in the eyes of a doctor], *Xin tiyu*, January 1953, 18-19.

²¹ A. Bu-jia-qie-fu-si-jii, “Za-tuo-pei-ke de changpao lianxifa” [Zatopek’s long distance training methods], *Xin tiyu*, January 1953, 20-21. Zátopek’s legacy in the running world includes his methods of interval training.

Ironically, a hand drawing of proper running technique accompanying the article does not seem to resemble Zátapek's style at all,²² which was notorious in the running world for being sloppy and labored.²³

Socialist bloc countries also participated in delegation visits and exchanges with the PRC. Primarily, this was because of an official desire in both China and these countries to forge closer relations, and in China for these visits to help promote domestic political goals. When Poland sent a representative team of about thirty-five people from men's and women's basketball to China in the summer of 1952, leaders of the welcoming committee for the delegation in Shanghai aimed to show how the visit "further promoted friendship between the Chinese and Polish people, *tiyu* workers, and athletes."²⁴ Chinese sports leaders also intended to use the games during the visit to carry out a kind of "thought education" (*sixiang jiaoyu*) on internationalism and patriotism, and promote among the masses "the ethical style of new *tiyu*" (*xin tiyu daode zuofeng*) and local interest in *tiyu* activities. In order to

²² A. Bu-jia-qie-fu-si-jii, "Za-tuo-pei-ke de changpao lianxifa," 21.

²³ For example, Allison Danzig, "Going the Distance," *New York Times*, July 27, 1952. Danzig wrote: "...this little phenomenon of almost super-human endurance and with the most agonizing running style within memory sped 26 miles, 385 yards 6 minutes and 16 seconds faster than an Olympic marathon had ever been traversed before." See also: Frank Litsky, "Emil Zatopek, 78, Ungainly Running Star, Dies," *New York Times*, November 23, 2000, <http://www.nytimes.com/2000/11/23/sports/emil-zatopek-78-ungainly-running-star-dies.html> [Last accessed: November 24, 2014] and Ron Fimrite, "7.27.52 The Czech Who Went the Distance," *Sports Illustrated*, August 4, 1996, <http://www.si.com/vault/1996/08/04/216441/72752-the-czech-who-went-the-distance> [Last accessed: August 22, 2014].

²⁴ SMA B126-1-34: Huadong ji Shanghai huanying bolan lanqiu daibiaodui choubi weiyuanhui tongzhi [Notice from the East China and Shanghai preparatory committee for welcoming the Polish basketball delegation], July 24, 1952.

connect the Polish delegation visit to peoples' everyday lives, for example, the committee called on local work units to develop "mass basketball activities."²⁵

Chinese sports leaders and officials hoped that such visits would raise the technical skill levels of their own athletes. This was especially true during the Soviet gymnastics visit in 1953 and the Hungarian soccer visit in 1954, since both countries had done exceptionally well at the 1952 Helsinki Olympics in these sports. The Hungarian national soccer team in the 1950s, famously known in sports history as the "Golden Team" and the "Magical Magyars," had recently beaten England in what became an unforgettable match, and was slated to play in the 1954 World Cup after their visit.²⁶ Such a prominent team gained the attention of Chinese sports leaders who desperately wanted to improve national soccer skills, and in February 1954 a Hungarian soccer delegation went to China for a month. Although internal reports from Shanghai suggest that Hungary only sent third and fourth tier soccer players,²⁷ the skill level was likely far above that of any teams in China at the time. The visit was clearly important, as seating plans from some of the matches suggest that the Chairman himself was present for them,²⁸ and a study group (*xuexi dui*) of nearly 100 people – from the State Sports Commission, the August 1 (Ba-yi) team, the central

²⁵ SMA B126-1-34: Huadong ji Shanghai huanying bolan lanqiu daibiaodui choubei weiyuanhui tongzhi.

²⁶ For more on this Hungarian team that went "undefeated in thirty-two international matches" between 1950 and 1954, see Andrew Handler, *From Goals to Guns: The Golden Age of Soccer in Hungary* (Boulder, CO.; New York: Eastern European Monographs; Distributed by Columbia University Press, 1994). The game against England in which Hungary won 6-3 has been called the "Match of the Half-Century" in the world of soccer (44, 49). Handler adds that immediately after this victory coincided with a Hungarian national holiday and "the jubilant people of Hungary were bombarded with the slogan 'Socialism defeated Capitalism'" (49).

²⁷ SMA B126-1-86: Zhaodai Xiongyali zuqiudui lai Hu fangwen gongzuo jianbao: di er hao [Briefing on the hospitality work for the Hungarian soccer team's visit to Shanghai: #2], February 18?, 1954.

²⁸ SMA B126-1-86: Zhaodai Xiongyali zuqiudui lai Hu fangwen gongzuo jianbao: di er hao.

training institute team and a group of referees and leaders – followed the Hungarian delegation to several cities, including Shanghai.²⁹ In each place they visited, they played matches with the regional team (in Shanghai this was the Huadong team) [Figure 5]. In addition, the August 1 and Central Training Institute teams traveled from Beijing in order to play exhibition and practice matches against the Hungarian team.³⁰ The State Sports Commission instructed local *tiyu* committees to set up formal discussion sessions (*zuotanhui*) with Hungarian leaders and players in order to “point out and give their opinions on Chinese team weaknesses” following matches.³¹ Occasionally this also happened less formally. In Shanghai over a meal between Chinese and Hungarian sports leaders, one of the Hungarians made specific comments about the lack of Chinese offensive tactics (“when near the goal [players] forget what they’re doing... and bounce [around] without purpose”) and suggested ways on how to better position defensive players.³²

Preparation for such important visits required the participation and cooperation of a range of committees beyond those organizing sports practices and games. Arranging evening activities, sightseeing, transportation, translators, meals and lodging, small gifts or souvenirs, and distributing spending money all required coordination and often merited their own subcommittees. For example, a Shanghai

²⁹ SMA B126-1-86: Zhaodai Xiongyali zuqiudui lai Hu fangwen gongzuo jianbao: di er hao.

³⁰ SMA B126-1-86: Zhaodai Xiongyali zuqiudui lai Hu fangwen gongzuo jianbao: di er hao.

³¹ SMA B126-1-86: [untitled document] (2), February 1954. Although this document is untitled and undated, the format and content indicate that it is a State Sports Commission notice sent to the *tiyu* and hospitality committees of Huadong (East China) and Zhongnan (Central China) about the upcoming visit.

³² SMA B126-1-86: Zhaodai Xiongyali zuqiudui lai Hu fangwen gongzuo jianbao: di si hao [Briefing on the hospitality work for the Hungarian soccer team’s visit to Shanghai: #4], March 1?, 1954.

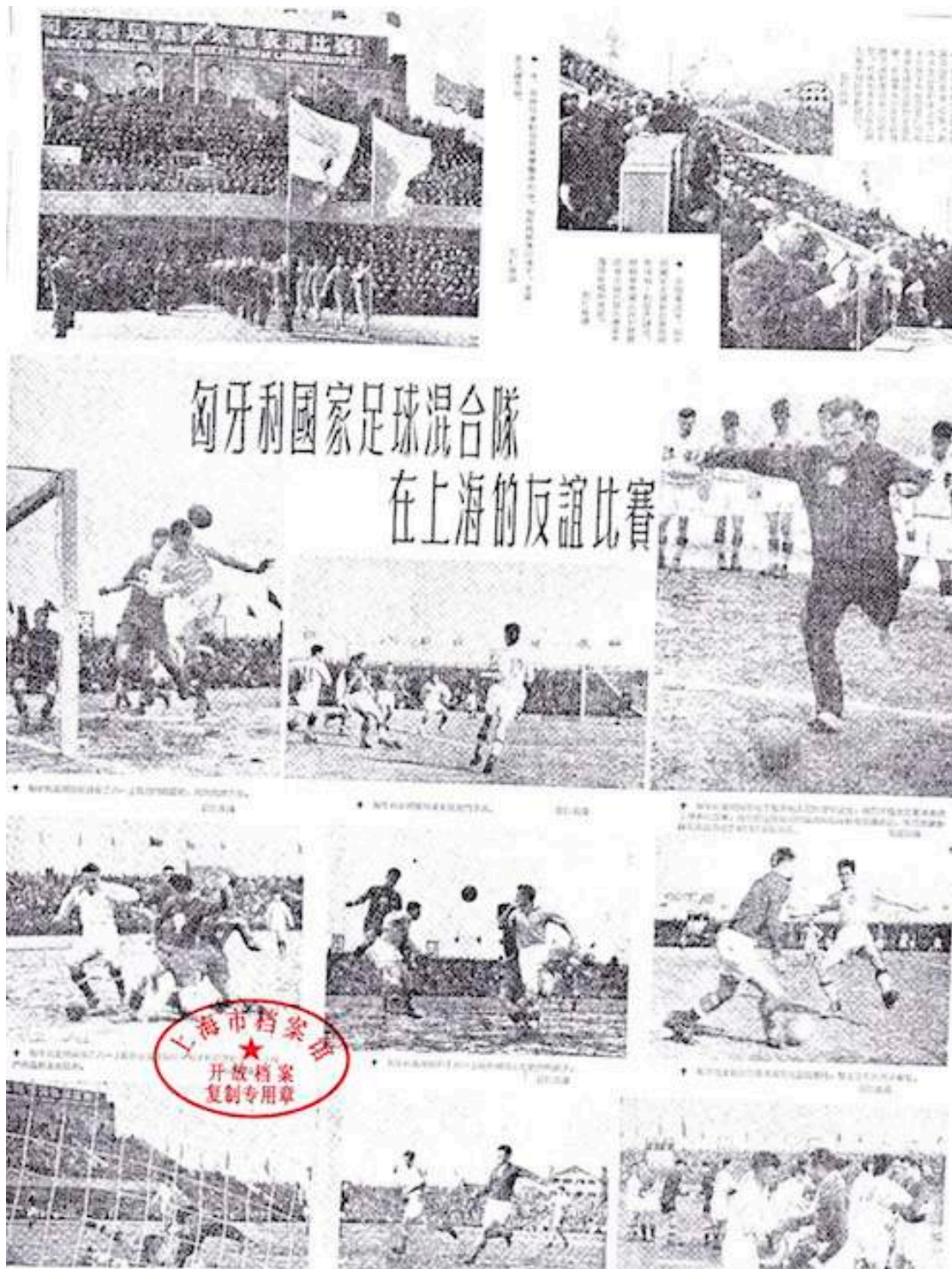


Figure 5. “Hungarian mixed soccer team’s friendly competition in Shanghai.” SMA B126-1-88. Originally published in *Xinwen bao*, February 28, 1954.

subcommittee in charge of cultural and evening activities for the Hungarian soccer delegation set up a Shaoxing opera performance one evening and a dance on another.³³ An additional task was identifying local translators. Some visiting sports delegations sent at least one multilingual person along to make the search easier –the Hungarian soccer delegation’s assistant spoke French and the team doctor could speak German³⁴ – but visiting athletes could not often communicate easily with their hosts. Chinese translators sometimes found themselves in precarious or awkward situations, such as when one Hungarian player asked how old a Shaoxing opera actress was and whether or not she was married, and when several of them asked how to say “I love you” [*wo ai ni*] in Chinese so they could use it with the women at evening dances.³⁵ In this particular case, Chinese leaders resolved to “get a good grasp on the work concerning the evening parties” and prepare Chinese participants in advance for these events.³⁶

Planning sightseeing around sports activities also required juggling a full schedule and meant long days for weary and sometimes uninterested guests. During the Soviet gymnastics visit in 1953, most of the delegation apparently “had no interest” (*bu gan xingqu*) in visiting the Cultural Palace, just one stop on a city tour considered

³³ SMA B126-1-86: Zhaodai Xiongyali zuqiudui lai Shanghai fangwen gongzuo jihua [Hospitality work plan for the Hungarian soccer team’s visit to Shanghai], February 1954.

³⁴ SMA B126-1-86: Zhaodai Xiongyali zuqiudui lai Hu fangwen gongzuo jianbao: di er hao.

³⁵ SMA B126-1-86: Jianbao (jue mi) [Report: top secret], February 27, 1954. I say somewhat precarious because these issues were listed in a report separate from the others and labeled “top secret.”

³⁶ SMA B126-1-86: Jianbao (jue mi).

“unsuitable” (*bu qiadang*) and taking up too much time.³⁷ The delegation’s assistant leader blamed a less-than-ideal performance later in the day on fatigue from such sightseeing activities. Food and meals during the Hungarian soccer team visit required meticulous preparation, and foreign guests also received a few small extras. For example, a preparatory report for Shanghai indicated that the assistant delegation leader wouldn’t eat cream soup, and instructed local workers to provide coffee, fruit and sweets for the players. At breakfast every day each player should be able to pick up a lemon, one hundred grams of chocolate, and Zhonghua brand cigarettes.³⁸ One of the players later complained, however, that the team was eating too much and that they were so full they had trouble moving during the games.³⁹

In addition to sightseeing, most visiting delegations received the grand tour of sports facilities that the local government wanted to show off. Delegation visit reports written by Chinese sports leaders and whose readers were often higher-ranking government officials, often recorded nice words foreign visitors had to say about the new construction. The Hungarian reporter that accompanied the soccer delegation in 1954 to Shanghai was apparently “very satisfied” with the newly built pool and the 60,000-person capacity of the Jiangwan sports stadium. This was “as large as [an] Olympic stadium,” he noted, and further added, “in the future the Olympics can be held in China.”⁴⁰ From these visits he concluded that one could “see China’s great construction [and] not only is China making great achievements in politics and the

³⁷ SMA B126-1-53: Zhaodai Sulian tiyu daibiaotuan biaoyan gongzuo zongjie [Summary of the hospitality work for the Soviet *tiyu* delegation exhibitions], October 1953.

³⁸ SMA B126-1-86: Zhaodai Xiongyali zuqiudui lai Hu fangwen gongzuo jianbao: di er hao.

³⁹ SMA B126-1-86: Jianbao (jue mi).

⁴⁰ SMA B126-1-86: Zhaodai Xiongyali zuqiudui lai Hu fangwen gongzuo jianbao: di si hao.

economy but also in sport.”⁴¹ Local *tiyu* committee leaders thus used foreign guests for validation that government resources and time were being well spent. They also made sure to record when foreign guests had commented on specific aspects of their visit to a locality that made it better than elsewhere. A Hungarian soccer player, for example, noted when in Shanghai that the fields were nicer than those in Beijing.⁴² Such a comment was likely made at least in part because of an ongoing rivalry between these two megacities, and because state resources for sport in the early PRC often went to the capital.

Chinese sports leaders claimed that their own athletes had improved their sporting ethics through exchanges with socialist bloc athletes. In the case of the Polish basketball delegation visit to Shanghai in 1952, the final report sent to the municipal committee stated that the visit had especially helped in the area of “ethical style” (*daode zuofeng*), decreasing the “bad habit of purposely injuring the opponent.”⁴³ Official reports often held socialist bloc athletes in the highest esteem. The Hungarian soccer players were regarded as “very lively” and with “upright and honest style.”⁴⁴ They also loved “being near the masses,”⁴⁵ walking around the city in order to meet ordinary people and watch kids play.

⁴¹ SMA B126-1-86: Zhaodai Xiongyali zuqiudui lai Hu fangwen gongzuo jianbao: di si hao.

⁴² SMA B126-1-86: Zhaodai Xiongyali zuqiudui lai Hu fangwen gongzuo jianbao: di san hao [Briefing on the hospitality work for the Hungarian soccer team’s visit to Shanghai: #3], February 25?, 1954.

⁴³ SMA B126-1-34: Guanyu huanying Bolan lanqiu daibiaodui de gongzuo xiang shiwei de baogao [Report concerning work to welcome the Polish basketball delegation], August 1, 1952.

⁴⁴ SMA B126-1-86: Zhaodai Xiongyali zuqiudui lai Hu fangwen gongzuo jianbao: di er hao and Xiongyali zuqiudui lai Hu fangwen gongzuo jianbao: di san hao.

⁴⁵ SMA B126-1-86: Zhaodai Xiongyali zuqiudui lai Hu fangwen gongzuo jianbao: di er hao.

Nevertheless, such public claims about the ethical values of these guests were sometimes dampened when players made more demands or did not behave the way Chinese officials would have liked. In Shanghai, for example, Hungarian players decided to skip a morning stroll in the park and go shopping instead. A top secret report produced during the visit noted that their guests had complained about not having enough spending money, even though each player had received 500,000 *yuan*, each leader 800,000 and the doctor 700,000.⁴⁶ If the guests wanted more money, it concluded, then “some of the representatives had brought foreign currency” and if they wanted to exchange this currency “we would be happy to quickly assist [with this].”⁴⁷

Sometimes sports leaders used international delegation visits as leverage when asking for money from the municipal or central government for facilities and equipment. In October 1952 the Beijing education bureau complained in an official report to the municipal government that, although Beijing had thirty years of experience in sports and similar cultural activities, the city’s *tiyu* facilities were still underdeveloped and the manpower and budget was incapable of bearing the burden of current needs – particularly in sports and cultural exchanges with fraternal countries. Officials cited the example of the “crash job” made for the Polish basketball team delegation that had visited Beijing in the summer of 1952, which had resulted in a lot of wasted manpower time on, for example, taking care of the delegation’s

⁴⁶ Although these numbers seem astronomical by today’s standards, even with inflation, these are prior to the currency revaluation that took place in 1955 at a ratio of 1:10,000 *yuan*.

⁴⁷ SMA B126-1-86: *jianbao* (*jue mi*).

entertainment, living quarters, and sports grounds.⁴⁸ This apparently included the lack of proper drainage facilities in the Xiannongtan stadium, requiring workers to spend entire mornings using water pumps to pump out storm water before afternoon competitions could take place.⁴⁹ In the report above, sports leaders estimated that at least 98 hundred million *yuan* was needed to repair Xiannongtan stadium and add enough room for 30,000 more spectators. They also asked for another 49 hundred million to add approximately 10,000 bleachers and make improvements in Beihai stadium for basketball and volleyball stadiums.⁵⁰ Fearing that the Beijing municipal budget could not handle such a request, however, Beijing sports leaders suggested that the report be submitted to higher authorities as it involved the responsibilities of handling international delegations. Likewise, prior to the Hungarian soccer team visit to Shanghai in February 1954, the Shanghai *tiyu* committee asked the State Sports Commission for 80 billion ten thousand *yuan* to fix the break room's heating stoves and the "somewhat serious contamination" in the showers and toilets. The committee decided to "paint over [the contamination] to clean [it]."⁵¹

⁴⁸ Beijing Municipal Archives (BMA) 002-004-00126: Guanyu qing Zhongyang bo zhuankuan xiujian. Xiannongzeng tiyuchang, beihai tiyuchang wenti de baogao [Report asking the Central government for money for building and repairing Xiannongzeng stadium and Beijing stadium], October 14, 1952.

⁴⁹ Zhang Qing, "Huiyi Beijingshi tiyu fenhui de chujian" [Remembering the beginnings of building the Beijing municipal *tiyu* committee], *Tiyu wenshi*, 1984(Z1), 13-14.

⁵⁰ BMA 002-004-00126: Guanyu qing Zhongyang bo zhuankuan xiujian. Xiannongzeng tiyuchang, beihai tiyuchang wenti de baogao. It is unclear whether or not they received such money or any at all as the original document has question marks scribbled over these estimates.

⁵¹ SMA B126-1-86: Zhaodai Xiongyali zuqiudui lai Hu fangwen gongzuo jianbao: di yi hao [Briefing on the hospitality work for the Hungarian soccer team's visit to Shanghai: #1], February 16, 1953. I presume that "painting over the contamination" would be similar to when, for example, my former rental property management decided that it would be more cost effective to quickly "clean" the mold in our rental unit by painting over it – in other words, covering the mold – rather than removing it with a cleaning agent.

The notion that these visits constituted part of a Soviet-led socialist world was obvious even when the Soviet Union was not the guest. During the Hungarian soccer team visit in 1954, the State Sports Commission instructed municipal committees that the Soviet flag be hung and the Soviet anthem played at each match.⁵² When the Hungarian delegation leader spoke to local Chinese sports leaders in Shanghai about the history of soccer in his country, he traced back to British influence in the nineteenth century, but ended his speech by crediting Soviet influence and programs – rather than the previous history – as the main reason for recent athletic success.⁵³

Sports interactions with these countries also offered something beyond improving technical skills and forging friendly relations: they gave Chinese athletes opportunities to compete outside the Euro- and Anglo-centric sports world, at a time when Chinese leaders continually battled for international recognition. The PRC participated in large-scale socialist bloc sports events, sending a delegation of eighty to the Fourth World Festival of Youth and Students held in Bucharest, Romania in August 1953. Huang Zhong accompanied a representative team of athletes from men’s and women’s basketball, volleyball, track and field, and swimming. The highlight of the trip for the Chinese team was when 25-year-old Wu Chuanyu won the only gold medal for China in the men’s 100-meter backstroke.⁵⁴ Wu was an ethnic Chinese, born and raised in Indonesia, who had “returned” to China (*hui guo*) in 1951

⁵² SMA B126-1-86: Zhaodai Xiongyali zuqiudui lai Hu fangwen gongzuo jianbao: di er hao.

⁵³ SMA B126-1-86: Zhe shi Xiongyali guojia zuqiu lunhedui zai er yue ershiliu ri shangwu baogaohui shang de baogao jilu, weijing zhengli, jingong cankao, buzhun fanyin [This is the February 26 morning public lecture report records of the Hungarian national soccer mixed team, not yet confirmed, for reference only, do not reprint], February 1954 .

⁵⁴ “Da shiji” [Memorable events] in *Zhongguo tiyu nianjian 1949-1991* [China Sports Yearbook 1949-1991], ed. Guojia tiwei (Beijing: Renmin tiyu chubanshe, 1993), 6.

following a second-place performance for the Indonesian team at the previous festival held in Berlin.⁵⁵ After his win in Bucharest in 1953, Wu became a media sensation in China. *Xin tiyu*, which rarely had the opportunity to highlight the international successes of any Chinese athlete in these years, included his victory as part of the “International Sports News Brief” in September 1953.⁵⁶ In October, the magazine included an article by Wu that described his background and experience,⁵⁷ featuring his photograph for the front cover.⁵⁸ When the Hungarian soccer team’s delegation reporter visited Shanghai in early 1954, the Shanghai *tiyu* committee set up an interview with Wu.⁵⁹ In September of the same year Wu was named as a representative to the First National People’s Congress, the only athlete on the list.⁶⁰ Unfortunately, he died in a plane crash while traveling to Hungary a month later.⁶¹

⁵⁵ Wu Chuanyu, “Wo wei zuguo yingde le yi ke jinzhi jiangzhang” [I won a gold medal for the motherland], *Xin tiyu*, October 1953, p. 26, and Li Lingxiu and Zhou Mingong, “Tiyu zhizi Rong Gaotang” [*Tiyu*’s son Rong Gaotang], *Tiyu wenhua daokan*, February 2003, 67. Wu was also the only representative of the Chinese delegation to participate officially in the Helsinki Olympics in summer 1952 (after the delegation arrived late), although this must have been difficult so soon after he “returned to the motherland” (*hui dao zuguo*) since he understood no Chinese and communicated in English (Wu, 26). According to Li and Zhou, prior to the festival in Romania, Wu had gone with a delegation to the Soviet Union in June 1953 where, through a Chinese translator, he received a few weeks of daily training from the very best Soviet swimming coach at the time. After just 8 days of training he had already improved his swimming times (Li and Zhou, 68).

⁵⁶ “Wo guo huo yi bai gongchi yangyong diyi” [Our nation wins first place in the 100-meter backstroke], *Xin tiyu*, September 1953, 40.

⁵⁷ Wu Chuanyu, “Wo wei zuguo yingde le yi ke jinzhi jiangzhang,” 26-27.

⁵⁸ *Xin tiyu*, October 1953, cover. The other side of the front cover includes several athletes carrying the flag as part of the athletes’ parade.

⁵⁹ SMA B126-1-86: Zhaodai Xiongyali zuqiudui lai Hu fangwen gongzuo jianbao: di si hao.

⁶⁰ “Zhonghua renmin gongheguo di yi jie quanguo renmin daibiao dahui daibiao mingdan” [First National People’s Congress of the PRC name list], *Renmin ribao*, September 4, 1954. The only other representatives named from the world of *tiyu* were Rong Gaotang and Ma Yuehan, who were much older sports leaders at the time. See also Li and Zhou, “Tiyu zhizi Rong Gaotang,” 67.

⁶¹ “Wo guo youxiu yundongyuan Wu Chuanyu shishi” [The death of our nation’s elite athlete Wu Chuanyu], *Renmin ribao*, December 25, 1954.

Sports yearbooks and official publications in China continue to cite Wu's gold medal in Bucharest as "the first time that the five-star flag was hung."⁶²

Other athletes had not fared as well as Wu, but they chalked up the event in Romania as a good learning experience and had high hopes for future success. Chinese athletes cited socialist bloc models for the successes they had made so far, however. Li Qi, a track and field athlete in the 1,500-meter race, attributed setting a new record at the national meet held in Beijing to having studied the Soviet Union and the training methods of Czechoslovakian athlete Emil Zátopek.⁶³ Mostly, he stressed that this included a planned regimen of speed, sprints, intervals, and endurance that he had begun in 1952 under the direction of the State Sports Commission's track and field team training. He had also worked on improving his overall physical strength, speed, and flexibility by, for example, practicing shot put and the high jump, and playing volleyball and basketball. Nevertheless, Li stated that he still had some areas that needed improvement, such as an "unnatural arm swing" and foot strides that were too short. He vowed to continue studying the "Soviet Union's advanced experience" in order to improve his techniques and continue making achievements.⁶⁴

Chinese publications also often attributed socialist bloc sport success, including their own, to the "Ready for Labor and Defense" *tiyu* system. First

⁶² "Da shiji," in *Zhongguo tiyu nianjian 1949-1991*, 6. Curiously Wu Chuanyu's record is not listed in the first China sports yearbook published after the establishment of the PRC, in 1964. *Zhongguo tiyu nianjian: 1949-1962*, ed. Zhongguo tiyu nianjian bianji weiyuanhui (Beijing: Renmin tiyu chubanshe, 1964).

⁶³ Li Qi, "You jihua de duanlian tigao le wo de yundong chengjiu" [Planned exercise improved my athletic achievements], *Xin tiyu*, August 1953, 21.

⁶⁴ Li, "You jihua de duanlian tigao le wo de yundong chengjiu," 21.

introduced by Stalin in the 1930s, the “Ready for Labor and Defense” system (known in Russian as *Gotov k trudu i oborone* or *GTO*) aimed to extend sports participation and raise the level of all-around physical fitness among ordinary citizens. Soviet leaders hoped the system would cultivate physically fit individuals who in their spare time voluntarily engaged in regular exercise. The system was designed to encourage people to train their bodies in order to pass regular fitness tests and receive badges at various levels. But it was more than just fitness: the *GTO* included the development of paramilitary skills, as well as courses on hygiene, health, and first aid.⁶⁵

The *GTO* served as the foundation for raising the fitness and health of everyone while simultaneously providing a method to build a more competitive athletic base. The system’s core provided a fitness program designed for mass participation and that aimed to connect all-around bodily training to national labor and defense goals, but its various levels also provided a way to build a nationally ranked system of competitive athletes.⁶⁶ Beginning in 1935 the *GTO* had included a preparatory (or entry-level) stage for schoolchildren, intended to encourage people from a young age to make some form of exercise part of their daily life, as well as two stages at the adult level, and the uniform rankings system for superior athletes.⁶⁷ Participants who passed the second level of the “Ready for Labor and Defense” system formed a base of athletes from which Soviet leaders then chose the best athletes for higher levels of competition.

⁶⁵ James Riordan, *Sport in Soviet Society: Development of Sport and Physical Education in Russia and the USSR* (Cambridge [Eng.]; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1977), 128-129.

⁶⁶ Xu Yingchao, “Sulian tiyu de jidian jieshao” [Some introduction to Soviet *tiyu*], *Xin tiyu*, January 1951, 14.

⁶⁷ Riordan, *Sport in Soviet Society*, 129-131.

By the 1950s, the “Ready for Labor and Defense” system had become a kind of de facto marker of sports and physical culture in the socialist bloc. East German leaders, for example, had introduced the Soviet-inspired model in 1950 in an effort to increase citizen participation in sport and train ideal socialist citizens through “soft coercion.”⁶⁸ Hungary, Romania, Poland and Bulgaria also adopted the program around the same time.⁶⁹ And, in the January 1951 issue of *Xin tiyu*, Xu Yingchao, an older generation *tiyu* expert and the vice-chair of the All-China Sports Federation, officially introduced the “Ready for Labor and Defense” *tiyu* system (the *laoweizhi*) to Chinese readers. Chinese sports leaders had high hopes for adopting this Soviet model for sport in China. Following a brief history of the system, Xu’s article was accompanied by an outline on how the system extended to *tiyu* at all levels and people – from schools to workplaces, villages, and even ranked elite athletes.⁷⁰

Adopting and adapting such a model for China showed not only a reverence for

⁶⁸ Molly Wilkinson Johnson, *Training Socialist Citizens: Sports and the State in East Germany* (Leiden; Boston: Brill, 2008), 75. Highly organized sports activities for ordinary citizens had a long history in Germany prior to the introduction of this system. Wilkinson-Johnson argues that it differed from earlier sports activities found in Germany primarily in its attempt to teach people the connection between individual and communal participation and larger socialist and nationalist goals. She says that the Soviet-inspired program worked well in getting East Germans involved through its method of “soft coercion,” but that it fell short of larger goals of cultivating ideal socialist citizens. For example, people remained loyal to individual and local communal interests rather than making a greater identification to collective socialism.

⁶⁹ There’s not much written about this program in secondary sources on countries aside from the books mentioned already by Wilkinson Johnson on the GDR and by Riordan on the Soviet system. However, records from the Chinese Foreign Archives, which are basically background reports on *tiyu* in various socialist bloc countries, indicate PRC official interest in adopting similar programs in order to become part of this world. The “Ready for Labor and Defense” system existed in each of them. Also, one of the Hungarian soccer delegation leaders mentioned the *laoweizhi* in the summary report he gave on the history of soccer in Hungary. The *laoweizhi* was, thus, Soviet-inspired in all countries, and the emphasis on learning from the Soviet experience.

⁷⁰ Xu, “Sulian tiyu de jidian jieshao,” 11-14.

learning from the Soviet Union, but also simultaneously an effort to join the rest of the Soviet-led socialist bloc on the same playing field.

Scientific Socialism and the “Ready for Labor and Defense” System

Soviet and Chinese leaders both highlighted the “scientific” nature of the “Ready for Labor and Defense” system, because it was grounded in modern scientific research methods that supported the necessity of an exercise program for training the whole body. “Scientific” here referred to “scientific socialism,” which in this case the CCP understood as part of Engels’ larger critique of “utopian socialism.” In the late nineteenth century, Engels posited “scientific socialism” against “utopian socialism” in order to explain their differing modes of understanding the human body within Nature. Utopian socialism, he claimed, was based on philosophical and metaphysical modes of reasoning. Metaphysics, argued Engels, isolates objects and “forgets the connection between them; in the contemplation of their existence, it forgets the beginning and end of that existence; of their repose, it forgets their motion. It cannot see the woods for the trees.”⁷¹ In contrast, scientific socialism was based on dialectical reasoning, which in turn stemmed from scientific methods of absolute reasoning, and studied the connections of the objects as a whole.⁷²

⁷¹ Fredrich Engels, “Chapter 2: Dialectics” in *Socialism: Utopian and Scientific*. Orig. pub. 1880 and available online at <http://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1880/soc-utop/ch02.htm> [Last accessed November 24, 2014].

⁷² Engels, “Chapter 2: Dialectics.” He also wrote that dialectics “comprehends things and their representations, ideas, in their essential connection, concatenation, motion, origin and ending.” More specifically, as related to Nature and mankind, Engels added that “Nature is the proof of dialectics, and it must be said for modern science that it has furnished this proof with very rich materials increasingly daily, and thus has shown that, in the last resort, Nature works dialectically and not metaphysically;

The evolution of the human body, Engels also argued, was due to, and responsible for, more sophisticated forms of labor and production.⁷³ The human hand in particular played the most vital role in society because it was responsible for labor. In contrast to metaphysical understandings of the human body that separated individual parts, Engels argued that the hand could not be extricated and understood except as part of the whole body.⁷⁴

Citing Darwin, Engels further noted that, “the body benefited from the law of correlation of growth... separate parts of an organic being are always bound up with certain forms of other parts that apparently have no connection with them.” The hand was “the product of labor”⁷⁵ because it evolved according to the modes of production, and it came as a direct result from the overall evolution of the human body. Engels also believed that the use of weapons in physical activities associated with work and military were directly responsible for the development of mental and physical abilities.⁷⁶

that she does not move in the eternal oneness of a perpetually recurring circle, but goes through a real historical evolution... [Darwin] dealt the metaphysical conception of Nature the heaviest blow by his proof that all organic beings, plants, animals, and man himself, are the products of a process of evolution going on through millions of years.” Scientific socialism was thus based on the belief that modern natural science – à la Darwin – is crucial to understanding *and proving* the dialectical workings of Nature. In other words, the human body is a living organism that is wholly connected to Nature, whose absolute truth can be proved through modern science, and is always in motion with the possibility to evolve.

⁷³ “Only by labour, by adaptation to ever new operations, through the inheritance of muscles, ligaments, and, over longer periods of time, bones that had undergone special development and the ever-renewed employment of this inherited finesse in new, more and more complicated operations, have given the human hand the high degree of perfection...” Engels, “Chapter 2: Dialectics.”

⁷⁴ “...the hand did not exist alone, it was only one member of an integral, highly complex organism. And what benefited the hand, benefited also the whole body it served...” Engels, “Chapter 2: Dialectics.”

⁷⁵ Quoted in Sigrud Schmalzer, *The People’s Peking Man: Popular Science and Human Identity in Twentieth-Century China* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2008), 61.

⁷⁶ Riordan, “Marx, Lenin and Physical Culture,” *Journal of Sport History*, vol. 3, no. 1 (1976): 154.

Thus socialism, as conceived of in the late nineteenth century by Marx and Engels, rejected the metaphysical separation of mind and body and the belief in an inherent oneness between man's mind and body that can be found in Nature. Any and all actions performed by man – and especially those involving labor – set in motion “the natural forces of his body, in order to appropriate Nature's productions in a form adapted to his own wants.”⁷⁷ The human body is inextricably linked to the human mind, and any physical activity performed by the body influences the trajectory of society, production, and mankind as a whole.

Lenin, however, was the first to more explicitly connect engaging in physical activity with performing physical exercises and sports, and he was also the first to emphasize how this could aid an individual's character formation.⁷⁸ Influenced by pre-revolutionary Russian scientists who advocated “active rest”⁷⁹ – that is, rest with movement (i.e., exercise) rather than passive rest (i.e., napping or a similar activity) – and his own experience with exercise, he believed that physical training promoted all-round body development and was the only way to fully develop and realize an

⁷⁷ Quoted in Riordan, “Marx, Lenin and Physical Culture,” 153. Original quote from Karl Marx, *Capital* (F.L.P.H., Moscow, 1961, vol. I.), 177.

⁷⁸ Riordan, *Sport in Soviet Society*, 63-65.

⁷⁹ Riordan, *Sport in Soviet Society*, 54-55. Ivan Sechyonov ran experiments in which he noticed that the work performed by a tired hand essentially made it stronger. Riordan argues that Sechyonov's findings had “considerable significance for later Soviet studies of fatigue and rest, of physiology of work and training methods” (54) and “undoubtedly played no small part in justifying and working out the ‘production gymnastics’ or physical exercises” of Soviet factory life (54-55). Sechyonov also influenced Ivan Pavlov, who Soviet physical education experts widely admired for his physiological findings on conditioned reflexes in animals, i.e. that “the conditioned reflex is the basis of all of men's higher nervous activity” (quoted in Riordan, 55). Soviet physical education experts connected the regular and systematic participation in a variety of sports and physical activities to improving the “general functioning and capacity of both the physical organism and of the mind” (55), and asserted that Pavlov's theory of the nervous system was the base of understanding why strength, speed, stamina, and skill improved “the functional capacity of the organism – especially for the purposes of work” (quoted in Riordan, 56).

individual's mental and physical abilities.⁸⁰ Communist leaders following the Marxist-Leninist line of thought since have more or less held the conviction that that only an individual with a “healthy body” could also have a “healthy mind.”

Likewise, in China the Marxist-Leninist reasoning behind adopting the *laoweizhi* was that the human body, vital for efficient labor and socialist production, was wholly connected in all its parts (there was no mind/body separation). A 1953 publication on “The Scientific Foundation of the *laoweizhi*,” argued that the all-around development of the body was necessary because “from studying physiology [we can see that] the human body is united” and it was not possible to “separate [it] into physical strength and intellect.”⁸¹ In fact, the authors stated, it was impossible to develop wisdom to its greatest extent without strengthening the physique (*tige*), because the “source of wisdom” (*zhihui de fayuandi*) was found in nerve cells. The decline in nerve cells also explained why as people aged they became absent-minded, their spirit declined, and their work effectiveness decreased. Wisdom, the authors continued, was “like a flower” and the body (*shenti*) “like its roots, branch and leaf.” If the roots, branches, and leaves withered early, then “how could this flower bloom beautifully and maintain long-lasting scent?”⁸² The *laoweizhi* thus needed to combine physical education with that related to mental development and, furthermore, the program could not be limited solely to school-age youth, because exercise needed to continue at all ages. However, it was especially important in the “prime of life”

⁸⁰ Riordan, *Sport in Soviet Society*, 63; Riordan, “Marx, Lenin and Physical Culture,” 158.

⁸¹ Liu Tianxi and Xu Hanwen, *Laoweizhi de kexue jichu* [The scientific basis of the *laoweizhi*] (Shanghai: Beixin shuju, 1953), 2.

⁸² Liu and Xu, *Laoweizhi de kexue jichu*, 2-3.

(literally the “robust period” *zhuangnian qi*) to participate in *tiyu* because – according to studies by modern physiology and *tiyu* experts – the human body would otherwise prematurely age by 15 to 20 years, or perhaps even more.⁸³

Additionally, the authors argued that this interdependence of wisdom and physique – at the core of *tiyu* under socialism – was also what separated capitalist from communist societies. The development of wisdom depended on the strength of body (*tipo*), and the authors claimed that precisely what was needed to transform society into a communist one was both a high level of intellect (*zhili*) and physical strength (*tili*). Capitalist societies, the authors claimed, with their emphasis on individual sports rather than overall physical development, had overlooked this important principle of all-round development of the body (*shenti*).⁸⁴

Tiyu officials in China also claimed that Soviet sports and physical culture programs were politically and practically better models to follow than those previously promoted by the Nationalists because they were based on scientific socialist research and methods.⁸⁵ Soviet *tiyu* scientific theory, they believed, was “concretely scientific, systematic and rich with science” (*fengfu de kexue*).⁸⁶ Soviet *tiyu* was also far superior to *tiyu* of capitalist countries because it was inclusive of the

⁸³ Liu and Xu, *Laoweizhi de kexue jichu*, 3.

⁸⁴ Liu and Xu, *Laoweizhi de kexue jichu*, 3.

⁸⁵ For example, People’s University in Beijing, established in 1950, became a model for higher education as it incorporated Soviet methods of research and hired numerous Soviet professors. Douglas Stiffler, “Building Socialism at Chinese People’s University: Chinese Cadres and Soviet Experts in the People’s Republic of China, 1949-57,” PhD dissertation, University of California, San Diego, 2002. Stiffler notes that full-scale copying of Soviet models became a source of contention at Renda.

⁸⁶ From *Xin tiyu*, 1952, 11. Quoted in Cui Lequan, Yang Xiangdong, and Fu Yannong, *Zhongguo tiyu sixiangshi (xiandai juan)* [History of China’s *tiyu* thought (modern volume)](Beijing: Shoudu shifan daxue chubanshe, 2008), 47.

masses. In Chinese Marxist theory science, production, and politics were linked together, and scientific theory and practice could only unite when science was associated with the masses.⁸⁷ In other words, *tiyu* should both include and encourage the direct involvement of the masses in its development. The *laoweizhi* was superior because it was a system designed for mass participation in all capacities. Furthermore, the CCP leadership characterized *tiyu* in capitalist countries, as it did *tiyu* under the Nationalists, as elitist because it ignored the masses.

Adopting this program thus resonated with national goals, such as building patriotic socialist citizens, as much as it meant political inclusion in the larger Soviet-led socialist world. The state's goal of cultivating patriotic citizens and raising the physical quality of the population through modern *tiyu*, as discussed in the previous chapter, was not new in the early PRC, and extended back at least to the Republican period. Attaining socialist citizenship in the PRC, however, differed from earlier efforts because leaders understood *tiyu* in the context of Marxism-Leninism and scientific socialism, meaning that the masses played a central role in its creation. Nevertheless, PRC leaders were also preoccupied with raising the physical quality of the masses, who Mao described as a "poor but blank" population of people.⁸⁸ They

⁸⁷ Richard Suttmeier, "Party Views of Science: The Record from the First Decade," *The China Quarterly*, no. 44 (Oct.-Dec. 1970): 150. Sigrid Schmalzer has further argued that, in seeking to carry out a so-called "mass science," Mao and followers applied a "class politics of knowledge" in which they attacked intellectual elites and sought to "overthrow the division between mental and manual labor." Schmalzer, *The People's Peking Man*, 9.

⁸⁸ Mao called the population "poor" and "blank" in the "On the Ten Major Relationships" speech he gave April 25, 1956. "On the Ten Major Relationships" in Mao Zedong, *Selected Works of Mao Tse-tung: Vol. V* (India: Kranti Publications, 1990) and available online at https://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/mao/selected-works/volume-5/mswv5_51.htm [Last accessed August 29, 2014]. Sigrid Schmalzer's work on science dissemination in the PRC has shown that understanding the population as "poor but blank" was sometimes an asset and sometimes a

accepted as fact that the majority of the population was backwards and took this as a “fundamental point of departure for development strategy.”⁸⁹ The *laoweizhi* was their answer to producing a strong and productive socialist collective, because the program required the participation of the masses in structured exercise that aimed to improve their all-round physical quality.

The CCP leadership did not have to look hard to find supporters of the *laoweizhi* among *tiyu* experts of all backgrounds. Many older-generation *tiyu* experts lauded the basic premises and fitness goals behind the *laoweizhi*; after all, encouraging people to participate in an exercise regime that was based in the physiological and natural sciences was hardly a new idea for them. *Tiyu* experts in the Republican period had touted the importance of physical education for improving the health of the general population. Ma Yuehan, for example, firmly believed in the physiological basis and health benefits of *tiyu* for everybody. In the very first issue of *Xin tiyu*, he had declared that science had already served as the main foundation for *tiyu* knowledge in China for decades.⁹⁰ In the early PRC, however, most *tiyu* experts believed sport (*tiyu yundong*) to be a scientific field of study in of itself,⁹¹ rather than a field that was just influenced by other fields of science. Furthermore, the *laoweizhi*

liability. An asset in that, as long as intellectuals and Party leaders studied and learned from the masses – i.e., their language and lives – then these elites could also educate the masses. However, in the case of science dissemination in the early PRC, the liability was that ignorant masses not only needed to be educated, but that they also needed science to displace superstition. Mao and Party leaders never really trusted the masses to be able to distinguish between the two. Chapter 2: “‘A United Front against Superstition’: Science Dissemination, 1940-1971” in Schmalzer, *The People’s Peking Man*, especially pages 56-58 and 76-77.

⁸⁹ Susan Greenhalgh and Edward A. Winckler. *Governing China’s Population: From Leninist to Neoliberal Politics* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 2005), 2.

⁹⁰ Ma Yuehan, “Women dui tiyu yingyou de renshi” [Our knowledge of *tiyu*], *Xin tiyu*, July 1950, 18-20.

⁹¹ Chen, *Tan tan laoweizhi*, 11. Literally: “*tiyu yundong shi yi men kexue*” (*tiyu* is a science).

was more politicized than state-sponsored programs in previous decades. Backed by Soviet-approved scientific research, the system was considered a fundamental part of communist education that every citizen needed.

The “Ready for Labor and Defense” System in China

In the first half of the 1950s, sports leaders in China began the daunting task of implementing the *laoweizhi*, a system that they themselves had just begun to comprehend. Early articles in *Xin tiyu* stressed the centrality of the *laoweizhi* to all *tiyu* programs, but the dearth of native-language materials and past experience with the new program meant that in these years workers often had to rely on available translated Soviet materials for further guidance. Although the Resist America-Aid Korea campaign, which began in late 1950, temporarily shifted official attention away from building Soviet-style mass *tiyu* programs in order to mobilize the masses for war, with the end of the campaign in late 1951 came a renewed interest in Soviet *tiyu* and the *laoweizhi*. Over the next few years, in addition to previously noted articles in *Xin tiyu*, *tiyu* handbooks and teaching materials translated from Russian and directed at educators were published,⁹² including those on the *laoweizhi*.

A booklet published as early as June 1951 and titled “The Soviet Union’s ‘Ready for Labor and Defense’ *tiyu* system” explained the basic regulations,

⁹² For example: Qie-lie-fu-ke-fu, ed., Qiu Biao, trans., *Sulian tiyu jiaocai* [Soviet physical education teaching materials] (Shanghai: Shanghai beixin shuju chuban, 1952) and Luo-qi-ke jiaoshou, ed., Qiu Biao, trans., *Xiaoxue xin tiyu jiaocai jiaofa* [Primary school new physical education teaching materials and methods] (Shanghai: Shanghai beixin shuju chuban, 1953).

requirements for participant registration, and testing standards.⁹³ The Soviet program consisted of three levels: the “preparatory” (*zhunbei*, or lowest) level, the first level, and the second (highest) level of the system. Within each level, the charts in the booklet divided testing standards according to age and gender with criteria for passing or receiving an “outstanding” mark. In addition to the required tests for passing each level, such as running short distances and hand grenade throwing, participants at the first and second levels of the *laoweizhi* also needed to pass one test of their choice within each of four required *tiyu* testing categories: endurance, speed, agility, and strength. Participants at the preparatory level only had to pass three. Those between the ages of 14 and 15 were generally given easier standards than those aged 16 and over. The standards for women to pass the tests were easier than those for men – endurance tests, for example, had shortened distances. In any case, there was no upper age limit for participation in the program, although the average participant was more likely to be a youth than middle-aged.

Before the *laoweizhi* could be launched everywhere nationwide, officials decided that they needed to first improve overall *tiyu* organization and structure. Then, they would run trials of it in the army and urban schools that had strong physical education programs – in other words, among youth who were already more likely than the average citizen to be in good physical shape. Drafts of the 1951 Beijing *tiyu* committee’s plan called for the promotion, organization, and planning of all *tiyu* activities, including the *laoweizhi* under the name “*tiyu* exercise standards,” in

⁹³ Zhonghua quanguo tiyu zonghui Beijingshi fenhui (Sulianxi), trans., ‘*Zhunbei laodong yu weiguo’ tiyu zhidu* [The “Ready for Labor and Defense” *tiyu* system] (Beijing: Qingnian chubanshe, 1951).

universities and middle schools.⁹⁴ General *tiyu* propaganda efforts followed alongside the introduction of the program, with a *Beijing tiyu* periodical to be published on a biweekly basis, as well twenty book collections focusing on various subjects and activities, such as gymnastics (*ticao*), athletics, ball sports, and the “general knowledge of *tiyu* science” (*tiyu kexue changshi*). Cadre training was to include organizing events for school physical education enthusiasts, such as frequent public lectures and short-term training classes during the summer. Additionally, leaders encouraged *tiyu* workers to help each other in self-study and organizing small study groups, and, along with enthusiasts, put to good use all *tiyu*-related movies, radio broadcasts, newspapers, and promotional books.

As this massive organization effort and propaganda launch took place, so too did a few select Beijing schools begin trials of the “*tiyu* exercise standards” in mid-1951.⁹⁵ The general goals and methods of the standards, like the official *laoweizhi*, encouraged more frequent and diverse exercise, with a focus on developing flexibility, strength, endurance, and speed, in order for students to gain a base of fitness.⁹⁶ More than 7,000 students at the university and middle school levels were organized into more than 500 small exercise groups for a month of organized and “systematic” (*xitong*) exercise. By the end of the summer, more than 1,400 students had reached

⁹⁴ BMA 185-001-00003: *Tiyu fenhui 1951 nian gongzuo* (cao'an) [The *tiyu* branch's 1951 work plan (draft)], January? 1951.

⁹⁵ Although the Beijing municipal *tiyu* committee and the municipal *tiyu* youth group technically called these the summer *tiyu* “exercise standards” (*duanlian biao zhun*), there were references in the documents to the Soviet “Ready for Labor and Defense” system.

⁹⁶ He Lu, Hui Xianyue, Gu Chen, “Shenme shi ‘*tiyu* duanlian biao zhun’ zhidu” [What is the ‘*tiyu* exercise standards’ system?], *Xin tiyu*, August 1953, 5-6.

“all levels” of the standards and received badges as rewards.⁹⁷ That winter, Tianjin and Shanghai also similarly promoted a set of winter exercise standards.⁹⁸

Although the exercise standards generally followed the goals and methods of the *laoweizhi*, they also differed from the official system in at least two important aspects. First, the required test standards were lower than those found in the official *laoweizhi*. In fact, the main goal of the standards was to support regular exercise rather than test students. Tests were to be used only for “examination and recognition of daily exercise achievements.”⁹⁹ Additionally, and in stark contrast to the *laoweizhi*, the standards openly allowed for flexible adjustment by area or even by school. The standards were thus suggestive rather than rigid, and each local committee could essentially decide which activities to include and how they wanted to implement the system as a whole.¹⁰⁰

The nationwide rollout of the *laoweizhi* began on May 4, 1954, when a directive called for the *yubei* (lowest) level to focus first on middle schools with “better conditions.”¹⁰¹ Directives stated that earlier “*tiyu* exercise standards” would

⁹⁷ Xiong Xiaozheng and Zhong Bingshu, *Xin Zhongguo tiyu 60 nian* [60 Years of New China’s *Tiyu*] (Beijing: Beijing tiyu daxue chubanshe, 2010), 44. The authors also claim that by the end of 1953 more than 80,000 students had participated in three levels of the *tiyu* exercise standards: preparatory (*yubei*) level, 1st and 2nd levels, and that the purpose of the program was cultivating “body quality” (*shenti suzhi*). Beijing no. 4 middle school, a frequent model school for *tiyu* in these years, is noted in a CCTV documentary as having been one of the participating schools. (CCTV, *Tiyu renjian: Suiyue jishi “laoweizhi” yu Beijing sizhong* [Sports world: Chronicling the years of the “laoweizhi” and Beijing no. 4], available online at <http://sports.cctv.com/20090831/112716.shtml> [Last accessed July 22, 2014].)

⁹⁸ Xiong and Zhong, *Xin Zhongguo tiyu 60 nian*, 44.

⁹⁹ He, Hui, Gu, “Shenme shi [tiyu duanlian biao zhun] zhidu,” 6.

¹⁰⁰ He, Hui, Gu, “Shenme shi [tiyu duanlian biao zhun] zhidu,” 6.

¹⁰¹ “Zhongyang tiwei guanyu gongbu zhunbei laodong yu weiguo tiyu zhuidu zanzheng tiaoli, zanzheng xiangmu biao zhun, yubeiji zanzheng tiaoli de tonggao (1954 nian 5 yue 4 ri)” [Notice from the State Sports Commission announcing temporary regulations, temporary standards in specific disciplines [i.e., of the sports tested in the fitness tests], and preparatory level temporary standards (May 4, 1954)], in

now simply be called the “*laoweizhi* preparatory level” – but that for the immediate future the system would still be in the trial stage and soliciting feedback from all levels of *tiyu* committees on how to revise or adjust appropriately. Specific work units and the large regional areas were allowed to make adaptations as needed.¹⁰²

Although the purpose of the *laoweizhi* was first and foremost to use exercise to raise overall health of the nation, beginning with young people,¹⁰³ the system also promoted a deep connection between physical training and the development of socialist character traits. Participation in the *laoweizhi*, leaders hoped, would strengthen peoples’ bodies for the purposes of labor, thereby contributing to efficient labor production, as well as provide them with a patriotic education and the necessary paramilitary skills useful in national defense. People would become “healthy, courageous, optimistic protectors of the homeland (*zuguo baoweizhe*) and constructors of socialism (*shehui zhuyi jianshezhe*).”¹⁰⁴ Paramilitary skills were thus an important part of the *laoweizhi*, and included tests like throwing weighted hand grenades specified distances¹⁰⁵ and running or swimming while carrying a rifle.¹⁰⁶ A

Tiyu yundong wenjian xuanbian (1949-1981) [Sports documents collection (1949-1981)], comp. Guojia tiwei zhengce yanjiushi (Beijing: Renmin tiyu chubanshe, 1982), 218-219.

¹⁰² “Zhongyang tiwei guanyu gongbu zhunbei laodong yu weiguo tiyu zhuidu zanxing tiaoli, zanxing xiangmu biaoqun, yubeiji zanxing tiaoli de tongzhi,” 217.

¹⁰³ “Zhonggong zhongyang pizhuan zhongyang tiwei dangzu guanyu jiaqiang renmin tiyu yundong gongzuo de baogao de zhishi (1954 nian 1 yue 8 ri)” [The Central Party forwards instructions on the State Sports Commission’s Party report on strengthening the people’s *tiyu* movement work (January 8, 1954)], in *Tiyu yundong wenjian xuanbian (1949-1981)*, comp. Guojia tiwei zhengce yanjiushi (Beijing: Renmin tiyu chubanshe, 1982), 3-4.

¹⁰⁴ “Zhongyang tiwei guanyu gongbu zhunbei laodong yu weiguo tiyu zhuidu zanxing tiaoli, zanxing xiangmu biaoqun, yubeiji zanxing tiaoli de tongzhi,” 218-219.

¹⁰⁵ Zhonghua quanguo tiyu zonghui Beijingshi fenhui (Sulianxi), trans., ‘*Zhunbei laodong yu weiguo*’ *tiyu zhidu*, 13.

¹⁰⁶ Zhonghua quanguo tiyu zonghui Beijingshi fenhui (Sulianxi), trans., ‘*Zhunbei laodong yu weiguo*’ *tiyu zhidu*, 19.

booklet published in 1953 on obstacle running (*zhang'ai pao*), for example, provided thorough descriptions and illustrations indicating how participants should position their bodies in order to move around obstacles while carrying a rifle [Figure 6].¹⁰⁷

Program handbooks in the PRC also reinforced the importance of all-around general physical fitness, rather than training only in a specific sport, to one's overall health and strength. Training all parts of the body through various tests such as running, jumping, hurling, scaling (*pan deng*), swimming, and shooting, would improve speed, agility, strength, and endurance—something, the handbooks claimed, that training for a single sports discipline could not promise.¹⁰⁸ For example, everyone needed to participate in track and field events as well as morning calisthenics, because the former translated to better endurance and the latter to better muscular development. Nevertheless, the *laoweizhi* did include optional tests to encourage people to choose a *tiyu* activity they liked—such as swimming, running, or even a ball sport—and then spend leisure time in specialized training for that activity. In this way, leaders promoted all-around physical fitness, while simultaneously encouraging each person to spend leisure time on a personally fulfilling and state-approved activity.

The program also emphasized bodily management and patriotic education that extended beyond physical exercise. The State Sports Commission instructed *tiyu* officials and leaders to pay close attention to a student's "daily life system" - as well

¹⁰⁷ Xin tiyu she, ed., '*Laowei' zhi duanlian fangfa xiacongshu: zhang'ai pao* ["Ready for Labor and Defense" system exercise methods small series: obstacle running] (Beijing: Zhongguo qingnian chubanshe, 1953).

¹⁰⁸ Chen, *Tan tan laoweizhi*, 8.

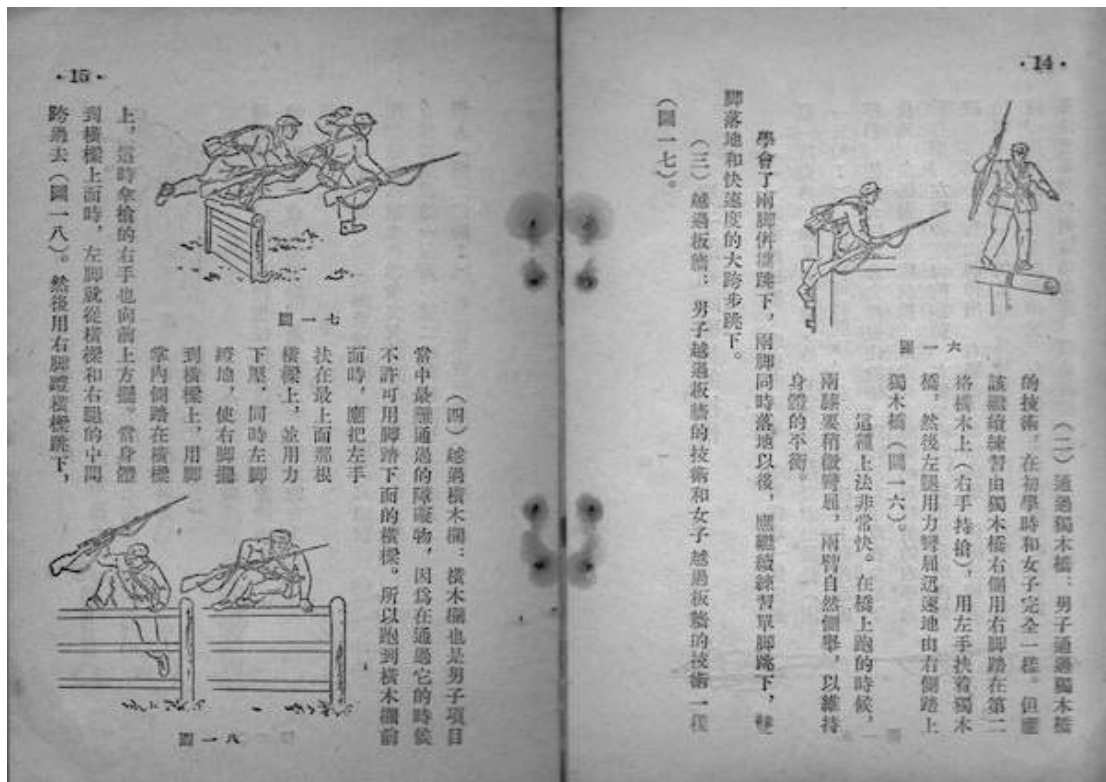


Figure 6. Examples of obstacle running. From the handbook: Xintiyu she, “Ready for Labor and Defense” system exercise methods small series: obstacle running (Beijing: Zhongguo qingnian chubanshe, 1953).

as “individual hygiene, hygiene of [surrounding] environment, and nutritional situation.”¹⁰⁹ Drafts of the 1956 middle school curriculum plan for Shanghai reflect these efforts to use *tiyu* education for encouraging daily bodily practices and political consciousness beyond sports skills or physical fitness. To be sure, passing the *laoweizhi*’s fitness tests, and training related to a specific sport of one’s choice was

¹⁰⁹ “Zhongyang tiwei, gaodeng jiaoyubu, jiaoyubu, weishengbu, qingniantuan zhongyang, quanguo xuelian guanyu zai zhongdeng yishang xuexiao zhong kaizhan qunzhongxing tiyu yundong de lianhe zhishi (zhailu) (1954 nian 5 yue 4 ri)” [Joint instructions from the State Sports Commission, Ministry of Higher Education, Ministry of Education, Health Department, Central Youth Committee, National Federation concerning the development of mass sport in secondary schools and higher (excerpts) (May 4, 1954)], in *Tiyu yundong wenjian xuanbian (1949-1981)*, comp. Guojia tiwei zhengce yanjiushi (Beijing: Renmin tiyu chubanshe, 1982), 387-388.

important, but so was passing classes such as “our country’s *tiyu* system,” “general hygiene knowledge,” and “self-management skills.”¹¹⁰ By providing this kind of educational program alongside a program of all-around physical training, leaders clearly hoped to cultivate a patriotic and self-aware citizen who understood his or her own body as an important part of the collective, socialist nation.

Articles in *Xin tiyu* discussed early successes in trials of the *laoweizhi*. Following the success of the workplace calisthenics (*gongjian cao*) and exercise standards in 1954 in the Central Committee of the CCP, the Office of the Youth Group of the Central Committee and the *tiyu* bureau of the Youth Central Committee Military Affairs, decided in March 1955 to make more efforts in introducing the preparatory level of the *laoweizhi* nationwide within its work units.¹¹¹ By the end of May 1955, 2,565 people from 14 work units were participating in the program.¹¹² Publications attributed the early success of exercise standards to the youth group and comrades responsible for *tiyu* club work. For example, they noted that many comrades hadn’t dared to use the parallel bars or the (gymnastics) vaulting box, out of fear of hurting themselves. But following “guidance and the enthusiastic help of their comrades,” the authors of this article claim, “[the comrades’] worries disappeared” as

¹¹⁰ SMA B105-1-1582: Yi ban shenti xunlian laoweizhi xiangmu ceyan de richeng shifan biao [Model table of a schedule for general physical training of the *laoweizhi* program tests], April 1956.

¹¹¹ Qingniantuan zhonggong zhongyang zhishu jiguan weiyuanhui bangongshi, qingniantuan zhongyang weiyuanhui junshi tiyubu [Office of the Youth Group of the CPC Central Committee and the *Tiyu* bureau of the Youth Central Committee Military Affairs], “Zhonggong zhongyang zhishu jiguan tuixing laoweizhi yubeiji de jingyan” [Experiences of the CPC Central Committee departments implementing the *laoweizhi* preparatory level], *Xin tiyu*, June 21, 1955, 24-25. By December 1954, seven work units and 848 people participated in fitness standards tests, 607 reaching passing levels and received exercise badges.

¹¹² Qingniantuan zhonggong zhongyang zhishu jiguan weiyuanhui bangongshi, qingniantuan zhongyang weiyuanhui junshi tiyubu, “Zhonggong zhongyang zhishu jiguan tuixing laoweizhi yubeiji de jingyan,” 24.

they learned many kinds of exercises that could be done using this equipment. Not only that, but “comrades reflected: ‘exercise really does cultivate our courageous spirit.’”¹¹³

Those students who passed the *laoweizhi* were officially rewarded with badges and certificates, and treated as model citizens [Figures 7-8]. In June 1955, representatives from the State Sports Commission and Beijing municipal *tiyu* committee handed out rewards to nearly eight hundred Qinghua university students at a prestigious ceremony held on campus [Figures 9-10].¹¹⁴ “Three goods” student Mao Yuhai of the radio department, and 102 others, passed the highest level of the *laoweizhi* standards. A *Xin tiyu* article praised Mao for having good marks in his homework, a strong physique, for not having been ill in the past two to three years, and for having never missed class. He had reached “all-round development” at Qinghua and at the time of graduation had “already become cultivated into a person who conforms to the nation’s requests (*yijing peiyang chengwei yige fuhe guojia yaoqiu de ren le*).”¹¹⁵

Leaders also hoped to spark a lifelong interest in *tiyu* activities and envisioned the *laoweizhi* as a unified system of *tiyu* activities nationwide, beginning with students in schools but eventually continuing throughout one’s adulthood in the work unit. By 1955, a national propaganda campaign had begun to promote the *laoweizhi*

¹¹³ Qingniantuan zhonggong zhongyang zhishu jiguan weiyuanhui bangongshi, qingniantuan zhongyang weiyuanhui junshi tiyubu, “Zhonggong zhongyang zhishu jiguan tuixing laoweizhi yubeiji de jingyan,” 25.

¹¹⁴ Huang He, “Duan xin: baochi rongyu, jianchi duanlian” [Short letters: maintain glory, uphold exercise], *Xin tiyu*, July 21, 1955, 7-9.

¹¹⁵ Huang, “Duan xin: baochi rongyu, jianchi duanlian,” 8.



Figure 7. The *laoweizhi* badge. *Xin tiyu*, June 6, 1955.



Figure 8. “Honor.” A woodcut by Qin Shangxin. *Xin tiyu*, December 21, 1955.



Figures 9-10. Qinghua University students receive *laoweizhi* badges. The caption on the left image reads: “Qinghua University President Jiang Nanxiang gives students *laoweizhi* badges.” The caption on the right image reads: “They happily cherish and excitedly put on *laoweizhi* badges.” Both photos credited to Gao Ming. *Xin tiyu*, December 21, 1955.

across the rest of society. In Beijing and other cities, work unit members were organized for the purposes of standardized exercise and team sports.¹¹⁶ A handbook published by the Beijing municipal *tiyu* committee targeting local office workers (*jiguan*) promised that participation in the *laoweizhi* would lead to frequent exercise and have numerous health benefits, such as reducing headaches and preventing

¹¹⁶ Duanfang Lu, *Remaking Chinese Urban Form: Modernity, Scarcity and Space, 1949-2005* (London; New York: Routledge, 2006), 145.

insomnia.¹¹⁷ Directed at potential participants (and presumably *tiyu* leaders within work units), it introduced the *laoweizhi* disciplines and standards, including an extra set of standards aimed at men and women in their thirties. No age cutoff existed for the program, but women over age thirty-five and men over forty needed to get approval from a doctor and their workplace's *tiyu* organization in order to participate.¹¹⁸ Like the standards found in schools, those in the workplace also required participants to pass the four main tests (in speed, endurance, flexibility and strength), and several of their own choice from a pre-determined selection.

But perhaps the most important success of promoting the *laoweizhi* standards could be measured by their overall effect on the health of workers. In the Central Committee work unit, all-round frequent exercise had already led to better health for some workers, such as Luo Yan, a mother of three children, who “every winter catches bronchitis, [which] not only influences her work and study, but also is not good for her child.”¹¹⁹ After Luo's department began the *tiyu* exercise standards, she was “determined to keep exercising” and, as a result, didn't catch bronchitis the following winter. Exercise also helped comrade Ou Yangjiang, a worker with gastroenteritis who was only able to work half-days. “After having read many essays related to *tiyu* hygiene, and thus understanding the benefits of exercise for the body,”

¹¹⁷ Beijingshi tiyu yundong weiyuanhui xuanchuanzu, ed., *Beijingshi jiguan laoweizhi yubeiji duanlian shouce* [Beijing municipal agencies *laoweizhi* preparatory level exercise manual] (Beijing: Beijing dazhong chubanshe, 1955), 11-12.

¹¹⁸ Beijingshi tiyu yundong weiyuanhui xuanchuanzu, ed., *Beijingshi jiguan laoweizhi yubeiji duanlian shouce*, 1.

¹¹⁹ Qingniantuan zhonggong zhongyang zhishu jiguan weiyuanhui bangongshi, qingniantuan zhongyang weiyuanhui junshi tiyubu, “Zhonggong zhongyang zhishu jiguan tuixing laoweizhi yubeiji de jingyan,” 24.

the authors noted, “he decided to try it out himself.”¹²⁰ A half-year later, his stomach problems had declined and he was able to start working full eight-hour days again.

Despite these early successes with the *laoweizhi*, the State Sports Commission remained hesitant about nationwide expansion for such an intense physical fitness program, especially beyond the school system. As late as July 1955, Commission leaders reported that the program still existed primarily only in the People’s Liberation Army and those schools “with better conditions.”¹²¹ They cautioned against beginning the program in factories or other workplaces just yet, claiming that it was too new, and that there was still not enough experience or the necessary cadres in most places – nor the required organizational leadership, technical instructors, or facilities to do so. Nevertheless, they had great hopes that the *laoweizhi* would gradually become widespread in work units following the popularization of, and increase in, sports and physical culture (*tiyu yundong*).

In 1956, as the nation enjoyed relative success under the First Five-Year Plan and began to make plans for the future, the State Sports Commission criticized existing “rightist conservative thought” in *tiyu* programs, including in the *laoweizhi*.

¹²² The Commission decided that progress with the program had been too slow, and suddenly decided to speed up efforts to universalize it. The program standards were

¹²⁰ Qingniantuan zhonggong zhongyang zhishu jiguan weiyuanhui bangongshi, qingniantuan zhongyang weiyuanhui junshi tiyubu, “Zhonggong zhongyang zhishu jiguan tuixing laoweizhi yubeiji de jingyan,” 24.

¹²¹ “Guanyu laoweizhi de jige wenti de huiyu” [Replies to several *laoweizhi* issues], *Xin tiyu*, July 21, 1955, 17.

¹²² “Zhonghua renmin gongheguo tiyu yundong weiyuanhui guanyu pubian tuixing laoweizhi de zhishi (1956 nian 4 yue 28 ri)” [Instructions from the PRC State Sports Commission on universally carrying out the *laoweizhi* (April 28, 1956)], in *Zhonghua renmin gongheguo tiyu yundong wenjian huibian* (2), comp. Renmin tiyu chubanshe (Beijing: Renmin tiyu chubanshe, 1957), 95-99.

also adjusted to accommodate more levels, and to simplify the formal procedures. The preparatory level was abolished in favor of a junior youth (*shaonian*) level, and standards for passing the first level were lowered so that more bureaus, schools, factories, and other workplaces would carry out the program.¹²³

The promotion and discussion of the *laoweizhi* proliferated. With the help of visiting Soviet experts, the Beijing *Tiyu* Research Institute (*Beijing tiyu xueyuan*) held a science symposium that reiterated studying “advanced Soviet theory”¹²⁴ and included expert discussion on, among other topics, physical education in schools and across society, communist ethics education (*daode jiaoyu*), physiology, and the development of the *laoweizhi*.¹²⁵ Numerous official handbooks and booklets, as well as a series of articles in *Xin tiyu*, appeared with the aim to provide a broad audience with the knowledge needed for participation in the *laoweizhi*. A June 1956 booklet titled “Discussing the *laoweizhi*” claimed that although the *laoweizhi* was, in theory, nationally widespread, still “many people were not extremely clear on it” and especially on the recently announced standards.¹²⁶

As spare-time sports schools (*tiyu xuexiao*) and associations (*tiyu xiehui*) opened in an effort to encourage ordinary citizens to participate in their leisure time

¹²³ “Shelun: Pubian tuixing *laoweizhi*” [Editorial: Universally carry out the *laoweizhi*], *Xin tiyu*, April 16, 1956, 2.

¹²⁴ “Dali kaizhan kexue yanjiu gongzuo: tiyu yundong weiyuanhui fu zhuren Cai Shufan zai Beijing tiyu xueyuan zhaokai de kexue taolunhui shang de baogao” [Vigorously development science research work: State Sports Commission vice-chair Cai Shufan’s report at the convening of the Beijing *tiyu* research institute science symposium], *Xin tiyu*, March 6, 1956, 4-5.

¹²⁵ Wang Ruying, “Guonei huodong: tiyu kexue taolunhui” [Domestic activities: *tiyu* science symposium], *Xin tiyu*, March 6, 1956, 16.

¹²⁶ Chen, *Tan tan laoweizhi*, 1. It is worth noting here that this booklet had a print run of 85,000 copies, a very high number vis-à-vis other *tiyu*-related publications. For example, on average only about 15,000 copies of *Xin tiyu* were printed each month. It seems likely that *tiyu* leaders wanted as many people and places as possible to get their hands on a copy.

(see Chapter 3), *tiyu* officials also introduced an athletic ranking system based on the *laoweizhi*. They added more levels to the *laoweizhi* (five in total) to identify athletes with more potential, while continuing to offer everyone the same chance to compete equally within it.¹²⁷ The highest level was “master sportsman” (*yundong jianjiang*) and an athlete had to pass the second level of the general *laoweizhi*, as well as the standards in his or her specific sport, in order to gain this title.¹²⁸ For example, a female track and field athlete competing in the 800-meter run had to pass the general *laoweizhi* standards as well as, according to the 1956 standards chart, achieve a time of 2 minutes 16 seconds or better in order to become a “master sportsman.”¹²⁹ This use of the *laoweizhi* to locate competitive athletes and future athletic prospects for further training in specific sports closely reflected the Soviet athletic ranking system.

Backlash and Criticism of the *laoweizhi*

Although relatively little public criticism of the program seems to have existed prior to the Hundred Flowers campaign, articles and handbooks did consistently reiterate the need to move gradually into participation in order to not injure oneself and remain healthy. Keeping in mind that many *laoweizhi* participants

¹²⁷ “Zhonghua renmin gongheguo ‘laodong he weiguo’ tiyu zhidu tiaoli (xiugai cao’an) (1956 nian 2 yue 29 ri)” [The PRC ‘Ready for Labor and Defense’ tiyu system regulations (draft of amendments) (February 29, 1956)], in *Zhonghua renmin gongheguo tiyu yundong wenjian huibian*(2), comp. Renmin tiyu chubanshe (Beijing: Renmin tiyu chubanshe, 1957), 80-83.

¹²⁸ “Zhonghua renmin gongheguo yundongyuan dengji zhidu tiaoli (cao’an) (1956 nian 4 yue 28 ri)” [PRC athletes’ ranking system regulations (draft) (April 28, 1956)], in *Zhonghua renmin gongheguo tiyu yundong wenjian huibian* (2), comp. Renmin tiyu chubanshe (Beijing: Renmin tiyu chubanshe, 1957), 28-29.

¹²⁹ “Zhonghua renmin gongheguo tianjing (nüzi) yundongyuan biao zhun (1956 nian 4 yue 28 ri)” [PRC track and field (female) athletes’ ranking standards (April 28, 1956)], in *Zhonghua renmin gongheguo tiyu yundong wenjian huibian* (2), comp. Renmin tiyu chubanshe (Beijing: Renmin tiyu chubanshe, 1957), 46-49. (The 800-meter time standards are listed on page 48.)

might be total newcomers to exercise, one handbook stressed that participants should strive for “gradual improvement” through long-term discipline so that one did not get injured—and that this was true for any *tiyu* activity. If one just “exercise[d] every day without interruption” and had “patience and diligence” then reaching the *laoweizhi* standard would not be difficult.¹³⁰ The handbook recommended beginning preparation for each *tiyu* activity with a slow jog, followed by stretches (*ticao*), and only then moving into more specific training for that activity. Activities to lengthen and “open” (*kai*) the four limbs of the body would both reduce injury and make one agile (*lingbian*). Finally, after practice, walking or doing light *ticao* was recommended over lying down, changing clothes, and general idleness. To remain in good health, the handbook also offered further general advice: avoiding exercise immediately before or after eating was also desirable – “[it’s] best to rest a bit” – so as to not “harm the stomach and regret it later.” And, of course, it was also inadvisable to exercise when sick.

Not until the Hundred Flowers campaign, however, when Mao and the Party officially invited criticism of current policies, did the *laoweizhi* come under attack. In early 1957 a regular section called “Everybody discusses the *laoweizhi*” appeared in *Xin tiyu* as a platform “opening up discussion on weaknesses in the last year’s work [related to the] *laoweizhi*.”¹³¹ Over the course of the next few months, *tiyu* experts weighed in on various aspects of the *laoweizhi*, but the gist of their criticism was the

¹³⁰ Renmin tiyu chubanshe, *Laoweizhi duanlian shouce: nüzi yiji shiyong* [*Laoweizhi* exercise manual: women’s first level] (Beijing: Renmin tiyu chubanshe, 1956), 2-3.

¹³¹ Editor’s note, *Xin tiyu*, January 6, 1957, 13.

same: the standards were too difficult for a majority of the population and the system needed to be modified, adapted, or somehow made more lenient in order to accommodate more people. No one suggested abolishing the system – indeed they all agreed that the system itself should persist – but they couldn’t agree on how to adapt the system so that it would be more flexible.

A *Xin tiyu* article penned by Min Jia opened the floor for discussion by addressing what he claimed were the most commonly raised issues concerning the *laoweizhi*: skepticism concerning the overall significance of developing a good body in order to meet the *laoweizhi* goals of labor and protecting the motherland; confusion over why some *tiyu* disciplines (for passing the tests) were chosen over others; the inability to adapt or modify the existing standards (either on the basis of group identification – students, factory workers, etc. – or based on location); and the reasons for calling it the *laoweizhi* instead of the “*tiyu* exercise standards.”¹³² Min noted that the system was drawn up to encourage people, and especially youth, to strive towards exercising their whole body (*quanmian duanlian shenti*) to build a foundation in physical strength and to attain a level of skill required for physical labor and protecting the homeland. Not wanting to step on any toes, he acknowledged these goals as being important ones towards justifications for a strict set of standards with the bar set high. However, he argued, if the most important aspect of the system was to encourage people to exercise their whole body, then there would be no harm in lowering the standards somewhat, broadening the scope of *tiyu* disciplines a bit, and

¹³² Min Jia, “Yao cong laoweizhi zhiding yuance fangmian jinyibu de yanjiu he taolun” [Want to further research and discuss the *laoweizhi*’s formulation principles], *Xin tiyu*, January 6, 1957, 13-14.

allowing each place to adapt the system according to local conditions. For example, athletes, as well as some army soldiers, middle school and college students, needed to have higher standards than most workers, cadres, and peasants. Furthermore, some places lacked the necessary equipment and facilities to fully carry out the program.

Min called for more systematic and on-the-ground research on how best to formulate principles and standards for mass *tiyu*, but he also took things a step further when he doubted the foundational role of the *laoweizhi* in mass *tiyu*. “[If] participation in the *laoweizhi* exercises are the only exercises that count,” Min wondered, “then does engaging in just one *tiyu* activity not count as exercising the body? Is having passed the *laoweizhi* standards test the only way that counts as having a good body [*shenti hao*]?” Was it really necessary, he opined, to have the *laoweizhi* serve as the basic foundation for developing mass *tiyu*, or “could not individual [*danxing*] *tiyu* activities be developed first?”

Xu Gangsheng agreed with Min, stating that the *laoweizhi*'s focus on all-round body development had been overemphasized as the only possible mass *tiyu* solution. Xu did not dispute the scientific reasoning behind the *laoweizhi*'s emphasis on all-round body development because “many physiologists with many years of experience and research” had already proven its efficacy.¹³³ But he believed this element inhibited, rather than encouraged, the vast majority of laborers (*laodong renmin*) to participate in the program, and thus crippled the usefulness of it towards achieving goals of improving peoples' health, socialist production, and national

¹³³ Xu Gangsheng, “Ye lai tan laoweizhi wenti” [(Let's) also talk about the *laoweizhi* problems], *Xin tiyu*, January 6, 1957, 14-15.

defense. As evidence, Xu cited a 1956 State Sports Commission directive on the *laoweizhi* that he claimed had largely been unsuccessful in factories, industrial enterprises, and offices. Only a few people, he claimed, most of who were already healthy and strong, and sports team athletes, had been able to reach the program's standards. Xu argued that re-focusing attention on the most important goals of the *laoweizhi* (i.e., the improvement of health through all-around bodily training) was the only way to fix the problems and encourage participation in *laoweizhi* exercises on a mass scale.¹³⁴

To encourage broader participation, Xu, like Min, argued for increased flexibility that would merely get people to participate in exercise and make it possible for them to effectively improve their health. He implied that overlooking these two aspects was partially responsible for “the biggest problem” of the previous year's effort to “broadly carry out [the *laoweizhi*] in industrial enterprises and offices.”¹³⁵ He recommended adding another set of lower level standards to the current program that would not be based on the requirement of all-round body development, but would make it easier for workers (and even villagers) to participate; those who were weak or sick should not be asked to take part in *laoweizhi* exercises at all, but should join in lighter forms of *tiyu* activities. Xu, like Min, recognized the need for local adjustments and modifications of the *laoweizhi*, but he further proposed communicating these changes to the State Sports Commission so that officials could

¹³⁴ However, Xu also sided with previous arguments made by other comrades that the name of the system, “labor and protecting the homeland,” caused feelings of burden among many youth, who felt that if they didn't participate in the *laoweizhi* then they didn't fulfill their obligation/duty (*yiwu*) to the homeland (*zuguo*).

¹³⁵ Xu, “Ye lai tan laoweizhi wenti,” 15.

then appropriately “replace certain centralized [*tiyu*] programs and standards.”¹³⁶ Xu also went so far as to suggest that some folk *tiyu* activities (*minjian tiyu xiangmu*) (presumably this included, among other things, various kinds of martial arts and dancing), though they lacked scientific research and testing standards, could be used in some places to substitute for the *laoweizhi*-related *tiyu* activities.

In the next issue of *Xin tiyu*, Meng Zheng provided a rebuttal to both Min and Xu by making the case for maintaining the *laoweizhi* as it was. Although he agreed that the masses should be considered when drawing up *laoweizhi* standards, Meng argued that the program’s fundamental emphasis on all-round body development should not be abolished. The all-round development of a person’s stamina (*quanmian fazhan ren de tineng*), according to him, was just as necessary for strengthening the physique as it was for constructing and defending the socialist homeland.¹³⁷ Meng contended that every body had the same four qualities (*suzhi*) of strength, speed, flexibility, and endurance, but developing all-round stamina meant more than just possessing these qualities - it also meant striving to reach a higher degree of balance in the body. This was necessary because “Our bodies are a whole (*yi ge zhengti*), [and] if some organs and physiological functions are not healthy all-round [*jianquan*], [and are] undeveloped, then this will influence [the ability of one’s] health level to rise.”¹³⁸ Using physiology, Meng explained how exercise increased and delivered the flow of blood to organs via blood vessels and capillaries located within muscles, sped up

¹³⁶ Xu, “Ye lai tan laoweizhi wenti,” 15.

¹³⁷ Meng Zheng, “Bu neng quxiao ‘quanmian fazhan tineng ‘zhege renwu’ ” [Cannot abolish the mission of all-round development], *Xin tiyu*, January 1957, 14.

¹³⁸ Meng, “Bu neng quxiao ‘quanmian fazhan tineng ‘zhege renwu’,” 14.

metabolism, and “provided much nourishment” to the body as a whole.¹³⁹ The dangers of not developing the whole body could be seen in, for example, weightlifters with very developed muscles who could not run fast or for a long time because their lungs and heart could not handle it. Running for even a short period of time would cause rapid breathing, intense heart palpitations, and general illness. The development of all-round stamina would, in contrast, guarantee all-round good health.

Like others, Meng argued that the goal of the *laoweizhi* was to improve the overall health of the population first, and that national construction would occur by strengthening peoples’ physiques (*tizhi*). But for Meng, good health, directly responsible for improved labor production and national defense, could *only* come through the development of the four physiological qualities. To begin with, the *laoweizhi* exercises for all-round body development helped build one’s overall immune system to resist bacteria that caused serious diseases such as tuberculosis. Strength and endurance would also help laborers stand for eight hours a day, and speed would improve the rapid movements of laborers using workshop machines. And these benefits were not reserved to those who worked in physically demanding jobs: those who did non-physical work (“those who labored with their brains” *naoli laodongzhe*) also needed all-round stamina because “brain cell work consumes 15-20 times more blood than muscle cell work.” A strong physique with vigorous energy would lead to a more effective work rate and the ability to work longer. Furthermore, because the whole body would be healthy, this would allow one to work until an

¹³⁹ Meng, “Bu neng quxiao ‘quanmian fazhan tineng ‘zhege renwu’,” 14.

advanced age by resisting diseases and not becoming decrepit. There was thus no excuse for not participating in the *laoweizhi*, including as the basis for all other *tiyu*. The all-round development of stamina was its “distinguishing characteristic” as well as its “science and superior advantage.”¹⁴⁰

Zhang Yuan also argued in favor of keeping all-round development, but he offered no heavy-handed physiological reasoning: he simply believed that it was the best program for the national development of *tiyu*, especially for youth and the future of nationally trained athletes. He claimed that the “vast majority of young students and soldiers” (as well as some youth in factories, mines, and offices) wanted a unified system with serious standards “to encourage them to continually exercise.”¹⁴¹ All high school and middle school *tiyu* teaching plans were also already based on the *laoweizhi* disciplines, he noted, which guaranteed their quality. Finally, Zhang argued, without a national unified *laoweizhi*, the national hierarchy of athletes would be affected, because it had been established with the *laoweizhi* as its foundation. Without the *laoweizhi*, “it would be difficult to guarantee that athletes’ bodies (*shenti*) developed all-round, and this would thus influence the growth of our nation’s athletic skill level.”¹⁴²

Zhang also claimed there should be some flexibility in the program, such as adjusting the standards according to availability of equipment and facilities in a particular work unit. However, he was adamantly against ignoring the principle of all-

¹⁴⁰ Meng, “Bu neng quxiao ‘quanmian fazhan tineng ‘zhege renwu’,” 15.

¹⁴¹ Zhang Yuan, “Laoweizhi xiangmu biao zhun yinggai tongyi” [The *laoweizhi* program standards should be unified], *Xin tiyu*, February 6, 1957, 14.

¹⁴² Zhang, “Laoweizhi xiangmu biao zhun yinggai tongyi,” 14.

round development. Furthermore, instead of adding more levels to the system, he argued for an easier set of standards at the lowest level. And if local conditions made things really difficult, then Zhang believed that the best solution was simply to introduce exercise standards that would be based on the “*laoweizhi* spirit” with the lowest level of the *laoweizhi* as a future target.¹⁴³ Although such standards “would not be as good as the *laoweizhi*’s scientific and somewhat rigorous requirements,” they would be easier and “receive a welcome from the many work units and masses who temporarily cannot carry out the *laoweizhi*.”¹⁴⁴

Other critics were concerned less with the content of the program itself than with the use of poor statistical studies to claim that the *laoweizhi* had been successful. Wan Wunian made a plea for *laoweizhi* propagandists to “seek truth from facts” (*shi shi qiu shi*) when conducting their research. He complained that exaggerated results from poorly executed studies on the program had created an untenable situation in *laoweizhi* propaganda. As one example, he took issue with a study published in issue 16 of *Xin tiyu* (1956), in which a Mr. Shu Qingren had positively correlated the *laoweizhi* with a small decrease in the number of sick students at Beijing No. 4 Middle School (from 1.065 percent in 1953 to 0.435 percent in 1956). Although these numbers were “very concrete,” Wan argued that the study did not take into account other factors – such as weather, school hygiene, epidemic prevention (*fangyi*),

¹⁴³ Zhang, “Laoweizhi xiangmu biao zhun yinggai tongyi,” 15.

¹⁴⁴ Zhang, “Laoweizhi xiangmu biao zhun yinggai tongyi,” 15.

medical treatment, and food – that may have also contributed to the results.¹⁴⁵ Wan contended that another study, by a Mr. Su Kecun, was not specific enough – it had reported that the *laoweizhi* led to increases in the height, weight, and chest measurements of students of the same age, but apparently with no detail provided about the students – “were these students male, female? What was the average age?” It was exactly these sorts of studies that “made people suspicious,” Wan claimed, because “if the number of people is not representative enough, or if there were issues [regarding] exact age, sex, and the survey, [then] in short [the study] is unconvincing [to] people.”¹⁴⁶

This was tied into a more general problem that Wan identified as misguided propaganda. Some people in schools and work units, he claimed, believed that participation or non-participation in the *laoweizhi* was based on one’s “knowledge” and that, “if you really love socialism, really love the country, you will voluntarily participate.”¹⁴⁷ In fact, Wan opined, some students were just busy, but still in good health because they found time to exercise on their own. He chastised propagandists for criticizing the “consciousness” and “thought” of such students. Some propagandists, he lamented, had become so jaded that they even saw exercising while sick (rather than resting) as a virtue that others could learn from.

Non-*tiyu* experts also reported to *Xin tiyu* about local abuses – or in some cases perhaps simply misinterpretations and misunderstandings – related to the

¹⁴⁵ Wan Wunian, “Xuanchuan laoweizhi yao shishi qiushi” [In promoting the *laoweizhi* seek truth from the facts], *Xin tiyu*, January 1957, 15.

¹⁴⁶ Wan, “Xuanchuan laoweizhi yao shishi qiushi,” 15. Original quote: “总之是不能说服人的。”

¹⁴⁷ Wan, “Xuanchuan laoweizhi yao shishi qiushi,” 15.

awarding of *laoweizhi* credentials. Li Dekai from the Sichuan Oil Company complained that in October 1956 he found many of his comrades adorning themselves with *laoweizhi* badges, and carrying certificates they had filled out themselves, all despite the fact that they admitted they had never passed any *laoweizhi* tests. When he confronted the cadre in charge of the *tiyu* association (*tixie*) about the issue, the cadre responded, “The purpose of giving out badges is to make comrades participate in exercise; only [when they] participate in the *tiyu* association, [and] pay the association fee, can [we] issue a badge.”¹⁴⁸ Li noted that he had also contacted other work units but not yet received any responses to his question: why were certificates and badges being given out to those who had not participated in the *laoweizhi* or passed the tests? An Su of the People’s committee in Cao county Shandong was similarly surprised to run into county-level *tiyu* cadres who sported *laoweizhi* badges following a half-month of study in Jinan. Not only had none of them passed tests – one of them had tuberculosis. When An inquired about the badge, a cadre responded that “the provincial *tiyu* committee said that in order for the propaganda work to be effective, our *tiyu* professional cadres may wear [a badge].”¹⁴⁹ Considering that the *laoweizhi* was a national *tiyu* program that required doing exercise and passing tests in order to “rightly obtain a badge,” An then asked the Shandong provincial *tiyu* committee that “if [the purpose was] for effective propaganda, then wouldn’t

¹⁴⁸ Li Dekai in “Duzhe lai xin: yansu duidai laoweizhi zhengzhang” [Letters from readers: Serious treatment of the *laoweizhi* badge], *Xin tiyu*, January 1957, 15.

¹⁴⁹ An Su in “Duzhe lai xin: yansu duidai laoweizhi zhengzhang.”

someone with tuberculosis who wears the *laoweizhi* badge only lead to harmful propaganda effects [*buliang de xuanchuan zuoyong*]?”

Not even *tiyu* institutes, which had opened in numerous cities beginning in the early 1950s and specialized in training *tiyu* specialists (e.g., physical education teachers and athletic prospects), and spare-time sports schools (which served the sole purpose of training athletes, see chapter 3) were immune to these problems. Fang Zhiqing of the Wuhan *tiyu* institute complained that, despite being at an institute, changes and tests related to the standards passed in 1956 were still not being followed.¹⁵⁰ Meanwhile, “Guan” from the Nanjing normal school wrote to report that the *laoweizhi* rules were not receiving “serious treatment.”¹⁵¹ Badges and certificates were supposed to only be given out if 20 percent or fewer of a class of students failed the tests, but in Guan’s class at Nanjing normal they received them despite four out of fifteen students having failed.

Public criticism of the *laoweizhi* trailed off with the end of the official invitation to criticize and the beginning of the anti-rightist campaign in late 1957. However, with the slow deterioration of Sino-Soviet relations over these same years (see chapter 3), it also seems likely that enthusiasm for the *laoweizhi* (or any Soviet-inspired model) had already begun to wane. During the Great Leap Forward, official enthusiasm for the *laoweizhi*, like other *tiyu* programs at the time (see chapter 4), burgeoned. A *People’s Daily* article declared in October 1958 that “Everybody

¹⁵⁰ Fang Zhiqing in “Duzhe lai xin: yansu duidai laoweizhi zhengzhang.”

¹⁵¹ Guan in “Duzhe lai xin: yansu duidai laoweizhi zhengzhang.”

participates in *laoweizhi* exercise”¹⁵² and, in line with Mao’s recent call for everyone to be a soldier, also stated that effective immediately, the *laoweizhi* would be closely connected to militia training. But, as in other realms, the Leap also led to an increased proclivity to fabricate numbers, which ultimately spelled disaster for the *laoweizhi* even before the unprecedented economic disaster and massive famines put an end to the campaign. Official statistics indicate that in 1958 the *laoweizhi* reached its height when more than twenty-three million people passed the lowest level of standards.¹⁵³ In 1959, 9.3 million passed and 7.5 million in 1960, before participation took a nosedive in 1961, when just over 200,000 passed the standards. Some former *laoweizhi* participants, however, remember the Great Leap Forward as a time in which certificates were handed out liberally, regardless of whether or not one had actually passed the tests.¹⁵⁴ The number of participants dwindled in the following years and through the Sino-Soviet split, with only 70,000 participants passing the standards in 1962 and 115,000 in 1963, before being officially replaced in 1964 with

¹⁵² “Dajia dou lai canjia laoweizhi duanlian” [Everybody participates in *laoweizhi* exercise], *Renmin ribao*, October 27, 1958.

¹⁵³ Sun Baoli, “Zhongguo qunzhong tiyu de yanjin” [The evolution of China’s mass *tiyu*], *Tiyu wenhua daokan*, May 2002, 32-34. Chart of statistics on page 33.

¹⁵⁴ Sina blogs have become a popular place for retirees to post their life experiences, including on the *laoweizhi*. For example: <http://z1943515.blog.163.com/blog/static/47921894201031311244251/> which highlights some of the absurdity of the Great Leap Forward in the school and then states, “the *tiyu* department had no other choice but to make the slogan that all students reach 100% of the *laoweizhi* standards.” Unfortunately, the blog author laments, it is “difficult to imagine” (*nanyi xiangxiang*) that those without a foundation in sports and physical fitness could run the required 1500-meter race in six minutes. Also, a surprising number of certificates from the years 1958-1959 are available for purchase on Kongfz.cn (just running a search for them brings up quite a few), which is probably an indication that more people received certificates during these years than in previous ones.

the “youth *tiyu* exercise standards.”¹⁵⁵ The *laoweizhi* thus met its fate with the demise of the Great Leap Forward.

Conclusion

Early PRC leaders sought to emulate the Soviet *tiyu* model for several reasons. The official foreign policy in the early PRC of “leaning to one side” meant that PRC leaders recognized and supported the Soviet Union as leader of the international socialist movement. Learning from and competing with the rest of the socialist bloc also served an important role in these early years of the People’s Republic. Sports delegations traveled back and forth to China from the Eastern bloc and Chinese athletes learned from these interactions. They gained practical, athletic skills and experience and, at least from the official point of view, they learned how to behave like socialist athletes with good morals and sound ethics. Thus, although the Soviet Union was considered to be the superior authority and model, athletes and sports leaders of the socialist bloc also offered excellent examples to follow.

Early PRC leaders sought to adopt and adapt many core features of the Soviet Union, including in *tiyu*, because it was leader of the socialist international movement. Mass *tiyu* programs held a central place in the education and training of ordinary Soviet citizens. One of the primary examples to follow was in the adoption of the

¹⁵⁵ Sun, “Zhongguo qunzhong tiyu de yanjin,” 33. Sun’s chart shows that in 1964, 129,474 people passed the new standards and 391,717 passed in 1965. However, the extent to which these new standards differed from the *laoweizhi* is not entirely clear from secondary sources. My inclination, given the relationship with the Soviet Union in these years, is to say that the change was primarily just renaming, in an attempt to sever any official association with the standards modeled on the Soviet Union’s *GTO*.

Soviet Union's "Ready for Labor and Defense" *tiyu* system. Mao and other top leaders believed that one of their fundamental duties was to raise the general health and quality of the population for the goals of creating a strong socialist state that would, in turn, displace the long-standing "sick man" stereotype. To do so, they sought programs that allowed direct management over the process of developing a nation peopled with their version of the ideal socialist citizen: a patriotic, healthy, hygienic, and physically fit individual who always put the socialist collective ahead of individual or familial needs. The Soviet-inspired *laoweizhi* served these needs and became the foundation for all mass *tiyu* programs in the PRC. Subsequent adaptations and renaming of *tiyu* programs in the 1960s did little to change the content and overall goals of the program.

Finally, the connection between the militarized aspects of the *laoweizhi* and fostering an international socialist world led by the Soviet Union should not be overlooked. Aside from the deference to the Soviet big brother so clear in the foundations of the *laoweizhi*, the adoption of this kind of training for the average Chinese citizen was meant to bring him or her on the same level (i.e., a physical fit and self-aware socialist subject) with socialist citizens all over the Soviet-led world, while simultaneously imagining him or her as part of an international socialist collective that would unite as needed – for war or otherwise.

Additionally, however, Chinese sports leaders credited the *laoweizhi* with having been ultimately responsible for the development of a base of internationally competitive Soviet elite athletes. This highlights a fundamental contradiction in the

laoweizhi. While on the one hand it promised to raise the level of mass *tiyu*, sports leaders hoped it would also lead to better choices when selecting elite athletes. In the 1950s, elite athletes were vital for the purposes of cultural diplomacy, with athletic competitions serving as a so-called “friendly” way of cultivating relations with other nations and their leaders. As subsequent chapters will show, elite athletes became even more strategically important as Sino-Soviet relations deteriorated and Chinese leaders looked for friends beyond the Soviet bloc. The result was that elite athletes received more state attention and *tiyu* resources than the masses – a change that departed from the intended purpose of “new” *tiyu*. As with the program in the Soviet Union in the 1930s,¹⁵⁶ this contradiction in the program itself – training elite athletes versus raising the *tiyu* level of the masses – was part of a larger, ongoing debate in state-sponsored *tiyu* over the balance of resources devoted to mass participation versus elite athletes.

¹⁵⁶ For discussion of the Soviet program see Riordan, *Sport in Soviet Society*, 135.

Chapter 3

“On the Foundation of Widespread Sport, Raise Athletic Skill Levels”¹: Building a Chinese *Tiyu* in the Late 1950s

“China used to be stigmatized as a ‘decrepit empire,’ ‘the sick man of East Asia,’ a country with a backward economy and a backward culture, with no hygiene, poor at ball games and swimming, where the women had bound feet, the men wore pigtailed and eunuchs could still be found, and where the moon was inferior and did not shine as brightly as in foreign lands. In short, there was much that was bad in China. But after six years’ work of transformation we have changed the face of China. No one can deny our achievements.”

- Mao Zedong, August 30, 1956²

Mao’s speech at the Eighth Congress in summer 1956 did not deny the importance played by the Soviet Union as he looked to the past six years of transformation. Nevertheless, following Mao’s declaration earlier in the year that China “mustn’t copy everything indiscriminately and transplant mechanically,”³ there

¹ “Zhonghua renmin gongheguo tiyu yundong weiyuanhui guanyu 1955 nian tiyu gongzuo zongjie he 1956 nian gongzuo renwu de baogao” [State Sports Commission 1955 *tiyu* work summary and 1956 work tasks report], *Zhonghua renmin gongheguo tiyu yundong wenjian huibian* (2) (Beijing: Renmin tiyu chubanshe, 1957), 12-13. The full quote is: “Caiqu jiasu kaizhan qunzhongxing de tiyu yundong, zai guangfa de qunzhong yundong jichu shang, nuli tigao yundong jishu de fangzhen.”

² “Strengthen Party Unity and Carry Forward Party Traditions,” speech given by Mao at the first session of the preparatory meeting for the Eighth National Congress of the Chinese Communist Party, August 30, 1956. Published in *Selected Works of Mao Tse-tung: Vol. VII* (India: Kranti Publications, 1990) and available online at http://marxists.org/reference/archive/mao/selected-works/volume-5/mswv5_53.htm.

³ “On the Ten Major Relationships,” speech given by Mao on April 25, 1956 at an enlarged meeting of the Political Bureau of the Central Committee of the Chinese Communist Party. Originally published in *Long Live Mao Zedong Thought*, Red Guard Publication, 1969, and in *Selected Works of Mao Tse-tung: Vol. VII* (India: Kranti Publications, 1990), and available online at

was far less praise and fewer mentions of the Soviets by Mao or anyone in the Party leadership. By mid-1956, in the aftermath of the death of Stalin and rise of Khrushchev, the relationship between the PRC and the Soviet Union had already become strained as the Chinese leadership increasingly disapproved of Soviet de-Stalinization and the USSR's general ideological direction. Specifically, de-Stalinization threatened to weaken Mao's position on promoting Stalinist modes of economic development; the easing of Soviet-American tensions, Mao believed, indicated that the Soviets had begun to change their stance on anti-imperialism.⁴

This gradual breakdown of Sino-Soviet socialist unity at the highest levels began to permeate the social, intellectual, and cultural realms of Chinese society. The subsequent Hundred Flowers Campaign, as well as the later Great Leap Forward, included the re-examination of current models and the development of Chinese-led socialist models that did not rely on the Soviet experience. Immediately following the announcement of the Hundred Flowers campaign, for example, Zhou Enlai called for the reexamination of Lysenkoism genetics – the Soviet scientific model for agriculture that essentially claimed that the genes of plants could be controlled and even changed according to their environment, and which had already had devastating consequences in some villages.⁵ Although Mao eventually called off the Hundred Flowers campaign following an overabundance of criticism, he did not advocate a return to the Soviet models that had been so popular earlier.

https://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/mao/selected-works/volume-5/mswv5_51.htm [Last accessed August 29, 2014].

⁴ Lorenz Lüthi, *The Sino-Soviet Split: Cold War in the Communist World* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2008), 46–47.

⁵ Lüthi, *The Sino-Soviet Split*, 52-53.

Likewise, the world of *tiyu* in the years 1956-1959 slowly turned away from Soviet-inspired models and aimed to forge a solidly Chinese path for *tiyu*. The story told about PRC sport in this period by scholars of Chinese sports history most often focuses on the PRC's policy in opposition to "two Chinas" in the international world of sport, gradual disillusionment with their Soviet comrades in the Olympic committee, their last-minute boycott of the 1956 Olympic games, and the eventual decision in 1958 to leave the IOC altogether.⁶ However, it was precisely during these years that athletic training programs vastly expanded as Chinese leaders and the *tiyu* experts gave less reverence to Soviet experts and leaders, and became more cautious about blindly adopting models like the *laoweizhi* without taking into account the situation on the ground. As the critiques of *laoweizhi* in 1957 suggest, *tiyu* experts believed that more attention needed to be paid to how the model was or was not working in China. This does not mean that Chinese *tiyu* experts and leaders abandoned Soviet models or stopped their admiration for Soviet athletic achievements. These models and achievements still remained the basis for many decisions related to *tiyu* over the next few years, for example when officials decided in spring 1956 to open spare-time sports schools and expand *tiyu* associations nationwide, all part of long-term plans to develop a Soviet-style system of ranked athletes. However, the decisions made by leaders no longer depended on what the Soviets were doing in *tiyu*;

⁶ For example, "Chapter 5: The 'Two Chinas' Question" in Xu Guoqi, *Olympic Dreams: China and Sports, 1895-2008* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 2008) and Susan Brownell, "'Sports and politics don't mix': China's relationship with the IOC during the Cold War," in *East Plays West: Sport and the Cold War*, eds. Stephen Wagg and David Andrews (London; New York: Routledge 2007).

when official publications offered representative models of, for example, sports associations, to workplaces looking to establish the same thing, they called attention to Chinese unions and workplaces that had already carried out such endeavors. Socialist internationalism was certainly not forgotten in these years, but it was put on the back burner as Chinese leaders attempted to carve out a space for a distinctly Chinese version of socialist *tiyu* that both served Chinese citizens and was shaped by Chinese leaders.

This chapter and the next follow the development of this Chinese-led socialist *tiyu* through the proliferation of exercise, sports, and fitness activities in everyday life and the rise of *tiyu* in popular culture. An important goal of campaigns in the late 1950s was to encourage as many ordinary citizens (“the masses”) as possible to understand the importance of their contribution to building a Chinese socialist utopia. Achieving such a utopia required staying true simultaneously to basic socialist ideals, such as collectivism, serving the motherland, and internationalism, as well as to Chinese-specific socialist goals, such as the need for continuous revolution and adhering to the mass line. *Tiyu* programs were an ideal place for officials to carry out such an endeavor because, besides collectively offering all citizens the potential to improve their health and participate in socialist construction, such programs could spread further patriotic education through massive propaganda campaigns down to the grassroots level. They could also provide tangible or visible methods of mass participation—awarding certificates and badges, daily calisthenics, sports competitions—that permeated everyday life. In fact, the official definition of *tiyu*

broadened beginning in the years 1956-1957 to become as inclusive as possible, as leaders also sought to expand *tiyu* associations and spare-time sports schools nationwide. By the time the Great Leap Forward began, *tiyu* included activities as diverse as radio broadcast exercises, ball games, ice-skating, folk dancing, chess and other games, *taiji* (tai-chi) and *wushu* (martial arts), and national defense clubs (such as for shooting, motorbikes, and parachuting).

Furthermore, in these years elite and mass *tiyu* activities were nearly indistinguishable from one another, as workplace-based associations encouraged anyone and everyone to join. Anyone who did well enough in passing the *laoweizhi* standards could move on to spare-time sports schools and train for higher levels. This chapter traces the buildup of these activities and their importance in daily life, while the next discusses the height of the inclusiveness of *tiyu* activities – especially of competitive sports programs – during the Great Leap Forward and in the preparation for the 1959 National Games.

The Breakdown of Socialist Unity in International Sport

The ideological differences with the Soviet Union following Joseph Stalin's death in 1953 that created a rift between China and the Soviet Union, and the subsequent disintegration of any socialist unity in the years 1956-1957,⁷ affected both international and domestic *tiyu* activities. Domestically, the earlier emphasis on “learning from the Soviet Union” declined as Chinese leaders began to show a more

⁷ Lüthi, *The Sino-Soviet Split*, 46-47.

active interest in pushing their own agenda. Sino-Soviet solidarity at IOC meetings also deteriorated.

In 1954 the IOC changed its rules so that territories under the control of a National Olympic Committee could receive the same recognition as nations, thereby simultaneously recognizing both the Republic of China (ROC, Taiwan) and the PRC.⁸ Although this may seem to have been a small victory in the fight for recognition, official PRC policy during this period continued to dictate that the PRC would refuse to participate in any event that also recognized the ROC as China⁹ and thus PRC leaders effectively considered it a defeat. However, they continued to instruct their Olympic delegates to rely on Soviet comrades, who had more weight in the IOC than they did, for further advice and instructions on all matters.

Soviet members had their own agenda, however, aimed at building their own position and influence, promoting the Soviet Union as the leader in sports development, and making the IOC more inclusive, especially of African and Asian nations – part of what they called an effort to “democratize” sport.¹⁰ As the situation between Chinese and Soviet leaders deteriorated through the latter half of the 1950s, so did any signs of solidarity at IOC meetings.¹¹ PRC representatives increasingly felt belittled and ignored not just by the IOC, but also by their Soviet comrades. Silenced

⁸ Christopher Hill, *Olympic Politics* (Manchester, UK; New York: Manchester University Press; New York, NY: Distributed exclusively in the USA and Canada by St. Martin’s Press), 45.

⁹ Liang Lijuan, *He Zhenliang and China’s Olympic Dream* trans. Susan Brownell (Beijing: Foreign Languages Press, 2007), 46-47.

¹⁰ Jenifer Parks, “Red Sport, Red Tape the Olympic Games, the Soviet Sports Bureaucracy, and the Cold War, 1952-1980” (PhD diss., University of North Carolina Chapel Hill, 2009), 105-107.

¹¹ Liang, *He Zhenliang and China’s Olympic Dream*, 42-48.

by Soviet representatives during a 1955 IOC meeting in the name of socialist unity, PRC representatives made little progress concerning the “two Chinas” issue.¹²

When the IOC invited both to the 1956 Melbourne Olympics, the ROC at first rejected the invitation in protest of the “two Chinas” issue, but later accepted.¹³ PRC leaders meanwhile prepared in earnest to send a large contingent of athletes to compete and hoped they could find a way so that ROC athletes would not be able to participate. One of the explicitly stated goals in the State Sports Commission’s 1956 work plan was to improve elite athletics in preparation for the upcoming Olympics.¹⁴ Trials for Olympic delegation spots took place in October in Beijing, with more than 1400 athletes from 27 provinces, municipalities, and autonomous regions taking part. Of these athletes, 92 were selected to represent China in track and field, swimming, weightlifting, soccer, gymnastics, and shooting.¹⁵

The PRC delegation, in an attempt to discourage ROC participation, planned to arrive at the Olympic village ahead of time. They were shocked upon their arrival to see that the ROC flag had already been hoisted and the delegation from Taiwan was already there. They formally voiced their discontent to the IOC and organizing committee to no avail and subsequently withdrew from the Games in protest of ROC participation. Over the next year and a half, PRC leadership, through their IOC

¹² Brownell, ““Sports and politics don’t mix,”” 259-260.

¹³ Allen Guttmann, *The Games Must Go On: Avery Brundage and the Olympic Movement* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1984), 145.

¹⁴ “Guojia tiwei guanyu yi jiu ba nian tiyu gongzuo de tongzhi (zhailu), 1958 nian 1 yue 20 ri” [State Sports Commission 1958 *tiyu* work announcement (excerpts), January 20, 1958] in *Tiyu yundong wenjian xuanbian 1949-1981*, comp. Guojia tiwei zhengce yanjiushi (Beijing: Renmin tiyu chubanshe, 1982), 31.

¹⁵ “Da shiji” [Memorable events], in *Zhongguo tiyu nianjian 1949-1962*, ed. Zhongguo tiyu nianjian bianji weiyuanhui (Beijing: Renmin tiyu chubanshe, 1964), 64.

member Dong Shouyi, sent several letters of complaint to IOC President Avery Brundage stating that the IOC should only recognize the PRC-led Olympic committee as “China.”¹⁶ These efforts continued to be futile as Brundage held steadfast in his stand that politics should not interfere with the Olympic spirit.

Despite these Olympic troubles, the successes of a few elite Chinese athletes in 1956 and 1957 did offer bright spots that the media emphasized. The first major international athletic victory for the PRC came in June 1956 in Shanghai when 20-year-old weightlifter Chen Jingkai beat his Soviet competitors and set a new world record in the lightweight category.¹⁷ His successful 133-kg jerk (lifting the weight above his head with straight arms) shattered the previously held record set by an American athlete the year before, and the Chinese media turned him into an instant celebrity. Before the year was over, he broke his own record twice more.¹⁸ In May 1957, swimmer Qi Lieyun broke the men’s record in the 100-meter breaststroke in Guangzhou,¹⁹ and in November Zheng Fengrong, a female high jumper from Shandong,²⁰ broke the world record with a 1.77-meter jump in Beijing.²¹ The ping-pong teams also did relatively well at the 1957 World Table Tennis Championships

¹⁶ Xu, *Olympic Dreams*, 85-86.

¹⁷ “Wo guo yundongyuan di yi ci dapao shijie jilu: zuiqing liangji juzhong yundongyuan Chen Jingkai shuangshou tingju 133 gongjin” [The first time an athlete from our nation has broken a world record: Bantam weightlifter Chen Jingkai clean and jerk 133 kilos], *Renmin ribao*, June 6, 1956. Chen was no stranger to athletics and had played numerous sports growing up, his favorite being basketball. He apparently ended up as a weightlifter because of his short height. Guo An, “Chen Jingkai – shijie tingju jilu zaici chuangzaozhe” [Chen Jingkai – world clean and jerk record creator again], *Renmin ribao*, August 10, 1957.

¹⁸ “Da shiji,” *Zhongguo tiyu nianjian 1949-1962*, 66.

¹⁹ “Da shiji,” *Zhongguo tiyu nianjian 1949-1962*, 70-71.

²⁰ Zhang also took first place at a meet held in Berlin in August 1957. “Zai da bolin yundonghui shang: wo qingnian tianjingdui qude si ge guanjun” [At the Berlin sports meet: Our youth track and field team’s four wins], *Renmin ribao*, August 20, 1957.

²¹ “Da shiji,” *Zhongguo tiyu nianjian 1949-1962*, 78.

held that March in Stockholm, with the men's team placing fourth and the women's third.²² PRC leaders treated these first international wins as huge victories and these athletes were frequently and prominently displayed and written about in media produced for both domestic and international audiences. Thus while media and publications in the early 1950s had primarily focused on the achievements of Soviet athletes, these victories helped propel propaganda efforts in the late 1950s that, for the first time, showcased the very best elite Chinese athletes for what officials hoped would be a large, supportive, and patriotic fan base.

“Mobilize the Masses, Rely on the Masses”²³

In late 1955, following several years of conservative developments, Mao and other top Chinese leaders decided that they would accelerate the rate of collectivization in the countryside, and in urban areas speed up the nationalization of industry and commerce.²⁴ Mao announced in January 1956 that this included the expansion and acceleration of the scale and rate of development in such fields as

²² “Da shiji,” *Zhongguo tiyu nianjian 1949-1962*, 69.

²³ “Fadong qunzhong, yikao qunzhong.” Quoted in Feng Jiayu, “Li Baokun shi zenyang dang tixie lishi de” [How Li Baokun became *tiyu* association director], in *Jiceng tiyu xiehui zenyang zuo gongzuo* [How to do the grassroots *tiyu* associations work] (Beijing: Renmin tiyu chubanshe, 1956), 14. In context of the section: Li Baokun was a model worker on the *tiyu* council for the Hebei department store's Tianjin wholesale branch (*pifa zhan*). Her motivation for *tiyu* activities was (wanting to reduce) the number of sick workers each month. This phrase (“fadong qunzhong, yikao qunzhong”) refers to her methods of improving the health of workers by relying on *tiyu* enthusiasts with different specialties/skills to help in different ways. For example, if someone had good sports skills then they should be made a coach; if they had high enthusiasm and were good at mobilizing others, then they should do organizational work.

²⁴ “Chapter 1: The ‘High Tide’ of Socialism” in Roderick MacFarquhar, *The Origins of the Cultural Revolution, Vol. 1: Contradictions Among the People 1956-1957* (London: Oxford University Press, 1974), 15-25.

science, culture, education, and public health.²⁵ Under the new slogan “more, faster, better, and more economically” leaders began to push forward new production and related policies across society that began what has since been known as the first “leap forward.”²⁶ The hope was that, by adopting the same slogan and speeding up development in *tiyu* programs, within two to three years Chinese athletes would reach international levels in at least a few sports.²⁷

Extending *tiyu* across all of society – and, most of all, to the masses – had always been a central aim of the Communist Party. Participation in sport, physical culture, and frequent exercise was seen as fundamentally connected to socialist citizenship through the belief that building up a strong and healthy population would serve the purpose of carrying out socialist production, and thereby strengthening the nation. Between 1949 and 1956 the primary method for accomplishing this had been to study Soviet models from the 1930s, such as the *laoweizhi*, and Chinese leaders tried to implement these models in a similar fashion to what they read or saw with their own eyes on visits. In the Soviet Union, mass sport primarily existed through workplace associations that organized a host of sports and fitness activities, including competitive teams, and through spare-time sports schools; these two institutions became the foundation for an elite system of ranked athletes. This model appealed to Chinese *tiyu* leaders and they set about to create something similar in China. But as the top PRC leadership grew disillusioned with Soviet leadership and any notions of a

²⁵ Cited in MacFarquhar, *The Origins of the Cultural Revolution, Vol. 1*, 26.

²⁶ MacFarquhar, *The Origins of the Cultural Revolution, Vol. 1*, 27, 30.

²⁷ “Zhonghua renmin gongheguo tiyu yundong weiyuanhui guanyu 1955 nian tiyu gongzuo zongjie he 1956 nian gongzuo renwu de baogao,” 12-13.

close socialist unity, so too did Chinese *tiyu* leaders begin to tone down their calls for relying on Soviet models, experts, and publications to dictate their own programs. In the latter half of the 1950s, successful Soviet athletes and descriptions of the training and techniques continued to inform Chinese leaders, and the Soviet-inspired models of sport remained, but the all-encompassing campaign to “learn from the Soviet Union” disappeared.

By the end of 1955, programs for general fitness, sports teams, and exercise groups already existed in some work units, schools, and the military, but leaders believed that the pace of development had thus far been too slow in universalizing such activities – a problem they felt needed to be resolved before it would be possible to accomplish long-term national goals of raising overall athletic skill levels.²⁸ The leadership proposed expanding nationwide the development of *tiyu* associations (*xiehui*) and spare-time sports schools (*yeyu tiyu xuexiao*), both of which were based on Soviet models and which worked in conjunction with the *laoweizhi* to provide the foundation for a successful elite ranking system. These institutions would be responsible for carrying out government-sponsored *tiyu* programs, such as daily broadcast calisthenics and the *laoweizhi*. Ideally, both would contribute heavily towards building a grassroots base of mass *tiyu* enthusiasts and be open to the voluntary participation of youth and workers regardless of background, although schools would be the more competitive institutions by effectively weeding out and training only the very best athletes. Since anyone could start training in their local

²⁸ “Zhonghua renmin gongheguo tiyu yundong weiyuanhui guanyu 1955 nian tiyu gongzuo zongjie he 1956 nian gongzuo renwu de baogao,” 11-12.

tiyu association, school, or national defense club, the distinction between *tiyu* for the masses and that for elites was minimal: the better athletes would voluntarily enter spare-time sports schools for more intense training and become the base for a ranked system of athletes.

Tiyu for Workers: Work Unit Associations

In the first half of 1956, the All-China Federation of Trade Unions began to mobilize workers across the country as part of the “more, faster, better, and more economical” plan to speed up the rate of industrialization and keep pace with agricultural development.²⁹ The mobilization of workers included influencing their everyday lives through implementing *tiyu* programs under the same slogan.³⁰

In fact, *tiyu* leaders had already begun to take steps in previous years to expand *tiyu* into the workplace and encroach on workers’ leisure time. In March 1954, the Central People’s Administration Council released an official notice that it would begin developing both “workplace calisthenics” (*gongjian cao*) [Figure 11] and “other” *tiyu* activities in government offices and bureaus nationwide (beginning with Beijing), as a method of improving the health of workers, strengthening their physiques (*tizhi*), and raising work efficiency, as well as providing them with a “good cultural activity.”³¹ There would be ten minutes of workers’ calisthenics twice per

²⁹ MacFarquhar, *The Origins of the Cultural Revolution, Vol. 1*, 31-32.

³⁰ “Zhonghua renmin gongheguo tiyu yundong weiyuanhui guanyu 1955 nian tiyu gongzuo zongjie he 1956 nian gongzuo renwu de baogao,” 12.

³¹ “Zhongyang renmin zhengfu zhengwuyuan guanyu zai zhengfu jiguan zhong kaizhan gongjiancao he qita tiyu yundong de tongzhi (1954 nian 3 yue 1 ri)” [Central People’s Government State Council notice on carrying out workplace calisthenics and other sports in government agencies (March 1,



Figure 11. “The Railways Ministry’s workplace calisthenics.” *Xin tiyu*, April 6, 1957.

1954)], in *Zhonghua renmin gongheguo tiyu yundong wenjian huibian (1)*, comp. Renmin tiyu chubanshe (Beijing: Renmin tiyu chubanshe, 1958), 9.

workday, once before noon and once after noon, as well as additional opportunities for participation in morning calisthenics, ball sports and other activities. *Tiyu* was to extend beyond the workday, however, as the notice also instructed unions, youth groups, and clubs responsible for carrying out exercise and sports activities to use leisure time and days off as opportunities for organizing sports competitions, “recreational *tiyu* socials” (*wenwu tiyu wanhui*), outings, and other activities that would benefit a healthy body and mind.³²

But by late 1955, worker sport had started to move beyond the goals of basic health, with some work units offering worker-athletes more intense training opportunities and even the possibility to compete nationwide. In October 1955 the first official workers’ meet was held to promote mass sport among workers by putting on display those achievements of the last six years. According to 1954 statistics on 26 provinces, 3 municipalities, and the Chinese locomotive sports association – established for the railways union in Beijing in July 1952³³ and based on Soviet-inspired models – worker sport included more than 82,700 basketball, volleyball and soccer teams and over 838,000 workers, as well as increasing participation numbers in broadcast calisthenics, exercise groups, and various organized sports teams in many industries.³⁴ For this first ever workers’ sports meet more than 1.2 million workers from 17 different industries took part in qualification

³² “Zhongyang renmin zhengfu zhengwuyuan guanyu zai zhengfu jiguan zhong kaizhan gongjiancao he qita tiyu yundong de tongzhi (1954 nian 3 yue 1 ri),” 9.

³³ “Lingdao tielu xitong tiyu yundong de zhongguo huochetou tiyu xiehui chengli” [Leading the sports movement in the railway system, Chinese Locomotive *tiyu* association founded], *Renmin ribao*, July 6, 1952.

³⁴ “Fazhan zhigong qunzhong de tiyu yundong” [Develop Workers’ Mass Sports], *Renmin ribao*, October 2, 1955.

competitions across the country, and more than 1,700 athletes attended the finals held in Beijing.³⁵ Worker sport had already “improved the health of workers, reduced disease, greatly improved [work] attendance and labor productivity,” but health and fitness were no longer the only goals, as officials noted that the continued improvement of skill levels had also “created outstanding results” such as breaking national records in cycling as well as track and field.³⁶ In his opening ceremony speech on October 3, He Long called attention specifically to implementing the *laoweizhi*, diverse *tiyu* activities, and the cultivation of both cadres and outstanding athletes in the workplace.³⁷ As a sure sign of the national significance of worker sport and these goals for it, all the top leaders – including Mao Zedong, Zhou Enlai, Liu Shaoqi, and Zhu De, as well as Soviet sports leaders, attended the opening ceremonies of the meet in Xiannongtan stadium.³⁸ An athletes’ parade held during these ceremonies included representatives from industries as diverse as textiles, machinery, coal, road transport, education, and the People’s Bank. Participants included athletes including Zhang Xiling, national record holder in the 10,000-meter run, as well as less well-known model athletes like Zhang Manhua, a mother of two who competed in track and field for the People’s Bank.³⁹ The Beijing Working Peoples’ Cultural Palace hosted a simultaneous exhibition that showcased *tiyu* in

³⁵ “Workers’ National Contest,” *China Reconstructs*, January 1956, 30; “Zhonghua renmin gongheguo tiyu yundong weiyuanhui guanyu 1955 nian tiyu gongzuo zongjie he 1956 nian gongzuo renwu de baogao,” 6.

³⁶ “Fazhan zhigong qunzhong de tiyu yundong,” *Renmin ribao*, October 2, 1955.

³⁷ “He Long tongzhi de jianghua” [Comrade He Long’s speech], *Renmin ribao*, October 3, 1955.

³⁸ “Quanguo gongren tiyu dahui kaimu Mao zhuxi tongdang he zhengfu lingdaoren dao hui” [Chairman Mao and Party and government leaders come to the national workers’ sports meet opening ceremony], *Renmin ribao*, October 3, 1955.

³⁹ “Quanguo gongren tiyu dahui kaimu Mao zhuxi tongdang he zhengfu lingdaoren dao hui.”

both China and the Soviet Union, with a particular focus on the growth of worker sport in China. The exhibition included over 700 pieces of sports equipment and books, as well as models, photographs, and charts that explained, among other things, the relationship between sport and health and the value of exercise, and were accompanied by detailed descriptions and images of *tiyu* activities already taking place in Chinese industries.⁴⁰

By the end of the actual competition, worker-athletes, many of whom hailed from associations affiliated with the Chinese Locomotive union and the Ministry of Education (*Jiaoyu bu*) had set eight national records at the October meet.⁴¹ The success of the athletes was largely attributed to two factors: their diligent hard work and their success in learning from the Soviet Union. For example, Li Zhonglin, the record holder in the 800-meter run, had improved his physique by running every day for 40-50 minutes to and from his clerical job with the Jinan railroad management bureau.⁴² In October 1953, he had represented his work unit in the 800-meter event at the national track and field meet, but had not done particularly well. Following this meet, he began to study the Soviet model of “all-round exercise” (*quanmian duanlian*). With the help of activities like weightlifting, gymnastics, jumping and hurling, he had increased his body strength, endurance, speed, and flexibility. This foundation allowed him to study and adopt advanced Soviet skills and methods in

⁴⁰ Feng Zhong, “Kan le gongren tiyu yundong zhanlanhui yihou” [After seeing the Workers’ Sports exhibition], *Renmin ribao*, October 4, 1955.

⁴¹ “1955 nian quanguo diyijie gongren tiyu yundong dahui ge xiang yundong zuigao jilu” [Various sports records at the 1955 national workers’ sports meet], *Xin tiyu*, November 6, 1955, 13.

⁴² Huang He, “Youshengzhe de daolu: ba ge po quanguo yundong jiluzhe de jieshao” [The way of winners: introducing 8 national record holders], *Xin tiyu*, November 6, 1955, 14.

his own training, such as varying his running speed (*bianlian pao*), intervals, and sprints.

Leaders used the success of this meet, in terms of scale, audience size, and athletic achievements, as justification that the time was ripe for the speedy development of worker sport, and in particular *tiyu* associations. Formally announced in spring 1956, the primary goal of all grassroots *tiyu* associations was to attract and organize the masses to participate in *tiyu* exercises and activities, as well as carry out the promotion and running of official *tiyu* programs, and “communist education”⁴³ that would contribute towards a general enthusiasm for socialist construction.⁴⁴ These associations would serve as centralized points for the administration of all *tiyu* activities that took place within work units such as factories, mines, companies, and offices, as well as schools or villages. Each association was to include a council consisting of a chair, vice-chair, and secretary, as well as four bureaus covering competitive activities, mass *tiyu* activities, *laoweizhi* work, and a “general” bureau that managed finances and was responsible for building and repairing all facilities and equipment.⁴⁵ The competitive activities bureau was to organize events, rank the association’s athletes and keep statistics, and was in charge of training competing athletes and referees, including offering classes and seminars as needed. Broadcast

⁴³ “Jiceng tiyu xiehui shifan zhangcheng” [Grassroots *tiyu* association model statutes (April 1956)], *Tiyu yundong wenjian xuanbian 1949-1981*, comp. Guojia tiwei zhengce yanjiushi (Beijing: Renmin tiyu chunbanshe, 1982), 178. There is no indication of what is meant by “communist education” in this context, but it likely included political thought education of some sort, either directly or indirectly.

⁴⁴ “Jiceng tiyu xiehui shifan zhangcheng,” 181.

⁴⁵ “Jiceng tiyu xiehui shifan zhangcheng,” 179. It was expected that income for such things would be collected from a work unit’s administration or union, membership fees, and income made by holding various *tiyu* activities and events.

calisthenics, parades, campaign and marches were among activities expected of the mass *tiyu* bureau, whose main goal was to grow the number of association members through propaganda. The association's *laoweizhi* bureau was in charge of anything related to the program, including propaganda and training participants, recording statistics on participation, and administering the standards tests for badges and certificates.⁴⁶ The *laoweizhi* had primarily been a program found in urban schools and the military up to this point, but officials began to promote it in the workplace with the hopes that the system would become a regular feature of association work.⁴⁷ Essentially, then, becoming a member of an association was the lowest common denominator for anyone interested in getting more involved in *tiyu*.

In 1955 eleven *tiyu* associations were established, or in the process of being set up, at the national level, along with 94 at the provincial and municipal levels and 297 at the work unit (lowest grassroots) level,⁴⁸ all based on the earlier Chinese locomotive model. Yet according to an editorial published in *Xin tiyu* in March 1956, this was still far too few.⁴⁹ Leaders hoped in 1956 that *tiyu* associations would be widely established within two to three years,⁵⁰ becoming the foundation for *tiyu* in every work unit, at every level of society. The masses already wanted to establish more, the editorial claimed, but the process was arduous as workers ran into problems

⁴⁶ “Jiceng tiyu xiehui shifan zhangcheng,” 180.

⁴⁷ He Long, “Xin Zhongguo gongren tiyu yundong da jianyue – wei quanguo di yi jie gongren tiyu yundong dahui zuo” [Review of New China’s worker’s sports – the first Workers’ Sports Meet], *Renmin ribao*, September 14, 1955.

⁴⁸ “Shelun: Guangfan jianli tiyu xiehui” [Editorial: Widely establish *tiyu* associations], *Xin tiyu*, March 6, 1956, 3.

⁴⁹ “Shelun: Guangfan jianli tiyu xiehui,” 3.

⁵⁰ “Jiceng tiyu xiehui shifan zhangcheng,” 181.

related to lingering conservatism in local *tiyu* committees and bureaus, and local leaders lacked knowledge of the importance of associations and the kinds of activities that they could provide. Local leaders often told workers they'd have to "wait a bit" in forming associations because there were other things to focus on at the moment, or that the proposed association's regulations were not up to par and that workers should "first [run a] trial and then [we'll] see."⁵¹ The editorial proposed simplifying the process by making it possible for a group of "sports lovers" (*aihao tiyu yundong de ren*) to voluntarily create an association and grow their own membership base. Removing bureaucratic layers would at least help the national *tiyu* work conference reach its goal of establishing 23 national level *tiyu* associations before the end of the year.⁵²

To simplify the previous year's bureaucratic issues, *tiyu* leaders soon thereafter released an official policy declaring that any group of twenty-five or more people could voluntarily form a *tiyu* association, which would be run by a council elected by members. Membership was officially open to anyone over the age of fourteen who was a member of the work unit, school, or village who wanted to join.⁵³ Members often had to contribute a small membership fee and pay dues on time, such as the nominal amount of one *jiao* required by members of the coal mining industry association every half-year.⁵⁴ In return, they received voting rights as well as the right

⁵¹ "Jiceng tiyu xiehui shifan zhangcheng," 181.

⁵² "Jiceng tiyu xiehui shifan zhangcheng," 181.

⁵³ "Jiceng tiyu xiehui shifan zhangcheng," 178.

⁵⁴ "Zhongguo meikuang tiyu xiehui zhangcheng (1955 nian 4 yue 4 ri)" [Chinese coal mine *tiyu* association statutes (April 4, 1955)], in *Tiyu yundong wenjian xuanbian 1949-1981*, comp. Guojia tiwei

to offer their opinions and criticism of the association, as well as use the association's public facilities and equipment and represent it as competitions or exhibition activities.⁵⁵ But leaders also had high expectations: an association member was to participate in daily exercise, work on raising his or her skill levels, and strive to pass the *laoweizhi* standards. They also politicized everyday *tiyu* activities by calling on members to improve their political consciousness and become models of production, work, study, and discipline whom the rest of their peers could follow.

Larger nationalized industries and unions were hierarchically organized with numerous sports associations scattered all over the country. Association councils existed at both the national level and extended down to the lowest grassroots levels in local work units. In 1957, for example, the railroad industry's *tiyu* association had assemblies at the national, district (*qu*), sub-district (*fenqu*), regional (*diqu*), and grassroots levels (the local work unit), with councils in charge of *tiyu* association activities at each level.⁵⁶ Councils approved activities and helped arrange times and referees for competitions between workshops.⁵⁷ Sources of funding for these activities included the union, company funds, membership fees, and income made from holding *tiyu* activities or related events.⁵⁸ The coal mining industry likewise relied on the same types of sources, about 10 to 15 percent of which was supposed to

zhengce yanjiushi (Beijing: Renmin tiyu chunbanshe, 1982), 190. To give a sense of how inconsequential this fee was, the cost of a single issue of *Xin tiyu* magazine was a little over 2 *jiao*.

⁵⁵ "Jiceng tiyu xiehui shifan zhangcheng," 179.

⁵⁶ "Zhongguo huochetou tiyu xiehui zhangcheng (1957 nian 4 yue 20 ri)" [Chinese locomotive *tiyu* association statutes (April 20, 1957)], in *Tiyu yundong wenjian xuanbian 1949-1981* (Beijing: Renmin tiyu chunbanshe, 1982), 193.

⁵⁷ Pan Chao, "An Interview with Kuo Ching-ping on Workers' Sports," *China's Sports*, No. 6, 1958, 25.

⁵⁸ "Zhongguo huochetou tiyu xiehui zhangcheng," 194.

come from the union and be used to pay for repairing or maintaining *tiyu*-related items or goods used every day, the wages of full-time *tiyu* association cadres, daily administration fees, propaganda, and sports clothing.⁵⁹

Competitions and meets also existed at each level, such as those to determine which athletes would represent the industry or union in municipal, provincial, and national competitions. In June 1956 the Shanghai Medical Workers Union (*Shanghai yiwu gongzuozhe gonghui*) held their second sports meet, one of the primary goals of which was to select track and field athletes to participate in the third Shanghai workers' sports meet. The only criterion for participation, aside from citizenship and a healthy body, was employment as a worker in a grassroots (the lowest level) work unit of the union in Shanghai. Each work unit sponsored and paid for its athletes to participate in the meet.⁶⁰ In the end, 1,543 athletes took part, a more than 25 percent increase over the first meet.⁶¹

The primary goal of all worker programs still remained improving general worker health, following the logic that healthier workers meant fewer sick leaves, higher efficiency, and ultimately better production levels. Associations provided the institutional structure necessary for carrying out such a feat through taking charge of official campaigns for workers' calisthenics and other *tiyu* activities, such as sports teams and *laoweizhi* small exercise groups. For example, sports association council

⁵⁹ “Zhongguo meikuang tiyu xiehui zhangcheng,” 188.

⁶⁰ Shanghai Municipal Archives (SMA) C3-1-80: Shanghai yigong di er jie tiyu yundong dahui jingsai ji biaoyan guicheng [Shanghai medical workers' second sports meet competition and performance rules], June 17, 1956.

⁶¹ SMA C3-1-80: Shanghai yigong di er jie tiyu yundong dahui huikan [Shanghai medical workers' second sports meet bulletin], June 17, 1956.

officials from China's No. 1 Textile Machinery Factory linked the increase of establishing regular *tiyu* activities and exercise directly to the improvement the health of workers like Liu Qingsheng, an assembly worker who suffered from aching hands every time the weather was overcast. Before regular exercise, he typically had to take off two to three days per month and could never finish his work. Following three months of participation in a small exercise group, however, his physique was strengthened so that he could now finish all his production duties and, moreover, he was named a "factory-ranked superior" (*changji yousheng*).⁶² In other words, frequent exercise not only led to better worker health but also produced an overall superior worker.

In cases where work units already had regular *tiyu* activities, associations also sped up the development of state-supported programs by providing formal organizational structure and support. The Tianjin fur processing plant, for example, offered broadcast calisthenics, track and field, and soccer to its more than 800 workers as early as 1951, and beginning in 1953 it held an annual sports meet.⁶³ When the sports association was established in early 1956, 257 workers became members and by March 1957 the plant had two soccer teams, two basketball teams, a ping-pong team, and a track and field team. Some smaller workshops and departments also had teams, and over 170 workers participated in *laoweizhi*-related

⁶² Zhongguo diyi jixie tiyu xiehui zhongguo fangzhi jixie chang lishihui, "Wo chang tiyu xiehui de jingchang gongzuo" [The regular work of our factory's *tiyu* association], in *Jiceng tiyu xiexhui zenyang zuo gongzuo*, 2-3.

⁶³ Yi Zhong, "Tianjianshi rongmao jiagongchang tixie gaohao gongzuo de san ge guanjian" [The Tianjin fur processing plant *tiyu* association's three keys to doing good work], in *Jiceng tiyu xiehui gongzuo jingyan*, ed. Renmin tiyu chubanshe (Beijing: Renmin tiyu chubanshe, 1957), 2.

exercise with 39 having already received first level badges.⁶⁴ Among sports successes, the plant's men's and women's basketball teams took home first place in two citywide basketball meets held in 1956. Meanwhile the plant's *tiyu* leaders also noted that its eighty-eight "top athletes" (*jian'er*) had an excellent work attendance rate of 99.44 percent as compared to the 95 percent rate found plant-wide.⁶⁵ These successes were credited to the hard work of the sports association council, staffed primarily by dedicated *tiyu* enthusiasts, such as the basketball and soccer team captains, and which provided services like two *laoweizhi* training courses in June 1956 and regular *laoweizhi* testing, as well as sports-related broadcasts and announcements.⁶⁶

As the main body responsible for sports and physical culture in the workplace, including leading calisthenics and encouraging workers to participate in sports and fitness activities during leisure time, days off, and holidays, a *tiyu* association also played a significant part in organizing and determining the daily routine of a worker. Official propaganda especially encouraged women to participate in association-sponsored extracurricular sports activities [Figure 12]. The Tianjin fur processing plant association held a women's sports meet on March 8, International Women's Day, and on their days off workers frequently got together for friendly matches held by their workshops.⁶⁷ Associations also further boosted official *tiyu* activities by putting into place regularly scheduled exercise and sports training sessions, usually held at the beginning or end of a workday. For example, a group of youth machine

⁶⁴ Yi Zhong, "Tianjianshi rongmao jiagongchang tixie gaohao gongzuo de san ge guanjian," 2-3.

⁶⁵ Yi Zhong, "Tianjianshi rongmao jiagongchang tixie gaohao gongzuo de san ge guanjian," 3.

⁶⁶ Yi Zhong, "Tianjianshi rongmao jiagongchang tixie gaohao gongzuo de san ge guanjian," 4, 8.

⁶⁷ Yi Zhong, "Tianjianshi rongmao jiagongchang tixie gaohao gongzuo de san ge guanjian," 7.



Figure 12. “Let our lives be active.” *Xin tiyu*, May 6, 1957.

repair workers from the Changxindian locomotive repair workshop's *tiyu* association met out front every morning before 5 a.m. to run, jump rope, use exercise bars, and play volleyball and soccer; after sunrise, more people arrived to stretch and participate in calisthenics.⁶⁸ Six workshop members, who were also members of the youth branch of the military sports committee, led daily calisthenics. This workshop's association also organized small exercise groups for particular activities, which met at least three times per week (but were not to exceed forty minutes per session). *Tiyu* associations thus attempted to effectively channel employees' leisure time into appropriate, state-supported *tiyu* activities.

Enthusiasm for such activities could not, however, solve the concrete problems of these grassroots associations, namely that they were growing too quickly and their demands for resources were too high. Many simply did not have the necessary leadership, equipment and facilities to carry out activities. A draft work report from Shanghai claimed that in 1957 only 10 to 15 percent of all workplace associations could be considered "advanced development" in that they had a large number of workers participating in all kinds of activities, including the *laoweizhi*, and they had organized competitions.⁶⁹ Between 60 and 70 percent of associations had started development, but lacked a solid plan and leadership, while the remaining 20 to 30 percent had basically done no work at all and in a year had held some kind of *tiyu* activity only occasionally. The main problem was one of leadership – or rather, lack

⁶⁸ "Yi ge chejian de tixie" [A workshop *tiyu* association], *Xin tiyu*, April 6, 1956, 10.

⁶⁹ SMA B126-1-280: Guanyu gudan jianquan zhigong tiyu xiehui de jige yijian (chu gao) [Several opinions on consolidating and strengthening workers' *tiyu* associations (draft)], n.d., 1957?

thereof – in carrying out association work. Every council, argued the report, included members of the Party, youth group, or union (and who were already “very busy” with other work) and *tiyu* enthusiasts, who were primarily production workers with demanding work and little spare time. But only the most advanced association councils had a contingent of people who “loved *tiyu* work” and had the time to devote to it.⁷⁰ Without such people any promotional or organizational work was essentially doomed.

Furthermore, training competent leadership was not as easy as it seemed, at least in the eyes of existing leaders. A cadre training class held by the Beijing Municipal Assistance Union (*xiezhushi gonghui*) in April 1957 attracted 93 people from *tiyu* associations, but the *tiyu* committee complained that participants didn’t know why they were coming to the class and most had low literacy levels – some could not even write.⁷¹ In Shanghai, leaders also complained that, although more than 1100 grassroots *tiyu* cadres had been trained by the end of 1957, as well as some enthusiasts in specific sports, the quality of the training was “not high”.⁷² Furthermore, many did not participate in exchanges with other cadres or associations regarding their experiences. Low quality cadres who were not well versed in how to handle the business of a grassroots-level *tiyu* association, critics worried, could not properly lead or guide the necessary work.

⁷⁰ SMA B126-1-280: Guanyu gudan jianquan zhigong tiyu xiehui de jige yijian (chu gao).

⁷¹ Beijing Municipal Archives (BMA) 185-001-00018: Shi tiwei: qingkuang bao [Municipal *tiyu* committee: report] #7, April 10, 1957.

⁷² SMA B126-1-280: Guanyu gudan jianquan zhigong tiyu xiehui de jige yijian (chu gao).

Another problem was that the exuberance of workers who wanted to participate often outweighed the availability of equipment, facilities, and proper guidance in training, which in turn became a burden for many associations and local *tiyu* committee. The local production of sporting goods could not keep pace with the ever-growing demand that had come with mass sports. In August 1956 *People's Daily* reported that Shanghai soccer, basketball, and volleyball monthly production numbers could only meet a quarter of production requests, and many cities were unable to locate horizontal or parallel bars to buy.⁷³ Many sporting goods were also apparently of shoddy quality. Basketballs, for example, often did not meet the required sizing standards, or the stitching on the ball was too rough, the leather too hard, or the ball not perfectly round. In one case, although twelve local factories produced thirty different kinds of soccer balls, not one was suitable for competition. The poor quality of certain pieces of equipment – such as misaligned or cracked parallel bars – caused several incidents of injury and even death.⁷⁴

There was also an increased need for training facilities and despite efforts to quickly build stadiums and swimming pools,⁷⁵ sometimes construction simply couldn't keep up. For some of the more popular ball sports, lack of training facilities was perhaps the biggest issue. The Beijing municipal *tiyu* committee noted that by December 1957 approximately 4,000 workers from 30 work units participated in

⁷³ Kong Bin, "Zhongshi tiyu qicai de shengchan he gongying" [Give importance to sports equipment production and supply], *Renmin ribao*, August 28, 1956.

⁷⁴ Kong Bin, "Zhongshi tiyu qicai de shengchan he gongying."

⁷⁵ "Da shiji" in *Zhongguo tiyu nianjian 1949-1962*. This lists the largest sports venues constructed in each year, and in 1955, 1956, and 1957 this included several large stadiums (some with capacities of 40,000+ spectators) and swimming pools across the country.

various sports activities, of which the most popular were basketball, ping-pong, and soccer.⁷⁶ Soccer in particular grew rapidly – the Number 2 Machine Tool factory, for example, had 3 soccer teams and 45 athletes in 1956 but by the end of 1957 the number had grown to 9 teams and 135 athletes. The overall number of factory teams in the city also grew from 30 teams and 547 athletes in 1956 to 53 teams and 795 athletes in 1957. The *tiyu* committee noted that most of these teams lacked specialists and proper guidance (and thus had low skill levels), and did not enjoy frequent public practice time because existing facilities simply could not accommodate the sudden increase in demand.

Perhaps worst of all, according to leaders, was the general conduct of players and spectators alike. The “very weak political thought leadership” on teams had resulted in a degree of “trophyism” (*jinbiaozhuyi sixiang*), which leaders blamed on poor efforts by the Party’s organization in grassroots work units to carry out education among worker-athletes.⁷⁷ They further argued that audience reactions to arguments and fights on the playing field were evidence of worker-spectators having received insufficient socialist education. During a competition between the Number 2 Machine Tool factory and the 541 factory,⁷⁸ many spectators had surrounded the scene following a referee decision they disagreed with, which disrupted and ultimately ended the match. Clearly, these Beijing leaders felt that worker-athletes and spectators at soccer matches lacked commonly upheld socialist values in sport,

⁷⁶ BMA 185-001-00018: Shi tiwei: tiyu gongzuo jianbao [Municipal *tiyu* committee: *tiyu* work report] #4, December 9, 1957.

⁷⁷ BMA 185-001-00018: Shi tiwei: tiyu gongzuo jianbao #4, December 9, 1957.

⁷⁸ The factory in the text is the 五四一厂, which to the best of my knowledge is the 国营五四一厂 (State-owned 541 General Factory) located in Beijing.

such as sacrificing team glory for the purposes of collective, friendly competition and good sportsmanship – a problem that they implied could be fixed with better efforts to provide education (*jiaoyu*) at the grassroots level.

Spare-time Sports Schools: The Foundation for Elite Athletic Training

While *tiyu* associations invited anyone interested to sign up, spare-time sports schools served as the heart of competitive athletic training. These schools, based initially on Soviet models and designed explicitly to nurture “all-around developed [and] high-quality outstanding athletes,”⁷⁹ encouraged anyone with high athletic potential – that is, those who met the entry criteria – to sign up for one of two levels of schools, either those for juniors (*shaonian*, for those aged 13 to 17) or those for youth (*qingnian*, ages 17 to 23). In both cases, there were schools that focused on just one sport as well as schools that included several sports. The intention of junior-level schools was to use after-school time for educating and further developing the next generation of elite athletes, with a focus on introducing programs for all-round body development and specialized sports skills.⁸⁰ Youth schools, meanwhile, aimed at using a student’s or worker’s spare time to simultaneously raise athletic skill levels

⁷⁹ “Guojia tiwei guanyu juban qing, shaonian yeyu tiyu xuexiao yingxing zhuyi shixiang de tongbao (1956 nian)” [State Sports Commission bulletin on matters that should be given attention in organizing youth and junior spare-time sports schools (1956)], in *Tiyu yundong wenjian xuanbian 1949-1981*, comp. Guojia tiwei zhengce yanjiushi (Beijing: Renmin tiyu chunbanshe, 1982), 545.

⁸⁰ “Shaonian yeyu tiyu xuexiao zhangcheng (cao’an) (Guojia tiwei 1956 nian 4 yue 15 ri banfa)” [Junior spare-time sports schools regulations (draft) (Issued by the State Sports Commission April 15, 1956)], in *Tiyu yundong wenjian xuanbian 1949-1981*, comp. Guojia tiwei zhengce yanjiushi (Beijing: Renmin tiyu chunbanshe, 1982), 551.

and educate students in basic *tiyu* knowledge, with the hopes that some of them would also become sports leaders or referees in the future.⁸¹

In addition to athletic training and competition, which included *laoweizhi* standards as the basis and specialized tactics training, leaders also instructed sports schools to teach basic knowledge of regulating physiological hygiene (*shengli weisheng*),⁸² patriotism, and other elements of communist education.⁸³ Broken annually into three terms, schools were to offer more technical courses than theory classes. Officials advised consulting the Moscow sports stadium's spare-time sports school for early youth as an example for teaching first and second year students: annual teaching time comprised 286 hours in total, which included 186 hours of skills training, about 60 hours in theory classes, and 40 hours of "supplementary sports."⁸⁴ This meant two to four two-hour coached sessions per week at set times for youth with high skill levels⁸⁵ and two or three sessions per week of 1.5 to two hours at the junior level.⁸⁶

Unlike associations, schools had strict admission criteria. Only a child with an existing foundation in sport, who was considered a future athletic prospect, had a good record of study and conduct, who could pass the physical exam and the entrance

⁸¹ "Qingnian yeyu tiyu xuexiao zhangcheng (cao'an)(Guojia tiwei 1956 nian 4 yue 15 ri banfa)" [Youth spare-time sports schools regulations (draft) (Issued by the State Sports Commission April 15, 1956)], in *Tiyu yundong wenjian xuanbian 1949-1981*, comp. Guojia tiwei zhengce yanjiushi (Beijing: Renmin tiyu chunbanshe, 1982), 548.

⁸² "Guojia tiwei guanyu juban qing, shaonian yeyu tiyu xuexiao yingxing zhuyi shixiang de tongbao," 546.

⁸³ "Guojia tiwei guanyu juban qing, shaonian yeyu tiyu xuexiao yingxing zhuyi shixiang de tongbao," 545.

⁸⁴ "Guojia tiwei guanyu juban qing, shaonian yeyu tiyu xuexiao yingxing zhuyi shixiang de tongbao," 546.

⁸⁵ "Qingnian yeyu tiyu xuexiao zhangcheng (cao'an)," 549.

⁸⁶ "Shaonian yeyu tiyu xuexiao zhangcheng (cao an)," 551.

school exam, and who had received the permission of their head of family and original school, would be allowed to enter a junior-level school. Leaders added that “relatively young children” could be recruited in swimming, figure skating, speed skating, acrobatic gymnastics, and rhythmic gymnastics.⁸⁷ Youth schools accepted athletes from schools, factories and mines, industry, and offices (*jiguan*) and required their applicants to possess a strong foundation in a specific sport, be a future prospect for national-level athletic competition, pass a physical exam and a school entry test, and be good in their “studies, work, and character.”⁸⁸ They also required applicants to have already passed level 1 of the *laoweizhi* standards to even be considered for admission, a clear indication that the *laoweizhi* would fast become the basis for choosing elite athletes in any sport.

Schools also offered additional incentives upon graduation. After the completion of three years of study, students would participate in various tests that determined their level of athletic standards. Those in youth schools who reached the second level of athletic standards would receive a graduation certificate, while those who reached the first level would also receive a reward (*jiangli*); at the junior level, students received certificates for passing the third level of standards and a reward if they made it to the second level or above.⁸⁹ In both cases, any student with a good

⁸⁷ “Shaonian yeyu tiyu xuexiao zhangcheng (cao an),” 551. They did not specify how young or give any indication on age.

⁸⁸ “Qingnian yeyu tiyu xuexiao zhangcheng (cao’an),” 548.

⁸⁹ “Qingnian yeyu tiyu xuexiao zhangcheng (cao’an),” 549 and 551.

record of behavior at both the sports school and in their original work unit “should promptly be given praise.”⁹⁰

Initially at least, State Sports Commission leaders seemed ambivalent about the number of students that would sign up for these schools. Many people, they claimed, were still unfamiliar with the form and goals of such schools. As a result, the admission requirement for getting the head of household’s approval would be difficult because “if their child is engaged in sport then [they think that the child] cannot become a student or professional” or more simply they didn’t want “to increase the [already existing] burden on students.”⁹¹ It might be equally difficult to convince a work unit manager to release a worker for the necessary training time. State Sports Commission leaders emphasized that removing such misgivings required successful promotion efforts in order to recruit, including spreading news about schools through the radio, press, and speeches. Nevertheless, students and youth workers were not the only targets – officials noted that children unable to attend school and unemployed youth should be recruited as well.

Such promotional endeavors required schools to form networks with unions, the local youth league, and bureaus responsible for education and hygiene, and not rely entirely on local *tiyu* committees,⁹² which were already responsible for providing any help and the supervision and inspection of the schools within their areas.⁹³ These

⁹⁰ “Qingnian yeyu tiyu xuexiao zhangcheng (cao’an),” 549.

⁹¹ “Guojia tiwei guanyu juban qing, shaonian yeyu tiyu xuexiao yingxing zhuyi shixiang de tongbao,” 545.

⁹² “Guojia tiwei guanyu juban qing, shaonian yeyu tiyu xuexiao yingxing zhuyi shixiang de tongbao,” 546.

⁹³ “Qingnian yeyu tiyu xuexiao zhangcheng (cao’an),” 548.

contacts also remained vital to successfully locating and recruiting school leadership and staff. Each school had a five- to seven- persons school affairs committee that included the school head, an assistant head, a doctor, a teaching head, and a person responsible for general affairs,⁹⁴ as well as regular full-time and part-time physical education teachers and sports coaches to ensure the “systematic training”⁹⁵ of outstanding athletes. Medical professionals were also needed for supervision and to carry out physical examinations at least twice per year before students could participate in competition.⁹⁶

According to a February 1956 notice from the State Sports Commission, ten new spare-time sports schools would be built, one each in Beijing, Tianjin and Shanghai, as well as in seven provinces (Hebei, Shanxi, Liaoning, Heilongjiang, Shandong, Jiangsu and Hubei).⁹⁷ The first Beijing spare-time sports school technically began operation in late December 1955 and students began to take classes in January 1956, with draft construction plans aiming to build facilities to train 900 students and house 210 teachers and other staff.⁹⁸ A notice sent to all middle schools from the Beijing municipal *tiyu* committee, municipal education bureau, and youth group, outlined that the main purpose of such schools was to raise the level of both school sport and Beijing athletes as a whole. The notice required school

⁹⁴ “Qingnian yeyu tiyu xuexiao zhangcheng (cao’an),” 548.

⁹⁵ “Guojia tiwei guanyu juban qing, shaonian yeyu tiyu xuexiao yingxing zhuyi shixiang de tongbao,” 546.

⁹⁶ “Qingnian yeyu tiyu xuexiao zhangcheng (cao’an),” 549.

⁹⁷ BMA 185-001-00029: Weituo banli tiyu xuexiao 1956 nian jiben jianshe gongzuo bing tongzhi bianzhi jijian jihua you [Entrusted to handle the basic construction work of the sports school for 1956 and notification on the preparation of infrastructure projects], February 27, 1956.

⁹⁸ BMA 185-001-00029: Xin tiyu xuexiao gongcheng sheji ziliao shu (cao’an) [The new sports school engineering design information book (draft)], n.d., 1956?

administration to guarantee participating students time to study by reducing their responsibilities towards “social work” (*shehui gongzuo*) and even allowing them to skip other extracurricular types of activities.⁹⁹

As the basic construction plan for the Beijing school attests, leaders meant serious business and money. In 1956 nearly 604,000 *yuan* was budgeted for the construction of school facilities, with more than 238,000 *yuan* going towards new teaching and administrative buildings, and 137,000 *yuan* for indoor and outdoor sports-related facilities, such as exercise grounds, fields for athletic activities, and six courts for basketball and volleyball.¹⁰⁰ In general, however, State Sports Commission officials hoped that spare-time schools at all levels and in all areas would not always be built anew and that local leaders would instead make use of existing facilities, fields, and venues as much as possible in order to “help the nation save a lot of funds.”¹⁰¹ Basketball courts, for example, might be in poor condition in some areas but could be used as-is or revamped; old lumber could be reused to make various bar apparatuses. The state’s scarce financial resources were thus an issue that, despite the importance of *tiyu*, always had to be taken into consideration.

This issue of scarcity remained a problem from the start, as schools were also not cheap to run or staff. Official work reports at all levels continually complained about budget issues and a dearth of quality teachers and coaches. In late November

⁹⁹ BMA 153-004-01816. Wei baozheng qingshaonian yeyu tiyu xuexiao xuexi de lianhe tongzhi [Joint notice to ensure youth and junior spare-time sports schools study], n.d., January? 1956.

¹⁰⁰ BMA 185-001-00029: Beijing tiyu xuexiao 1956 nian jiben jianshe jihua [Beijing sports school 1956 basic construction plan], n.d., 1956?

¹⁰¹ “Guojia tiwei guanyu juban qing, shaonian yeyu tiyu xuexiao yingxing zhuyi shixiang de tongbao,” 546.

1956, for example, the State Sports Commission sent a note to all *tiyu* research institutes and schools indicating that it had not sufficiently budgeted for the year, and in July 1957 the Beijing municipal *tiyu* committee received a note from the city government suggesting that instead of going over budget that they temporarily halt construction plans (although what precisely to halt was not indicated).¹⁰² A constant refrain in State Sports Commission summary reports was lack of leadership at all levels, which impeded the ability to raise overall athletic skill levels of future athletes. The Beijing municipal *tiyu* committee reported in April 1957 that the number of sports school students in track and field, soccer, and gymnastics had dropped from 142 to 80 because of fewer coaches, frequent coaching changes (such as some coaches being moved into national team work), and a lowered quality of teaching.¹⁰³ Later in the year the municipal *tiyu* committee complained that it still lacked a backbone for leadership in competitive sports, a problem directly related to training the next generation of athletes.¹⁰⁴

Nevertheless, by June 1957, 25 youth and 80 early youth spare-time sports schools existed nationwide with 10,723 students enrolled.¹⁰⁵ The schools covered sixteen different sports, ranging from volleyball, basketball, swimming and ping-pong

¹⁰² BMA 185-001-00029: Note sent from the State Sports Commission to all *tiyu* xueyuan and *tiyu* xuexiao on November 30, 1956 and BMA 185-001-00029: Note sent from the Beijing municipal government to the *tiyu* committee on July 26, 1957.

¹⁰³ BMA 185-001-00018: Shi tiwei: qingkuang bao [Municipal *tiyu* committee: report] #6, April 3, 1957.

¹⁰⁴ BMA 185-001-00018: Shi tiwei: *tiyu* gongzuo jianbao [Municipal *tiyu* committee: *tiyu* work report] #2, November 15, 1957.

¹⁰⁵ Cui Yinshan, “Peiyang *tiyu* yundong de houbeyun: quanguo juban 105 suo qingshaonian yeyu *tiyu* xuexiao” [Cultivate sports reserve army: nationwide organization of 105 youth spare-time sports schools], *Renmin ribao*, December 8, 1957.

to ice sports and weightlifting, with track and field and gymnastics being the most widespread. Officials at these schools worked to advance students' sport skills while also obsessively tracking improvements to their physiques and overall physical fitness. A *People's Daily* article, for example, noted that physical education and training of early youth track and field athletes at the Shanghai No. 1 sports school over the course of the year had caused on average a 5 cm growth spurt (from 160 cm to 165 cm), lower blood pressure (118/66 to 110/64) and a 7 *jin* (7.7 lbs) increase in body weight. With such an improvement in physical fitness, claimed the article, some of these students had also raised their academic performance substantially and been named "outstanding students" at their regular schools.¹⁰⁶

Still, schedule balancing was an issue for many students, indicating that not everyone was as excited about *tiyu* as officials were. The Beijing municipal *tiyu* committee reported in March 1957 that many students said they felt that the amount of exercise made them hungry and physically tired, and that they often returned home so late that their dinners were cold.¹⁰⁷ An investigation into spare-time sports school dropout rates in Beijing in April also confirmed that some middle school students felt that they spent too much time training and used up too much of their physical strength in doing so, thereby adversely affecting their ability to study. Those in their third year of middle school feared that this would affect their ability to get into high school.¹⁰⁸

¹⁰⁶ Cui Yinshan, "Peiyang tiyu yundong de houbiejun: quanguo juban 105 suo qingshaonian yeyu tiyu xuexiao."

¹⁰⁷ BMA 185-001-00018: Shi tiwei: qingkuang bao [Municipal *tiyu* committee: report] #5, March 21, 1957.

¹⁰⁸ BMA 185-001-00018: Shi tiwei: qingkuang bao [Municipal *tiyu* committee: report] #8, April 18, 1957.

The annual work plan from the State Sports Commission in 1957 stated that in addition to the current requirement of 90 minutes per week of physical education there also needed to be two 45- to 90-minute sessions of extracurricular sports activities, and both were to be based on the *laoweizhi* program. The work plan followed up these requirements with a reminder of the need to promote the benefits of physical exercise to “those not willing to particular in *tiyu* activities” such that they would “voluntarily participate” (*ziyuan canjia*).¹⁰⁹

Village Sports

When assessing *tiyu* work targeting the peasant population of 500 million in early 1956, the State Sports Commission admitted bluntly that it had made, up to that point, “no concrete plans and measures.”¹¹⁰ The Commission resolved in 1956 to change this by promoting simple sports activities and helping establish county-level committees, the heart of which would be building *tiyu* associations in agricultural cooperatives.¹¹¹ Leaders presumed less knowledge and experience among rural citizens and encouraged more basic types of *tiyu* activities that required little equipment and fewer financial resources. To help resolve this gap in knowledge, People’s *Tiyu* Publishing House produced a series of booklets designed exclusively

¹⁰⁹ “Zhonghua renmin gongheguo tiyu yundong weiyuanhui guanyu 1956 nian tiyu gongzuo zongjie ji dui 1957 nian gongzuo de yaoqiu (1957 nian 1 yue 17 ri)” [PRC State Sports Commission 1956 *tiyu* work summary and 1957 work requirements (January 17, 1957)] in *Zhonghua renmin gongheguo tiyu yundong wenjian huibian* (3), comp. Renmin tiyu chubanshe (Beijing: Renmin tiyu chubanshe, 1958), 6-7.

¹¹⁰ “Zhonghua renmin gongheguo tiyu yundong weiyuanhui guanyu 1955 nian tiyu gongzuo zongjie he 1956 nian gongzuo renwu de baogao,” 11.

¹¹¹ “Zhonghua renmin gongheguo tiyu yundong weiyuanhui guanyu 1955 nian tiyu gongzuo zongjie he 1956 nian gongzuo renwu de baogao,” 13.

for peasant sports (*nongmin tiyu yundong*). A handbook printed in 1956 for village youth and those with low literacy outlined, in very simple language, the benefits of sport and exercise and introduced training in sixteen types of *tiyu* activities.¹¹² The handbook outlined the three main benefits as strengthening the body for national production and protection, cultivating a spirit of courage and collectivism, and making village life “flourishing and lively” (*honghuo renao*).¹¹³ Strengthening the body was most important as it could be directly tied to an individual’s ability to work, which in turn contributed to the country’s production. If a person’s “4 limbs and 5 organs” were not strong and healthy, claimed the handbook, then he or she would not be able to tolerate the heat or cold, would get easily tired, and even suffer from asthma when running, the result of which would be an inability to work. Such was the case of a female from the Geguo Shunxing agricultural collective in Hebei’s Baoding district, Zhao Lanfang, whose body had been so weak in 1953 that she was often sick and had to stop working. In that year she had averaged six work points per day for an annual total of 71.¹¹⁴ Following regular participation in *tiyu* activities, however, she had raised her average by 1955 to eight points per day and reached 134 for the whole year.¹¹⁵ Wang Hongting, a member of the Xuguang collective in Hebei’s Ninghe county, claimed that basketball helped increase his strength such that now he could dig two rice paddies, but later he would be able to dig four.¹¹⁶

¹¹² Renmin tiyu chubanshe, *Nongcun qingnian tiyu shouce* [Rural youth *tiyu* handbook] (Beijing: Renmin tiyu chubanshe, 1956). The first print run of this handbook was 400,000.

¹¹³ Renmin tiyu chubanshe, *Nongcun qingnian tiyu shouce*, 6.

¹¹⁴ In these years, agricultural work was measured and remunerated according to a point system.

¹¹⁵ Renmin tiyu chubanshe, *Nongcun qingnian tiyu shouce*, 4.

¹¹⁶ Renmin tiyu chubanshe, *Nongcun qingnian tiyu shouce*, 4.

Just as important as agricultural production to leaders was the guarantee of a future supply of People's Liberation Army soldiers. However, not all rural youth could easily meet the physical requirements to join the army. The handbook stated that many youth eagerly signed up to “protect the motherland, liberate Taiwan, [and] carry out the duties of military service” – but some failed the physical exams.¹¹⁷ Such was the case for Niu Chongwen of Jiantaizhai's agricultural collective in Hebei's Huai'an county. Niu had never liked participating in sport and failed the exam initially, but after one year of exercise his body was in much better shape and in 1956 he passed the army's basic requirements.¹¹⁸

Tiyu activities were also important for their potential influence on eliminating the vices of village life – that is, they were part of a morally appropriate and suitable cultural life under communist rule. Instead of “sleeping long hours after work, [telling] superstitious and dubious stories [*bu san bu si de gushi*], [participating in] illicit moneymaking, taking strolls, and gambling,”¹¹⁹ the handbook advised villagers to participate in state-supported *tiyu* activities. An example of how sport could have a positive effect was in Bai Miao village in Liaoning, where several youth dropped their poker and gambling habits after joining a basketball team. Likewise, sports meets could provide appropriate entertainment in villages, such as the one held in

¹¹⁷ Renmin tiyu chubanshe, *Nongcun qingnian tiyu shouce*, 4-5.

¹¹⁸ Renmin tiyu chubanshe, *Nongcun qingnian tiyu shouce*, 5.

¹¹⁹ Renmin tiyu chubanshe, *Nongcun qingnian tiyu shouce*, 6.

Hebei's Jiantaizhai in January 1956 in which 800-900 spectators of all ages, the handbook claimed, found the meet “interesting.”¹²⁰

Basic training instructions in the handbook included a few activities also promoted in urban areas, such as calisthenics, soccer, basketball, volleyball, and swimming, along with activities aimed at a rural crowd with fewer resources, such as stone lifting (*jushi dan*), hand grenade throwing, tug of war, jump rope, rope climbing, and shuttlecock. Besides this main handbook, a series of booklets also existed for each individual activity.¹²¹ These included information on how to build the necessary facilities and fields for training and some basic methods for organizing competition. For example, the exact measurements for basketball courts accompanied chart examples for holding round-robin competitions.¹²² An additional booklet, published a few months later, included further detailed instructions about how to build simple rural sports fields and facilities.¹²³ Two diagrams depicted examples of how to set up space for multi-sport facilities. In one of these, a soccer field takes up the center space with basketball courts to the north and volleyball courts to the south [Figure 13]. Part

¹²⁰ Renmin tiyu chubanshe, *Nongcun qingnian tiyu shouce*, 6.

¹²¹ Such as Yan Fang, ed., *Da lanqiu* [Play basketball] (Beijing: Renmin tiyu chubanshe, April 1956).

¹²² Yan Fang, ed., *Da lanqiu*, 29-34. Both this and the front cover of the main handbook depict rural young men on a basketball court. Indeed, basketball may have been one of the more popular sports in rural villages. (This is probably because the sport is relatively inexpensive, and a court does not cost a lot to build or take up much space.) Yan Yunxiang notes that, at least in Xiajia village in Heilongjiang, there was an annual basketball tournament among production teams and village units beginning in the late 1950s, and that a village team was even put together for commune-level tournaments. By the 1960s, Yan states, basketball games were one of the two most popular activities among young people (the other being movies) because it provided an “opportunity for romance” in that youth could “become familiar with those of the opposite sex.” Yan Yunxiang *Private Life Under socialism* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 2003), 34-35, 52.

¹²³ Chen Shichong, ed., *Nongcun zenyang zhunbei jianbian de tiyu yundong changdi he shebei* [How to prepare simple rural sports grounds and equipment](Beijing: Renmin tiyu chubanshe, June 1956).

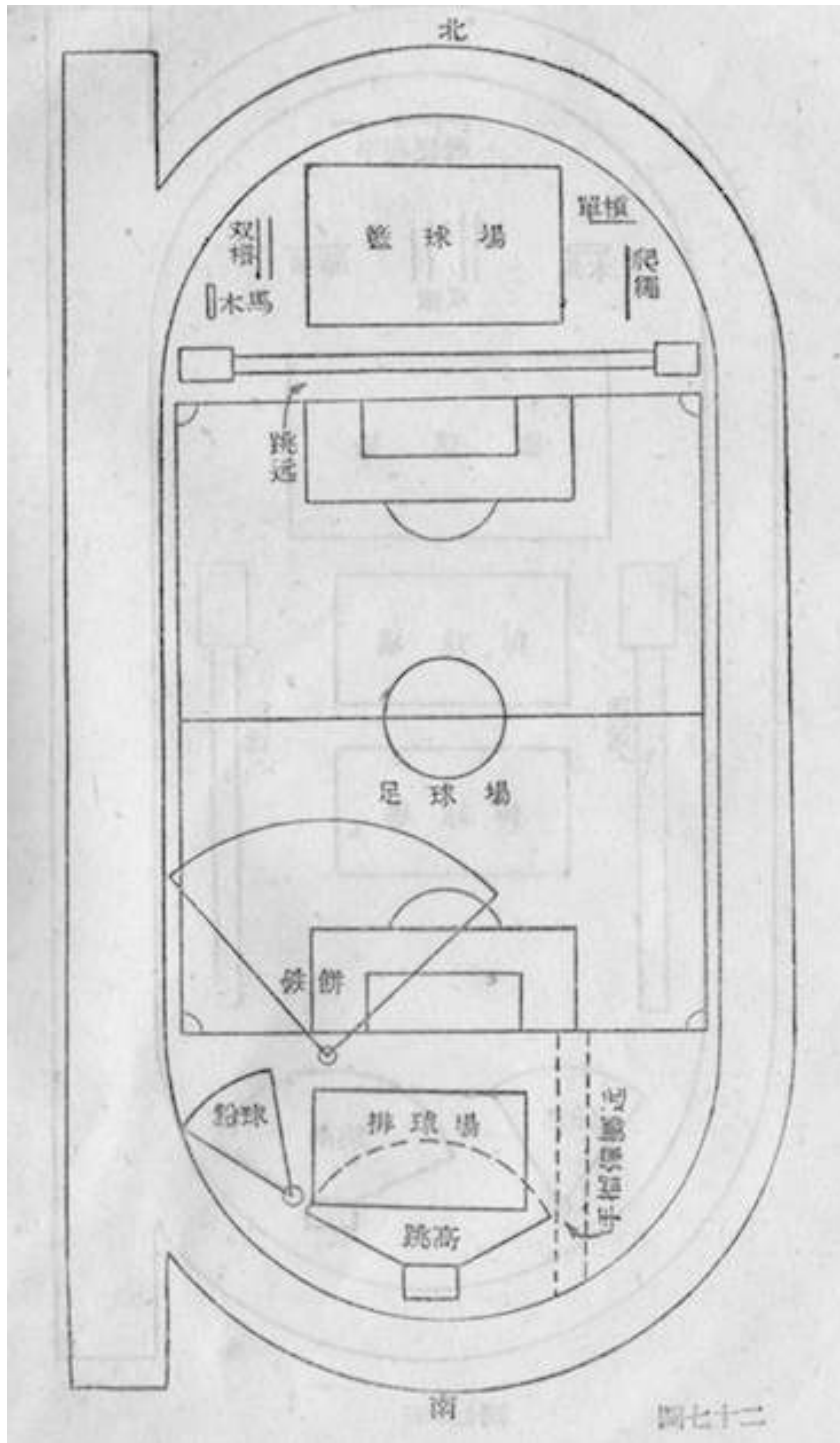


Figure 13. Sample diagram for building rural sports grounds. Chen Shichong, ed., *Nongcun zenyang zhunbei jianbian de tiyu yundong changdi he shebei*, 41.

of the soccer field is designated for discus throwing and next to the basketball courts are single and parallel bars as well as a vaulting horse and a climbing rope. Next to the volleyball courts is an area for shot put, another for high jump, and a strip for hand grenade throwing. These kinds of detailed diagrams simultaneously provided a method to save on space and keep areas separate for safety purposes, while also implicitly suggesting suitable types of rural sports activities.

As in cities, officials envisioned *tiyu* associations as the backbone to village activities. The Hubei Echeng county Dushan village agricultural cooperative's *tiyu* association served as a model for other rural areas to follow. With roughly 100 members and more than 85 percent of the local youth signed up, the cooperative had four tug-of-war teams (two male and two female), and four production teams had their own exercise groups and men's basketball teams; female members of the cooperative had also organized two basketball teams.¹²⁴ At least 5 percent of members had passed the *laoweizhi* standards. All teams, according to their own situations and provisions, trained in the morning or after production in their spare time, and members also volunteered their labor to help expand existing sports facilities. The association held competition activities on holidays and in the agricultural slack season, such as those for women's basketball, jump rope, and shuttlecock on International Women's Day (March 8), a boat race for the Dragon Boat Festival, a swimming competition in July, and a round-robin basketball tournament after the early grain harvest. Moreover, this association planned to get

¹²⁴ “Pínglunyuan de hua: yí gè shè de tiyú guìhua” [A commentator's words: one cooperative's *tiyu* plan], *Xin tiyu*, March 21, 1956, 4.

even more people participating in broadcast calisthenics and “frequently used blackboards and posters to promote the benefits of sports and fitness.”¹²⁵ Other cooperatives, claimed one *Xin tiyu* author, were not expected to be quite as proficient, but could feasibly plan and set more appropriate *tiyu* goals and methods of reaching them based on their own circumstances.¹²⁶

Despite this proliferation of propaganda for village *tiyu* activities and associations, the State Sports Commission proclaimed in early 1957 that the effort had thus far largely been futile. Leaders had discovered early on that the “demands [for *tiyu* activities] were unusually high” and had already adjusted them down to simpler and easier activities, but there was still a problem with finding qualified leaders.¹²⁷ Not many concrete plans seem to have been laid out for 1957 either, as the official request for village *tiyu* was vaguely stated as “according to [a village’s] specific conditions, develop *tiyu* activities that the peasants like the best.”¹²⁸ But the toughest issue that remained to be solved in villages was still, according to an early 1958 report, finding the right balance between getting people to participate while not compromising labor time or scarce financial resources.¹²⁹

National Defense Sports

¹²⁵ “Pinglunyuán de huà: yì gè shè de tǐyù guìhuà.”

¹²⁶ “Pinglunyuán de huà: yì gè shè de tǐyù guìhuà.”

¹²⁷ “Zhōnghuà rénmin gōnghéguó tǐyù yúndòng wéiyuánhùi guānyú 1956 nián tǐyù gōngzuò zǒngjiè jì duì 1957 nián gōngzuò de yàoqiú,” 5, 9.

¹²⁸ “Zhōnghuà rénmin gōnghéguó tǐyù yúndòng wéiyuánhùi guānyú 1956 nián tǐyù gōngzuò zǒngjiè jì duì 1957 nián gōngzuò de yàoqiú,” 14.

¹²⁹ “Guójia tiwei guanyu yi jiu wu ba nian tiyu gongzuo de tongzhi (zhailu) (1958 nian 1 yue 20 ri),” 32.

National defense sports (*guofang tiyu*), a common and unique feature of the socialist bloc, also served an important role in the diversification and expansion of *tiyu* in the second half of the 1950s. These essentially consisted of paramilitary training activities, ranging from parachuting, rifle shooting, and airplane modeling to motor clubs, nautical navigation activities, mountaineering, military camping (during holidays and time off from school and work), and wireless radio transmitter activities. International competitions in national defense sports, held among countries in the socialist bloc, added a new dimension to competitive athletics that had not previously existed in China. One of the first international sports competitions held in the PRC was a rifle shooting competition that took place in Beijing in November 1955. Elite athletes from the Soviet Union and the Eastern bloc, as well as North Korea and Mongolia, participated, and Chinese athlete Li Suping won the women's small-caliber category.¹³⁰ By the late 1950s, Chinese athletes attended numerous competitions held in the Soviet Union or elsewhere in the Eastern bloc in these paramilitary sports.

Technically speaking, not counting the People's Liberation Army, which basically carried out its *tiyu* activities autonomously,¹³¹ a central national defense

¹³⁰ "Tiyu yundong dashiji," *Tiyu nianjian 1949-1962*, 53.

¹³¹ Xiong Xiaozheng and Zhong Bingshu, *Xin Zhongguo tiyu 60 nian* [60 Years of New China *Tiyu*] (Beijing: Beijing tiyu daxue chubanshe, 2010), 39-42. This included, for example, hosting their own sports meets and competitions. Sport under the direction of the People's Liberation Army remains largely shrouded in mystery because PLA records are not open to the public. The PLA's August 1st (Ba-yi) teams – particularly those in basketball and volleyball – did often play internationally and against foreign guests at home, facts that often show up in any of the *Tiyu* yearbooks covering these years. Kai Chen, who played for the Ba-yi team in the 1970s and defected to the United States in the 1980s, notes in his memoir that, prior to the Cultural Revolution, every military district had their own professional teams, which participated in regional, military, and national competitions. At the top was the Ba-yi team, which during these years acted as a second National team and often traveled to international competitions. "Chapter 13: Rejecting" in Kai Chen, *One in a Billion: Journey Toward Freedom* (Bloomington, Indiana: AuthorHouse, 2010), 107-112.

sports club had been established in June 1952,¹³² Chinese observers attended international competitions in the Soviet Union and Romania in 1954,¹³³ and by 1955 trials of municipal club programs had been carried out in about ten cities.¹³⁴ The *laoweizhi* had also introduced some paramilitary skills, such as hand grenade throwing and shooting, to students. Not until 1955 and 1956, however, when the State Sports Commission decided to invest more heavily in national defense sport, did activities really take off. The official policy in mid-1955 called for developing national defense education and military skills of youth in order to cultivate their “courage, determination, calmness and resourcefulness, optimism, and collectivism” so that they would become “modern defense reserve forces” (*xiandaihua guofangjun de houbei lilian*).¹³⁵ The Commission wrote Zhou Enlai in January 1956 asking to establish Chinese People’s Armed Forces support voluntary associations based on the Soviet experience with similar organizations. Not only would such associations provide patriotic education and cultivate love for the army, the Commission argued, but they would also be useful for the compulsory military service requirement in preparatory schools.¹³⁶ Local club activities received the boost they needed to move forward.

¹³² Xiong and Zhong, *Xin Zhongguo tiyu 60 nian*, 16.

¹³³ “Da shiji,” in *Tiyu nianjian 1949-1962*, 45-46. This included observing an international shooting competition in Romania in early October and in November an international wireless radio transmitter competition in the Soviet Union.

¹³⁴ Xiong and Zhong, *Xin Zhongguo tiyu 60 nian*, 16.

¹³⁵ “Guojia tiwei, zongzhengzhi bu, qingniantuan zhongyang guanyu zai qingnian zhong kaizhan guofang tiyu huodong de lianhe zhishi (1955 nian 7 yue 4 ri)” [State Sports Commission, General Political Bureau, Central Youth Group directive concerning the development of national defense sports activities among youth (July 4, 1955)], in *Tiyu yundong wenjian xuanbian 1949-1981*, comp. Guojia tiwei zhengce yanjiushi (Beijing: Renmin tiyu chunbanshe, 1982), 587. (July 4, 1955)

¹³⁶ Xiong and Zhong, *Xin Zhongguo tiyu 60 nian*, 16.

Soon thereafter, national defense activities began to proliferate. In March 1956, Beijing officially established clubs for rifle shooting, motorcycling, parachuting, water sports (*shui shang yundong*), and airplane modeling.¹³⁷ School students may have been the primary targets for such activities, but they were not and had never been the only participants. For example, small-caliber rifle training during the summer break of 1955 had included nearly 3,000 students and workers and, in early 1956, 200 workers, students, and cadres received training to coach short-range rifle shooting. Leaders in Beijing proposed that for 1956, among other things, the city should increase the number of rifle clubs in work units at all levels and construct 200 shooting ranges, as well as train coaches for wireless transmitter competitions, and establish more parachuting clubs in middle schools.

Although *tiyu* under the Chinese Communist Party had always carried a militarized element to it that envisioned the masses as a kind of reserve army, and the *laoweizhi* included some paramilitary skills training, the build-up of national defense sports in these years was not directly connected to these efforts. Instead, they paralleled the development of other, non-militaristic competitive sports, as seen in the introduction of organized, spare-time training in clubs and competitions at the municipal and national levels. The development and training of internationally competitive athletes, who could win glory for China in socialist bloc competitions,

¹³⁷ BMA 001-006-01153: Chai Zemin tongzhi guanyu kaizhan guofang tiyu yundong de qingshi he ganbu xiujiashi wenti de baogao: 1956 nian shiwei ganbu baojian weiyuanhui huiyi taolun yicheng [Comrade Chai Zemin on developing national defense sports and report on cadre leave system issues], March 22, 1956.

further indicates that officials primarily treated national defense sport in these years as another section of competitive sport.

In sum, by the end of 1956, *tiyu* covered an immense spectrum of activities that sought to include many people at all levels of society. Local leaders, especially in urban areas, were largely unprepared for this sudden exponential growth and proliferation of associations, schools, and clubs within such a short period of time. The State Sports Commission noted that in 1956 alone 21 national-level councils in sports associations had been set up and more than 36,000 grassroots-level associations had been established with an estimated participation of over 4.3 million people.¹³⁸ This included 3 million participants in the *laoweizhi*, a nine-fold increase over 1955. Additionally, by October 1956, there were already more than 38,000 ranked athletes and 73 youth and junior-level spare-time sports schools.¹³⁹ With this, however, had come an overwhelming proliferation in the number of competitions (*jingsai*), which officials concluded were “too many” and lacking any comprehensive and unified plan.¹⁴⁰ Leaders suggested that in 1957 there should be fewer large-scale meets and more grassroots and local level competitions, the time spent on such events should be shortened, and an attempt should be made to have them coincide with holidays and vacations rather than wasting time that could be spent working.

¹³⁸ “Zhonghua renmin gongheguo tiyu yundong weiyuanhui guanyu 1956 nian tiyu gongzuo zongjie ji dui 1957 nian gongzuo de yaoqiu,” 2.

¹³⁹ “Zhonghua renmin gongheguo tiyu yundong weiyuanhui guanyu 1956 nian tiyu gongzuo zongjie ji dui 1957 nian gongzuo de yaoqiu,” 3.

¹⁴⁰ “Zhonghua renmin gongheguo tiyu yundong weiyuanhui guanyu 1956 nian tiyu gongzuo zongjie ji dui 1957 nian gongzuo de yaoqiu,” 9.

Insufficient leadership was a frequent complaint made by officials at all levels – and not just in associations. In Beijing, the municipal *tiyu* committee complained that this problem led to poor refereeing and disorganized competitions,¹⁴¹ as well as a lack of guidance and organized training for competitive athletes. *Tiyu* committee leaders recommended immediately choosing junior-level youth for two to three years of guided, competitive training¹⁴² and asking the current generation of athletes to provide the necessary leadership and impart their knowledge and skills to this next generation. However, some athletes do not seem to have been particularly confident in their own abilities to leader, as they “urgently” requested Beijing *tiyu* committee leaders to help them “raise their culture and *tiyu* science knowledge level.”¹⁴³

Some *tiyu* leaders also had mixed feelings concerning the involvement of the masses. On the one hand, as the sudden growth in soccer in Beijing indicates, enthusiasm for team sports was high in work units, something on which leaders often reflected positively. On the other hand, work reports also indicate that many people were less inclined (or unqualified) to become more involved in the administration or leadership of such activities. For example, a ping-pong public lecture (*baogaohui*) held in April 1957 in Beijing, during which experts spoke about overseas ping-pong visits and technical knowledge about the game, only attracted 168 people even though

¹⁴¹ BMA 185-001-00018: Shi tiwei: tiyu gongzuo jianbao [Municipal *tiyu* committee: *tiyu* work report] #1, October 19, 1957.

¹⁴² BMA 185-001-00018: Shi tiwei: tiyu gongzuo jianbao #2, November 15, 1957.

¹⁴³ BMA 185-001-00018: Shi tiwei: tiyu gongzuo jianbao #2, November 15, 1957.

1,000 tickets had been distributed.¹⁴⁴ Lectures and training classes related to track and field sponsored by the Beijing *tiyu* committee also apparently weren't very popular. Officials felt that more importance needed to be placed on teaching content, methods, and research in this sports discipline, but they complained that when they sent tickets to sports enthusiasts to attend evening classes, some gave their tickets away "to people who don't like sports activities and make no effort."¹⁴⁵ In other words, leaders hoped to reel in the masses not only as spectators and exercising athletes, but also as potential promoters and sports leaders – something that required enthusiasm and dedication to the cause as well as a basic background in sports.

Conclusion

During the years 1955-1957 *tiyu* programs, including the *laoweizhi*, expanded across society and into the everyday lives of ordinary citizens. Leaders hoped that such programs, which included a broad spectrum of activities run through local work unit, would contribute to building a stronger, healthier and well-rounded populace. They also hoped that the development of *tiyu* associations and spare-time sports schools would give every individual the resources, guidance, and opportunities to become a better socialist citizen through reaching his or her potential in sport and physical fitness. Everyone in society could, at least in theory, become a competitive athlete at some level.

¹⁴⁴ BMA 185-001-00018: Shi tiwei: qingkuang bao [Municipal *tiyu* committee: report] #9, April 24, 1957.

¹⁴⁵ BMA 185-001-00018: Shi tiwei: qingkuang bao #8, April 18, 1957.

Meanwhile, leaders gradually shifted their attention away from the Soviet Union as the perfect model to follow. While Soviet-inspired models continued to dominate the landscape by heavily influencing program structures, no longer did leaders blindly revere everything Soviet; instead they chose to look for a distinctly Chinese experience and began to cultivate a Chinese socialist model. Certainly successful athletes or examples from the Soviet Union continued to receive attention, but increasingly those from within China gained ground. If a textile factory in Shanghai, for instance, had a successful spare-time sports association – indicated by various factors, such as membership levels, leisure activities, or a winning sports team – then that example took precedence over any Soviet one. This attempt to craft a successful Chinese socialist model in *tiyu*, which would appeal to and touch the lives of every citizen in society, reached its height under the policies of the Great Leap Forward.

Chapter 4

“Strive for Greater Glory for the Motherland”: *Tiyu* during the Great Leap Forward

When the massive push for to accelerate economic and industrial development under the Great Leap Forward gathered steam in mid-1958, with the intention of surpassing the United Kingdom’s levels of iron, steel, and other major industrial products within 15 years,¹ so too did officials speed up the development of sports. *Tiyu* programs reached their height of inclusivity in the lead up and preparation for the 1959 National Games, when the distinction between elite and mass *tiyu* activities became increasingly fuzzy as officials encouraged everyone to get involved in competitive sport. In September 1959, just two months after Peng Dehuai’s criticism of the GLF at the Lushan conference, more than 10,000 athletes from all over China competed in front of their compatriots and international leaders in Beijing. Leaders connected the achievements of Chinese athletes in these Games and in international sport to their implementation of Chinese *tiyu* models. Although these models had been inspired by the Soviet Union, Chinese leaders made real efforts to showcase their sports achievements as the early and rapid rise of a successful Chinese model of socialism distinct from that found in the Soviet Union.

Meanwhile, there was also an explosion of popular culture surrounding *tiyu* that lasted through the early 1960s. Besides physical participation in *tiyu* activities, people could also participate through reading *tiyu* magazines and newspapers,

¹ Roderick MacFarquhar, *The Origins of the Cultural Revolution, Vol. 2: The Great Leap Forward* (London: Oxford University Press, 1983), 17.

watching *tiyu* newsreels and movies (*tiyu pian*), and attending competitions as spectators. These participation-spectatorship *tiyu* activities served to define a key aspect of socialist citizenship: *tiyu* aimed not only to regulate ordinary peoples' bodies in order to achieve broader socialist goals, but also to teach people that through their own active participation and spectatorship in *tiyu* activities they could transform themselves into ideal socialist subjects, contributing to the larger socialist collective and by extension a Chinese nation no longer suffering from past humiliation.

This chapter begins with a discussion of long-term plans for *tiyu* formulated just prior to the announcement of the Great Leap Forward. With the availability of competitive sports programs across all of China, sports leaders envisioned Chinese athletes as reaching or surpassing world levels within ten years. The first place they chose to build and then showcase the successes of these programs was at the 1959 National Games. In order to make these everyday programs appealing to the ordinary citizen, beginning in the late 1950s officials and leaders worked hard to simultaneously build up popular culture showcasing *tiyu*. The chapter ends with an analysis of several films that sought to convince the average person that participation in *tiyu* activities was not only a proper way to spend leisure time, but that it was also patriotic and indeed necessary to do so in order to become an upright socialist citizen.

Sport and the Ten-Year Plan for National Glory

With the completion of the first Five Year Plan and the Great Leap Forward just on the horizon, the State Sports Commission declared in early 1958 that activities

for the next year would focus on making *tiyu* universal while also simultaneously raising overall skill levels. The goal was to create even “more ‘Zheng Fengrongs’”² – Zheng was the female high jumper who had broken the world record in 1957 – in other words, more elite and highly competitive athletes who could break national and world records. Officials lamented that the main issue in *tiyu* was, in general, that far too many people separated sports activities into those meant for the masses and competitions reserved for the few best athletes, when in fact “sports competitions promote mass sport and are an important method of growing athletic teams and raising athletic levels.”³ That is to say, there remained a gap between mass and more competitive athletic training and activities, when there should be no separation between them at all. This problem, sports leaders felt, had prevented progress towards long-term goals of producing a successful athletic ranking system and competitive athletes, all of which directly influenced the ability to send better elite athletes to international competitions. Despite continued troubles with the IOC and the boycott of the 1956 Olympics, one goal of the 1958 work plans was thus to universalize and raise overall athletic skill levels for the 1959 National Games and, ultimately, the assembly of a strong contingent of athletes for the 1960 Olympics.⁴

² “Feiyue tigao lizheng shangyou jinnian yiding neng yongxian geng duo de zheng fengrong zhang junxiudaibiao shuo, women quanti yundongyuan yiding geng jia nuli de qinxue kulian, tigao chengji, wei zuguo zhengqu geng da de rongyu” [Improve the leap forward, strive for the best: this year have more Zheng Fengrongs emerge, representative Zhang Junxiu says, all of our athletes must make more efforts to study and train hard, improve performance, and strive for greater honor for the motherland], *Renmin ribao*, February 9, 1958.

³ “Guojia tiwei guanyu yi jiu ba nian tiyu gongzuo de tongzhi (zhailu), 1958 nian 1 yue 20 ri” [State Sports Commission 1958 *tiyu* work announcement (excerpts), January 20, 1958] in *Tiyu yundong wenjian xuanbian (1949-1981)*, comp. Guojia tiwei zhengce yanjiushi (Beijing: Renmin tiyu chubanshe, 1982), 30.

⁴ “Guojia tiwei guanyu yi jiu wu ba nian tiyu gongzuo de tongzhi (zhailu) (1958 nian 1 yue 20 ri),” 31.

In the spirit of the Great Leap Forward, the State Sports Commission formulated a plan to boost the number of competitive athletes over a ten-year period of time with the specific goal of reaching world levels quickly. This became an obsession that would continue through the next few years, with a particular focus on ten sports: basketball, volleyball, soccer, ping-pong, gymnastics, track and field, weight lifting, swimming, ice skating, and rifle shooting.⁵ Success was to be measured by how well Chinese athletes did in the Olympic Games and similar international competitions. By the 1960 Olympic Games, for example, the goal was to place in the top three in several sports, by 1964 to surpass the United States in weightlifting and Japan in gymnastics, and by 1968 to place in the top three in nearly every targeted sport.⁶ The National Games to be held in 1959 would serve as the first litmus test for the feasibility of the training programs and these ambitious ten-year goals.

To reach these long-term goals required increasing the number of spare-time sports schools; in addition, certain provinces were designated as hubs for training in specific sports. For example, Guangdong, a province with a good training environment and sports experience, would provide training in weightlifting, swimming, ping-pong, gymnastics, volleyball, and track and field, while Heilongjiang

⁵ SMA B126-1-351: Guanyu tigao tiyu yundong jishu shuiping shi nian (1958-1967) guihua de jianyi [Recommended plan for raising sports skill levels in 10 years (1958-1967)], February 9, 1958.

⁶ SMA B126-1-351: Guanyu tigao tiyu yundong jishu shuiping shi nian (1958-1967) guihua de jianyi.

and Jilin, the most northern and coldest provinces, would focus on ice skating.

Beijing, Shanghai, and Tianjin would be centers of development for all sports.⁷

For the first time, sports leaders also placed particular emphasis on training increasingly younger athletes. They claimed that this was a “world trend” and that it would be key in reaching and staying at internationally competitive levels. This included lowering the age requirements for entering sports schools, although the suggested entry age ranged depending on the sport. Swimming would take children as young as 7 and ping-pong as young as 9, while ball sports such as basketball and volleyball set the minimum age at 11 and weightlifting would not take anyone under 16.⁸

Connected to these long-term plans was the introduction in June 1958 of a complete athletic ranking system that also included types of competitions and rankings for referees and coaches. Built on the foundation of the *laoweizhi* (see Chapter 2), the Chinese elite ranking system consisted of five levels: master sportsman (*yundong jianjiang*), first level, second level, third level, and a level for those under the age of 17. To reach the highest level of master sportsman or the first level just below, an athlete had to pass the second level of the *laoweizhi* standards, and as with lower levels have achieved the standard based on the sport that was required for this level. Standards for individual sports would be revised every four years, with those vying for master level assessed by the State Sports Commission and all other levels of athletes determined by more local *tiyu* committees in provinces and

⁷ SMA B126-1-351: Guanyu tigao tiyu yundong jishu shuiping shi nian (1958-1967) guihua de jianyi.

⁸ SMA B126-1-351: Guanyu tigao tiyu yundong jishu shuiping shi nian (1958-1967) guihua de jianyi.

municipalities. A master sportsman in basketball, volleyball, or soccer, for example, included any athlete who had achieved a significant result in international competition, was a member of the mixed national team, or was on a team that was placed fourth or better among the nationwide A-team leagues or at the national competition.⁹ All athletes had to be upstanding citizens with good “production, work, and study” (for adults) or who “loved labor” (for youth under 17), with “good political quality [*zhengzhi pinzhi hao*], [and] good sportsmanship [*tiyu daode zuofeng hao*].”¹⁰ Alongside this new ranking system was an official regulation system for competitions that aimed to attract even more of the masses to “enthusiastically participate in exercise, [and] continue to raise athletic skill levels,”¹¹ largely by offering a formal structure for carrying out regular competitions among ranked athletes, who would move up or down in the system primarily based on their results at these events.

The earlier fraternal relationship with the Soviet Union was clearly absent in these ten-year plans as Chinese leaders eagerly sought to stake their own claim in the world of sport. Zhou Enlai told Soviet athletes in Moscow that in ten years’ time Chinese athletes would, like their Soviet counterparts, “also gain big achievements.”¹²

⁹ “Yundongyuan dengji biao zhun: lanqiu, paiqiu, zuiqiu yundongyuan dengji biao zhun (xiuding cao’an)” [Athlete ranking standards: basketball, volleyball, soccer athletes ranking standards (revised draft)], in *Zhongguo tiyu nianjian 1949-1962*, ed. Zhongguo tiyu nianjian bianji weiyuanhui (Beijing: Renmin tiyu chubanshe, 1964), 173.

¹⁰ “Zhonghua renmin gongheguo yundongyuan dengji zhidu tiaoli (xiuding cao’an)” [PRC athlete ranking system rules (revised draft)], in *Zhongguo tiyu nianjian 1949-1962*, 171.

¹¹ “Zhonghua renmin gongheguo tiyu yundong jingsai zhidu (cao’an) (Zhonghua renmin gongheguo tiyu yundong weiyuanhui 1958 nian 6 yue 21 ri fabu)” [PRC competitive sports system (draft) issued by the State Sports Commission June 21, 1958], in *Zhongguo tiyu nianjian 1949-1962*, 169.

¹² SMA B126-1-351: Guanyu tigao tiyu yundong jishu shuiping shi nian (1958-1967) guihua de jianyi.

There was also far less emphasis across Chinese society on learning from the Soviet Union or following Soviet-inspired models. Nevertheless, given the continued success of Soviet athletes at international competitions, leaders looked to Soviet experts for training advice and the ten-year plan envisioned them as playing a practical role on the ground in the world of competitive sport in China. To reach ambitious short-term goals the plan thus suggested continuing to hire Soviet experts for practical help with training programs,¹³ but it also called for increasing and strengthening national scientific and technical research and studying the latest advancements and experiences of other foreign countries. In addition to hiring specialists from the Soviet Union and other socialist countries to come teach, the plan stated, “[we] need to summarize our own technical methods and training work.”¹⁴ In other words, sports leaders felt it was time to build knowledge based on homegrown experiences rather than relying on foreigners.

Local *tiyu* committees geared up for implementing the new ranking system and ten-year work plans for the years ahead. Even before the release of the full ten-year plan, Beijing had scheduled 16 international team visits and 48 national competitions for 1958.¹⁵ When the largest citywide *tiyu* work conference to date was held there in May, more than 1,400 people participated from the city’s universities, middle schools, primary schools, unions, youth group, and bureaus, including various administrative leaders and Party members. Reports indicated that the atmosphere of

¹³ SMA B126-1-351: Guanyu tigao tiyu yundong jishu shuiping shi nian (1958-1967) guihua de jianyi.

¹⁴ SMA B126-1-351: Guanyu tigao tiyu yundong jishu shuiping shi nian (1958-1967) guihua de jianyi.

¹⁵ BMA 185-001-00026: Shi tiwei: tiyu gongzuo jianbao [Municipal *tiyu* committee: *tiyu* work report] #2, February 4, 1958.

the meeting was one of excitement, in which school leaders pushed for expanding teaching outlines and activities and bureau representatives noted the success of broadcast calisthenics programs while advocating promotion of the *laoweizhi* and the organization of sports teams. Meanwhile, participants criticized the *tiyu* committee for having been too limited in its work efforts.¹⁶

For most local *tiyu* committees, plans for 1958 and the next ten years also included setting ambitious quotas for raising overall numbers of athletes across all levels of society, with projections for the subsequent five and ten years outlined. A preliminary ten-year plan for sports developmental work in Shanghai from the municipal *tiyu* committee noted that in 1957 approximately 1.3 million people participated in some kind of *tiyu* activity on a regular basis. This number included 170,000 workers, 800,000 primary school students, 300,000 middle school students and 30,000 other urban residents and farmers (*nongmin*). Officials hoped to raise these general numbers in 1958 alone to 4 million participants – 1.5 million workers, 1.2 million students, 500,000 farmers, and 800,000 other urban residents.¹⁷ To raise the number of overall participants quickly, leaders planned for a campaign to begin in March to get “everyone to participate daily in 10 minutes of *tiyu* activities” (*meiren meitian canjia shi fenzhong tiyu huodong*) and in May citywide “big competitions” (*da pingbi*), as well as having leading cadres take the initiative in promoting regular

¹⁶ BMA 185-001-00026: Shi tiwei: *tiyu gongzuo jianbao* [Municipal *tiyu* committee: *tiyu* work report] #12, May 10, 1958.

¹⁷ SMA B126-1-351: 1958 nian-1967 nian Shanghai *tiyu* shiye fazhan zhishi (chubu dasuan) [1958-1967 Shanghai *tiyu* development instructions (tentative plan)], February? 1958. Five and ten year projections were, comparatively speaking, somewhat more modest at 5 million and 6 million participants and included increases only among farmers and urban residents.

sports and competitions.¹⁸ And, although initially it had been part of the plan for the next five years, in the first half of 1958 *tiyu* associations were to be established everywhere.

Shanghai's plan also included impressive quotas and requests for the *laoweizhi*, worker and school *tiyu* programs, as well as cadre training, competitions, spare-time sports schools, and the relatively new athletic ranking system. Although only 50,000 people had passed the *laoweizhi* in 1957, the quota for 1958 was set at 200,000, 1.06 million by the end of 1962, and 2.1 million by 1967, with student participants intended to make up the bulk of the requested quota. The plan estimated that the city had 1.6 million workers in approximately 4,500 work units of more than twenty-five workers each, but that only about 200,000 of them, or 15 to 20 percent, participated in some kind of sports activity. The plan to raise that involvement was divided according to factory size and level of development in *tiyu* within it. About 30 percent, or 1,350 factories, fell under the category with the highest demands in the plan, which, in addition to standard broadcast calisthenics and workplace calisthenics (*shenchan cao*), called for the development of twelve to fourteen different sports (and teams), monthly competitions, and an annual or semi-annual sports meet. All in all, more than 95 percent of workers in these factories were to participate frequently in some kind of *tiyu* activity.¹⁹ The plan also called for about twenty work units to open their own junior-level spare-time sports schools in 1958, but within five years to open an additional 150 of these schools for both juniors and regular youth. All of this was

¹⁸ SMA B126-1-351: 1958 nian-1967 nian Shanghai tiyu shiye fazhan zhishi (chubu dasuan).

¹⁹ SMA B126-1-351: 1958 nian-1967 nian Shanghai tiyu shiye fazhan zhishi (chubu dasuan).

to happen at the level of the work unit: whether or not the plan would succeed thus hinged on how many work units had well-managed *tiyu* associations that could follow through on the requests.

Fulfilling the expectations of the Great Leap Forward by reaching such high quotas of athletes so quickly would not be easy. In the spring, to celebrate the kickoff of the campaign, *People's Daily* and *Xin tiyu* began to regularly promote models for successful development of *tiyu* locally. The State Sports Commission promoted learning from the Tianjin fur processing plant's experience in developing mass *tiyu* activities, which they considered successful in several ways. First and foremost was that "politics are in command, leaders set the examples" (*zhengzhi guashuai, lingdao daitou*), by which they meant that fifty-six leading cadres participated in *tiyu* activities and that these activities had a close relationship with reducing absenteeism, raising production efficiency, and guaranteeing that production tasks would be completed.²⁰ This plant had also successfully educated its workers on the benefits of exercising the body for the explicit purpose of production, and prioritized making *tiyu* activities universal above raising skill levels, which had improved the health of the majority of workers. Finally, the plant had "followed the mass line" by relying on the masses to solve difficulties and problems with the development of *tiyu* activities.²¹

Shandong's Gaotang county became the officially promoted model for village collectives. Wuai agricultural collective, for example, was praised primarily for

²⁰ "Tianjin rongmao chang jianchi tiyu yundong: guojia tiwei zhaokai xianchang huiyi zongjie jingyan jiayi tuiguang" [Tianjin fur processing plant upholds sport: State Sports Commission holds an on-site meeting to summarize and promote experience], *Renmin ribao*, May 17, 1958.

²¹ "Tianjin rongmao chang jianchi tiyu yundong: .guojia tiwei zhaokai xianchang huiyi zongjie jingyan jiayi tuiguang."

carrying out inexpensive and simple *tiyu* activities, such as the long jump and tug-of-war, during short periods of rest from fieldwork. This kind of “active rest” improved labor efficiency when compared to the previous habit of taking naps, which had left people “with no energy to work.”²² In other words, the State Sports Commission pushed a model for universalized *tiyu* in a way that, above all else, incorporated every factory worker and rural laborer into a project of becoming healthier, more efficient, and improving production levels [Figure 14].

To advertise *tiyu* more visibly and encourage a rapid increase in its popularity, from the late spring through summer 1958 many areas held promotional sports-themed events over the course of days, weeks, or months. These celebrations included a diverse array of competitions and exhibitions. Shanghai held a “competitions month” (*jingsai yue*) beginning in May, in which the municipal *tiyu* committee partnered with the Shanghai Higher Education Bureau, Education Bureau, Federation of Trade Unions, Communist Youth League, and National Defense Sports Association to sponsor competitions in various activities, ranging from track and field, ball games, and weightlifting to national defense sports, shuttlecock, skipping, and broadcast calisthenics.²³ They aimed to get at least 800,000 people over the course of the month to participate in small and large-scale competitions, either formal or friendly in nature,

²² Chuan Hongde, “Duanlian shenti, renshou nianfeng – Gaotang xian nongcun tiyu huodong canganji” [Exercise the body, live long and prosper – notes on Gaotang county rural activities from visit], *Renmin ribao*, May 23, 1958.

²³ Xiao Bing and Zong He, “Qiang jingu zeng zhishi diao ganqing qiang yizhi Jiangsu, Shanghai dali fazhan qunzhong xing tiyu huodong” [Strengthen the bones, increase knowledge, adjust emotions, strengthen the will: Jiangsu and Shanghai vigorously develop mass *tiyu* activities], *Renmin ribao*, May 14, 1958; SMA B126-1-359: Shanghaishi 1958 nian “tiyu yundong jingsai yue” jihua [Shanghai’s 1958 “sports competition month” plan], April 29, 1958.



Figure 14. “Make sport blossom everywhere!” *Xin tiyu*, November 21, 1958.

as well as hold numerous opportunities for standards testing. Leaders hoped that by the end of June 10,000-12,000 people would pass the ranked athletes standards and 80,000-100,000 would reach the *laoweizhi* standard.²⁴ Beijing organized a similar “national sports leap forward” month in June with competitions and exhibitions featuring “outstanding sports teams from all levels [i.e., national level, but also municipal, district, and local levels]” every night in the city’s public sports venues.²⁵ In August, Xi’an followed suit with a “sports month” that included a calisthenics conference, numerous propaganda efforts including crosstalk (a popular form of Chinese comedy in which two people speak in rapid dialogue with one another) and street performances, as well as exhibitions and shows in ball sports, track and field, and gymnastics.²⁶ The same month, Guangxi held a “universal sports awareness month” that promoted the goals and significance of mass and national defense sports in building socialism and advocated that everyone participate in “at least one *tiyu* activity” as well as make calisthenics a regular part of their lives.²⁷ These and similar events held across the country were, as the Shanghai plan indicates, intended to jump-start local districts and work units in planning their sports competitions and activities over the course of the following year.²⁸

²⁴ SMA B126-1-359: Shanghai shi 1958 nian “*tiyu yundong jingsai yue*” jihua.

²⁵ “Zengqiang renmin tizhi shuli fengshang shoudu *tiyu yuejin yundong yue kaishi*” [Strengthen the Peoples’ physiques, make *tiyu* fashionable, the capital’s *tiyu* leap forward month starts], *Renmin ribao*, June 7, 1958.

²⁶ Bo Jie, “Xi’an juxing *tiyu yundong yue*” [Xi’an holds sports month], *Renmin ribao*, August 17, 1958.

²⁷ “Guangxi da guimo xuanchuan *tiyu*” [Guangxi promotes *tiyu* on a large-scale], *Renmin ribao*, August 17, 1958.

²⁸ SMA B126-1-359: Shanghaishi 1958 nian “*tiyu yundong jingsai yue*” jihua.

Meanwhile, as these national efforts to build competitive athletes continued, the PRC relationship with several international sports federations and the International Olympic Committee deteriorated. Two weeks before the new athletic ranking system was introduced in June, the PRC, which as previously noted continued to prepare for future Olympic competition, withdrew from the international soccer federation in protest against the “two Chinas” issue.²⁹ In August, as the Politburo approved the nationwide establishment of communes that accelerated collectivization and marked the beginning of the most extreme phase of the movement, the PRC withdrew from the IOC and other international sports federations.³⁰ Dong Shouyi, in the official letter sent to the IOC, accused President Avery Brundage of serving the American imperialists and their “two Chinas” plot.³¹ Within a week, the PRC initiated the second Taiwan Straits crisis.³² Nevertheless, international sports exchanges and visits continued largely as they had been conducted before. Although international sports federations affiliated with the IOC technically had rules prohibiting competitions between member and non-member nations, many countries continued to send athletes to compete with the PRC in

²⁹ “Da shiji” [Memorable events] in *Zhongguo tiyu nianjian 1949-1962*, 85.

³⁰ “Buxu ‘liangge zhongguo’ de yinmou decheng wo aowehui juxing jizhe zhaodaihui xuanbu tuichu guoji aowehui” [(We) must not allow the “two Chinas” conspiracy to succeed: our Olympic committee holds a press conference to announce withdrawal from the IOC], *Renmin ribao*, August 21, 1958. The eight other international federations the PRC withdrew from were: the international swimming, athletics (track and field), basketball, weightlifting, shooting, wrestling, and cycling federations, and the Asian table tennis federation.

³¹ IOCA: Dong Shouyi to IOC, August 19, 1958.

³² MacFarquhar, *The Origins of the Cultural Revolution*, Vol. 2, 97. This began on August 23 when the PRC launched a “massive artillery barrage” on the Quemoy (Jinmen) islands located off the coast of Fujian province and claimed by the ROC.

“friendly” (unofficial) competitions. In fact, continuing in the spirit of the Great Leap, these types of sport exchanges actually increased in the following years.³³

The changing international situation – the Taiwan Straits crisis, a growing Sino-Soviet rift, and PRC leaders’ concerns over nuclear weapons³⁴ – also likely contributed to an increase in national defense sports. The PRC already had an organized base for training elite athletes in national defense sports (e.g., parachuting, shooting, gliding) and by the time of the Great Leap Forward, held regular national competitions in these sports, sending the best athletes to compete internationally within the socialist bloc. The ten-year plan included provisions to increase these kinds of *tiyu* activities, and the Beijing municipal *tiyu* committee began construction in July 1958 on a municipal spare-time aviation sports school. The committee also budgeted for facilities for the motorcycle club, the rifle club, the new parachuting club, and the wireless transmitter club.³⁵

The “everyone a soldier” movement announced in the fall of 1958, which aimed to build a people’s militia among the general population,³⁶ seems to have sped up the development of national defense sports. The State Sports Commission’s 1959 annual work plan stated that the centrally important cities should develop rifle shooting, gliding (*huaxiang*), parachuting, and nautical (*hanghai*) activities and those

³³ Liang Lijuan, *He Zhenliang and China’s Olympic Dream*, trans. Susan Brownell (Beijing: Foreign Languages Press, 2007), 51. See also “Da shiji” [Memorable events] in *Zhongguo tiyu nianjian 1949-1991* [China Sports Yearbook 1949-1991] (Beijing: Renmin tiyuchubanshe, 1993), in particular the years 1958-1960.

³⁴ MacFarquhar, *The Origins of the Cultural Revolution*, Vol. 2, 98.

³⁵ BMA 185-001-00028: [untitled note], July 3, 1958.

³⁶ MacFarquhar, *The Origins of the Cultural Revolution*, Vol. 2, 100-101. For more on this campaign, see Elizabeth J. Perry, *Patrolling the Revolution: Worker Militias, Citizenship, and the Modern Chinese State* (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2006), 186-189.

currently without any national defense sports clubs should strengthen the leadership required for this kind of work.³⁷ The official emphasis in these sports was on competition, and the structure of national defense sports programs – with amateur clubs and spare-time training schools – mirrored that of other competitive sports. In other words, the main focus of the programs was not on developing paramilitary skills for a reserve army among the general population *per se*, but rather on training competitive athletes. Nonetheless, officials encouraged making paramilitary activities generally more commonplace across society. Schools and factories, for example, were instructed to use vacation time for holding military camps (*junshi ye ying*) and rifle shooting activities.³⁸ As a result of these efforts, the number of clubs and participants in national defense sports increased dramatically during these years. For instance, participation in gliding jumped from 544 athletes in 1957 to 8,633 in 1960, and in parachuting from 38 to 1,860.³⁹ Whether or not leaders saw national defense sports primarily as sports competition or as building a reserve army among the population, these kinds of activities definitely contributed to an increased militarization of society.

Staging Chinese Socialist Achievements: the 1959 National Games

³⁷ “Guojia tiwei dangzu guanyu yi jiu wu ba nian tiyu gongzuo ji ge wenti de baogao (1959 nian 3 yue 22 ri)” [State Sports Commission Party report on several issues concerning *tiyu* work (March 22, 1959)], in *Tiyu yundong wenjian 1949-1981*, comp. Guojia tiwei zhengce yanjiushi (Beijing: Renmin tiyu chubanshe, 1982), 37.

³⁸ “Guojia tiwei dangzu guanyu yi jiu wu ba nian tiyu gongzuo ji ge wenti de baogao (1959 nian 3 yue 22 ri),” 37.

³⁹ Dong Jinxia, *Women, Sport and Society in Modern China* (London; Portland, OR: Frank Cass, 2003), 245 fn28. Dong’s original source is noted as: “Woguo 18 ge yundong xiangmu jishu fazhan ziliao” [Material on the Technical Development of 18 sports in China], in *61 nian tiyu gongzuo huiyi cankao wenxian* [Reference Document of 1961 Sports Conference], ed. Beijing tiyu xueyuan, 80-105.

Despite problems in the world of international sport, with the country's first National Games in 1959 the PRC leadership, for the first time, sought to use Chinese sport and Chinese athletes to showcase the rise of Chinese socialism. Leaders envisioned the Games as an important culmination and celebration of the first decade of the PRC, and the success of them as vital in spreading a message domestically and to the rest of the world of the rapid advances made in mass sports specifically and Chinese socialism more generally.⁴⁰ Leaders also hoped that the Games would help raise national awareness and launch the ten-year plan to reach world levels of performance in sport. The 1959 National Games were thus of vital national importance, accompanied by a large-scale media campaign intended to demonstrate nationwide (and hopefully to the rest of the world) the PRC's ten years of "great achievements" in *tiyu*, showcasing competitive athletes from successful mass sports programs.⁴¹

Preparations for the event included building new sports venues and quickly increasing the numbers of athletes. In spring 1958 officials announced plans to build the "Far East's Biggest Stadium" for the Games, which would occupy 360,000 square meters in the eastern suburbs of Beijing and hold 83,000 spectators – "8,000 more than the seating capacity of Tokyo's new stadium."⁴² Equipped with floodlights for

⁴⁰ Di yi jie quanguo yundonghui choubi weiyuanhui xuanchuanbu [Preparatory committee propaganda department of the First National Games], comp. *Di yi jie quanguo yundong hui xuanchuan ziliao (di yi ji)* [First National Games promotional information (Part 1)] (Beijing: Renmin tiyu chubanshe, 1958), 1, 4.

⁴¹ Di yi jie quanguo yundonghui choubi weiyuanhui xuanchuanbu, comp., *Di yi jie quanguo yundong hui xuanchuan ziliao (di yi ji)*, 4.

⁴² "Far East's Biggest Stadium," *Peking Review*, no. 9, April 29, 1958, 5.

evening events, this would also include a 400-meter track (plus an additional covered one for use in wet weather), two soccer fields, a baseball diamond, a swimming pool with space for 4000 spectators, an artificial lake for rowing and ice-skating, and new facilities for fencing, gymnastics, and weightlifting. By the end of the year, construction had begun [Figure 15].

Training competitive athletes for these Games became the primary focus over roughly the next year and a half. *Tiyu* committee activities in Beijing and Shanghai focused on quickly building athletic programs and raising the skill levels of participating athletes. An early draft of Shanghai's preparation plans in 1958 focused on rapidly increasing its overall athletic levels in order to send 600 first-level athletes to the Games.⁴³ This included an overall build up of local sports programs in 25 different sports disciplines, as well as designating centers in the city for more competitive training in specific sports and holding large-scale sports meets in November 1958 and May 1959 to evaluate the results. At the local level, the most emphasis was to be placed on the widespread establishment of basketball, volleyball, ping-pong, and track and field teams, followed by establishing teams in soccer, swimming, weightlifting, marksmanship (rifle shooting), and gymnastics in most areas.⁴⁴ Along with developing approximately 50,000 teams citywide and providing

⁴³ SMA B126-1-359: Xunsu tigao yundong jishu shuiping, dali zhunbei canjia di yi jie quan yundonghui de cuoshi (chu gao) [Rapidly raise sports skill level, measures to take to vigorously prepare for participation in the first National Games (first draft)], April? 1958.

⁴⁴ SMA B126-1-359: Xunsu tigao yundong jishu shuiping, dali zhunbei canjia di yi jie quan yundonghui de cuoshi (chu gao). Only some areas were asked to develop teams in other represented sports at the National Games: handball, badminton, tennis, rowing, cycling, fencing, archery, *wushu*, diving, softball, water sports, baseball, boxing, wrestling, international wrestling, and motorcycling.

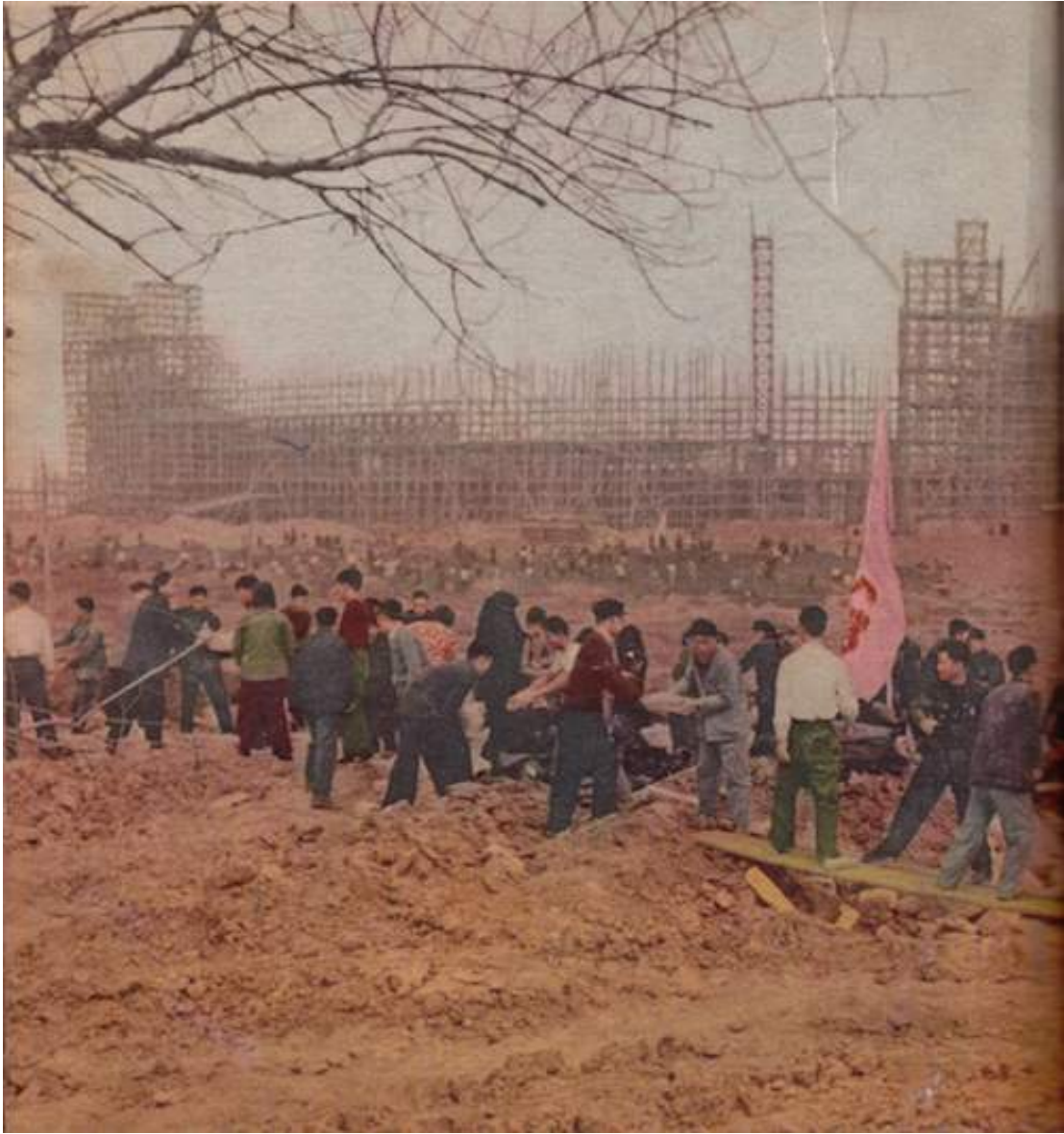


Figure 15. Building the stadium for the 1959 National Games. A caption reads: “Representatives from those who attended the Second National Youth Socialist Construction Activists Meeting participate in voluntary labor at the Beijing Workers’ Stadium.” *Xin tiyu*, December 21, 1958.

organized leadership in about half, leaders also planned to train 50,000 university and middle school students, making use of three weeks during summer break and one week during winter vacation. They hoped to identify approximately 1,000 outstanding

athletes who would then receive further training at one of four training centers in the city. To train these athletes for the upcoming Games also called for improving leadership and coaching, including transferring specialists from local sports schools, middle schools, universities, work units, and research institutes, for a period of one year, as well as holding training-related forums, demonstrations, and providing other opportunities to exchange specialized knowledge. In an effort to distribute specialized knowledge to everyone, leaders requested that the city's top athletes each provide guidance to one local grassroots-level team.

By early 1959, the Beijing municipal *tiyu* committee reported that 758 spare-time sports schools, with approximately 60,000 students enrolled in total, had been established in the city.⁴⁵ Local officials considered this a success, as increasing numbers of city athletes, especially in basketball, soccer, and ping-pong, took part in international competitions and were even sent on visits abroad. Nevertheless, they also felt that the overall demands for *tiyu* development in the city under the Great Leap Forward had been too high to realistically meet, especially considering continued issues with finding or training experienced leaders. The main plans for the Beijing *tiyu* committee in 1959 continued to center on gearing up for the 1959 National Games and sending a big representative team to them, and this required strengthening both the organization and athletic training of all the city's athletes. Teams from the city's sports schools reported regularly to the *tiyu* committee in 1959 on their preparations for the Games, with most outlining an increase in training

⁴⁵ BMA 185-001-00024: 1959 nian Beijingshi tiyu gongzuo jihua (cao an) [1959 Beijing *tiyu* work plan (draft)], February 27, 1959.

activities and bringing up any related issues. The swim team, for example, reported in early February that beginning in December pool training sessions had been increased to six times per week (three hard, one medium, and two easier).⁴⁶ Additionally, athletes participated in land training that included exercises to improve endurance, strength, flexibility, and coordination, such as stretching, jumping, and muscle-specific weightlifting.

Along with practical sports training and exercise, schools also instituted political thought work (*zhengzhi sixiang gongzuo*), which was led by the local Party youth groups. In Beijing, training in the early months of 1959 included frequent criticism and self-criticism sessions in order to “raise political consciousness and arouse enthusiasm” as well as “resolve remaining issues” on teams.⁴⁷ Each athlete also carried out weekly “thought reviews of their life” (*shenghuo sixiang jiantao*) and, twice during winter season training, every team held “small-scale thought rectification” (*xiao guimo de zhengdun sixiang*) sessions to collectively resolve internal team issues.⁴⁸ According to one report, these sessions had been successful so far. As one example, the tennis team had suffered from a lack of momentum because of several arrogant and cocky players who, led by a haughty coach, refused to cooperate with and ridiculed the skills of other players. Following “several days of

⁴⁶ BMA 185-001-00035: Quanyunhui Beijingshi choubenhui bangongshi yundongyuan xunlian qingkuang [National Games Beijing preparatory committee office athlete training situation] (1), February 4, 1959.

⁴⁷ BMA 185-001-00035: Quanyunhui Beijingshi choubenhui bangongshi yundongyuan xunlian qingkuang [National Games Beijing preparatory committee office athletic training situation] (2): Beijing tiyu xuexiao jidi dongji xunlian gongzuo zongjie [Beijing sports schools winter base training work summary], March 10, 1959.

⁴⁸ BMA 185-001-00035: Quanyunhui Beijingshi choubenhui bangongshi yundongyuan xunlian qingkuang (2).

analysis [and] criticism,” however, the team had raised the thought of these teammates, increased team unity, and improved relations, and they “pushed forward and carried out successful training work.”⁴⁹ Sometimes the criticism was more personal and lengthier, but the end result was similar. The same report stated that the *wushu* coach had gone through serious criticism and self-criticism sessions for, among other things, his attitude of “personal fame and gain” (*geren mingli sixiang*). Although his initial attempt at self-criticism was deemed insufficient, after going through “several analyses by the masses [and] help from within and outside the group” the coach “finally realized his mistakes” by admitting that he had personal goals of pursuing fame. As a result of this criticism, concluded the report, the outlook for the entire *wushu* team had changed, and its members educated on overcoming individualism. Coaches were thus in difficult positions: they had to train and keep athletes motivated for top competition, while also trying to keep everyone friendly, modest, and at least giving the appearance of a team engaged in collective work for the greater good. If they couldn’t do this, then they could become targets for accusations of arrogance and individualism.

Leaders in Beijing often criticized or praised a team and training methods as directly related to its political thought work, and a team’s success depended on “good” political thought. In a report on the city’s weightlifting team, leaders blamed the inability of athletes to improve their skills on “conservative thought” in training, by

⁴⁹ BMA 185-001-00035: Quanyunhui Beijingshi choubenhui bangongshi yundongyuan xunlian qingkuang (2).

which they meant that athletes found the clean and jerk method technically complex and believed themselves lacking in strength, and thus were unwilling to risk errors in training.⁵⁰ An August report cited the main problems of the track and field team as related to individualism and collectivism, in that some athletes were not willing to participate in competition unless they could win, and there were issues of respect and cooperation between athletes and coaches.⁵¹ When the Beijing baseball and softball team did well at a competition held in Shanghai, the *tiyu* committee report attributed this strength to political thought,⁵² as another report cited Fujian's tennis and badminton team success to having a person devoted exclusively to guiding each team's ideological work.⁵³ Likewise, the city's basketball teams "lacked enthusiasm" in addition to suffering from problems of individualism and cooperation,⁵⁴ while the soccer team beat every team in national competition because it had strengthened political thought work.⁵⁵ A Beijing report from August noted training issues and problems related to thought on the *wushu*, tennis, and badminton teams. The report

⁵⁰ BMA 185-001-00035: Quanyunhui Beijingshi choubenhui bangongshi: yundongyuan xunlian qingkuang [National Games Beijing preparatory committee office athletic training situation] (9), March 26, 1959.

⁵¹ BMA 185-001-00035: Quanyunhui Beijingshi choubenhui bangongshi: yundongyuan xunlian qingkuang [National Games Beijing preparatory committee office athletic training situation] (24), August 14, 1959.

⁵² BMA 185-001-00035: Quanyunhui Beijingshi choubenhui bangongshi: yundongyuan xunlian qingkuang [National Games Beijing preparatory committee office athletic training situation] (17), April 14, 1959.

⁵³ BMA 185-001-00035: Quanyunhui Beijingshi choubenhui bangongshi: yundongyuan xunlian qingkuang [National Games Beijing preparatory committee office athletic training situation] (18), May 19, 1959.

⁵⁴ BMA 185-001-00035: Quanyunhui Beijingshi choubenhui bangongshi: yundongyuan xunlian qingkuang [National Games Beijing preparatory committee office athletic training situation] (21), July 11, 1959.

⁵⁵ BMA 185-001-00035: Quanyunhui Beijingshi choubenhui bangongshi: yundongyuan xunlian qingkuang [National Games Beijing preparatory committee office athletic training situation] (22), July 11, 1959.

accused some athletes of being conservative and some of having an “irritable attitude” because they thought “their self-advancement too slow [and] even feel that they can’t do anything.”⁵⁶ Other athletes were too free or liberal (*ziyou zhuyi*) because they did not “cooperate with other athletes” in practice or in their daily lives. In order to “overcome [this] conservative feeling and resolve the individual-collective relationship issue” the report noted that leaders following the study and discussion of a recently published report from *People’s Daily* on overcoming rightist conservatism, the “attitudes of athletes improved.”⁵⁷ Political thought was directly linked to being a good coach or athlete, and the team’s entire success or failure hinged on it.

Even if a team’s political thought was in order, however, no amount of willpower could deliver better equipment or replace years of solid training, although that didn’t stop leaders and athletes from trying. One of the Beijing wrestling teams, which had no exercise equipment, instigated a “mass movement” to make their own out of bricks, stones, and pieces of leather, a feat they proudly reported had not only resolved the problem but also “saved our National Day about 300 RMB.”⁵⁸ The Beijing winter training summary report complained that too many athletes did not place enough importance on training their bodies and did “not sufficiently eat bitterness (*chi ku*)” (i.e., train hard enough); however, some members of the

⁵⁶ BMA 185-001-00035: Quanyunhui Beijingshi choubenhui bangongshi: yundongyuan xunlian qingkuang [National Games Beijing preparatory committee office: athletes training situation] (29), mijian: wushu, wangqiu, yumaoqiu daibiaodui yizhou gongzuo jianbao [classified: one week report on *wushu*, tennis, badminton teams], August 26, 1959.

⁵⁷ BMA 185-001-00035: Quanyunhui Beijingshi choubenhui bangongshi: yundongyuan xunlian qingkuang (29).

⁵⁸ BMA 185-001-00035: Quanyunhui Beijingshi choubenhui bangongshi yundongyuan xunlian qingkuang [National Games Beijing preparatory committee office athletic training situation] (3), March 10, 1959.

badminton team, who apparently lacked strength and endurance, suffered injuries during attempts to implement a weight-training regimen.⁵⁹ The track and field team meanwhile skipped a national competition held by Shanghai, Wuhan, and Chengdu because their athletes also had injuries, and leaders wanted to guarantee good training in the spring.⁶⁰ But despite these reports of injuries earlier in the year, summer reports from the Beijing *tiyu* committee continued to measure progress primarily according to their work related to political thought.

When the Games finally opened on September 13, 1959, more than 10,000 athletes came from all over the nation to participate in 42 events.⁶¹ These ranged from common Olympic sports, such as basketball and gymnastics, to national defense sports, such as shooting and wireless transmitter contests, as well as martial arts (*wushu*) and Chinese chess. Domestic media covered the event both for local audiences in publications like *Xin tiyu* and *People's Daily*, as well as in *China's Sports*, a relatively new publication (1958) that was written exclusively for an audience of foreign subscribers. Highlighting the athletic successes of the Games, PRC media noted that over the 20 days of the Games, athletes set four world records [Figure 16] and more than a hundred national records.⁶²

⁵⁹ BMA 185-001-00035: Quanyunhui Beijingshi choubenhui bangongshi yundongyuan xunlian qingkuang (2).

⁶⁰ BMA 185-001-00035: Quanyunhui Beijingshi choubenhui bangongshi yundongyuan xunlian qingkuang [National Games Beijing preparatory committee office athletic training situation] (8), March 25, 1959.

⁶¹ Wang Wen, "Our First National Games," *China's Sports*, no. 5, 1959, 6.

⁶² Wang, "Our First National Games," 7.



Mu swam the 100 m. breast stroke in 1 min. 11.1 sec.

Chen Yung gained 589 points in small bore rifle shooting



Chao and Wang flew a radio-operated piston-engined model airplane to an altitude of 1,260 m. to claim a new world record



Figure 16. Athletes creating new world records. Captions from top to bottom: “Mu [swam the 100 m. breast stroke in 1 min. 11.1 sec. Chen Yung gained 589 points in small bore rifle shooting. Chao and Wang flew a radio-operated piston-engined model airplane to an altitude of 1,260 m. to claim a new world record.” “The Birth of Four World Records,” *China’s Sports*, no. 5, 1959.



Figure 17. Leaders at the National Games. Caption: “Chairman Mao Tse-tung, Chairman Liu Shao-chi and other Party and State leaders watching the mass performances on the opening ceremony of the First National Games held on September 13.” *China’s Sports*, no. 5, 1959.

An elaborate and impressive opening ceremony held on the first day took place in front of 80,000 spectators at the recently completed Beijing Workers’ Stadium. Following a rendition of the “The East is Red” played by a 1,200-member brass band, Mao, Liu Shaoqi, Zhou Enlai, Zhu De, Lin Biao and other top Chinese leaders made their way to their seats as the audience applauded [Figure 17]. Also attending the opening ceremony were sports delegations and officials from eleven socialist countries, as well as Iraq, France, Sudan, and other nations. A massive parade followed the playing of the national anthem, in which more than a thousand

top-ranked “Master of Sports” athletes preceded referees, judges, and athletes from 29 provinces, municipalities and autonomous regions.⁶³ He Long then gave an opening speech in which he summarized a decade of *tiyu* achievements, and immediately afterwards athletes presented leaders with flowers as balloons and a thousand pigeons were released into the sky. As if all that wasn’t grand enough, approximately 8,000 students performed a series of calisthenics sets that ended with formations displaying such slogans as “Blossoms of youth” [Figure 18] and “Long live the motherland!”⁶⁴ *People’s Daily* described the themes of the various calisthenics performances as “how children in new China grow up happy, the industrial and agricultural Great Leap Forward, [and] our nation’s historical traditions of martial arts styles.”⁶⁵

Officials emphasized that the significance of these Games included, among other things, the quick boost it had given to building competitive sports programs in China. The influx of new sports schools, students, and coaches, along with a year of intense training, paid off not only in terms of participant numbers, but also in terms of all the national and provincial records that had been set. Prior to the Games, many of China’s top athletes had either come from the People’s Liberation Army (such as weightlifter Chen Jingkai and the Bayi ball teams) or were overseas Chinese who had

⁶³ Wang, “Our First National Games,” 6-7.

⁶⁴ Wang, “Our First National Games,” 7.

⁶⁵ “Jianyue woguo tiyu yundong shi nianlai de juda chengjiu di yi jie quan yun hui long chong kaimu Mao zhuxi Liu zhuxi Dong fuzhuxi Zhu weiyuan zhang Zhou zongli jianyuele tiyu duiwu” [Review of our nation’s decade of sports achievements, the grand opening of the first National Games: Chairman Mao, chairman Liu, vice-chair Dong, committee head Zhu, vice-premier Zhou review the sports teams], *Renmin ribao*, September 14, 1959.

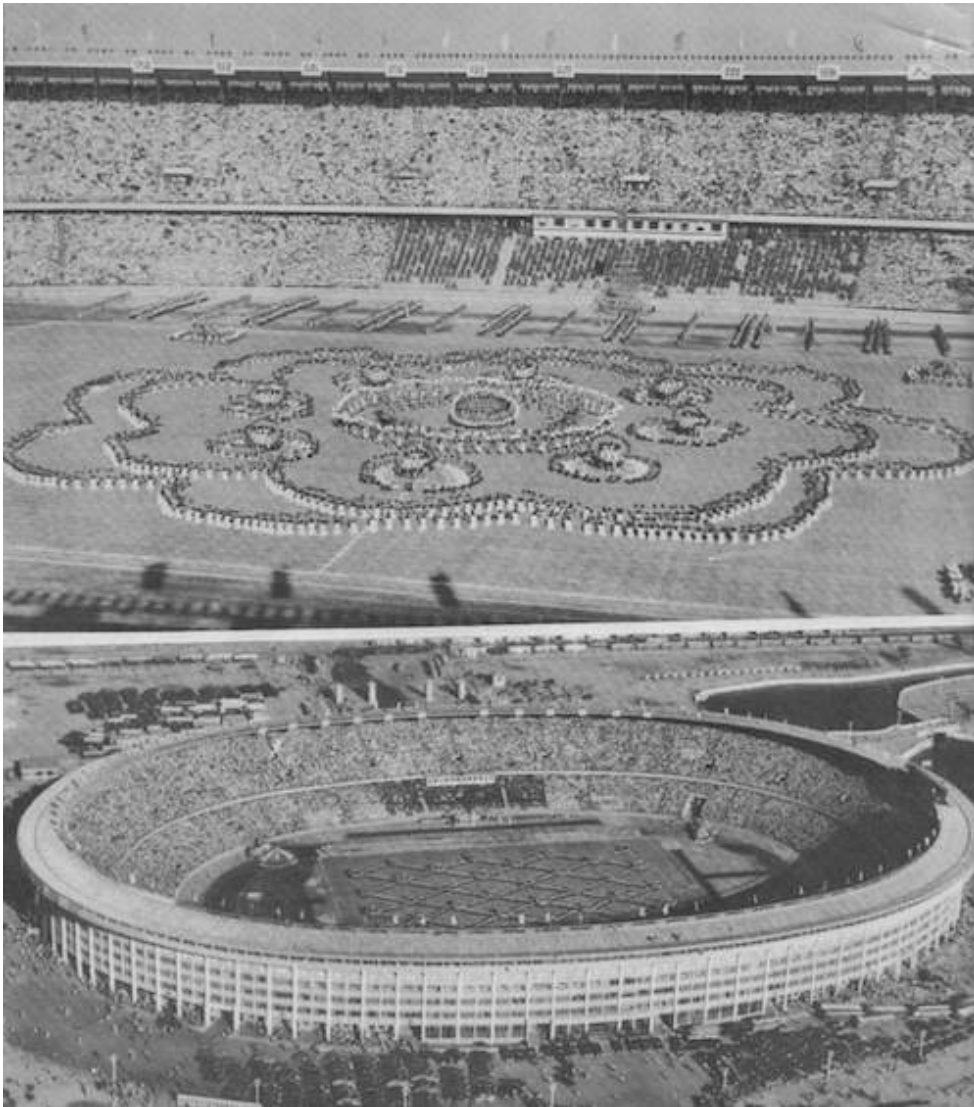


Figure 18. Mass calisthenics at the First National Games. Top photo caption: “A flower formed in the mass exercise named “Blossoms of youth.” Bottom photo caption: “An aerial view of Peking Workers’ Stadium on the opening ceremony day.” *China’s Sports*, no. 5, 1959.

“returned to the motherland” (such as swimmer Wu Chuanyu). In fact, in April 1959 amidst preparation for the Games, Rong Guotuan, one of these “returned” athletes,

had won the men's 1959 ping-pong world championship less than two years after leaving the Hong Kong team.⁶⁶ Following the National Games, however, vice-chair of the All-China Sports Federation and the State Sports Commission Rong Gaotang noted, "We are proud of the achievements of our veteran sportsmen, but we are all the more happy at the prospect of so many young challengers coming up."⁶⁷ In other words, the results of the National Games and associated training programs showed that the next generation of athletes had already begun to emerge and replace older athletes.

The National Games also gave Chinese leaders an opportunity to project an image of China in the world free from the Soviet Union and successful on its own, an indication of strained Sino-Soviet relations. Chinese officials attributed the success of the Games, as well as the previous ten years of sports development, almost exclusively to the Party and the government. Even when praising the success of the *laoweizhi* in China,⁶⁸ absent was any nod by the Chinese leadership to the extensive earlier project of learning from the Soviet Union. Official publications also grouped

⁶⁶ A brief encapsulation of Rong Guotuan's background and path to becoming a Chinese athlete and winning the world championship is told in Nicholas Griffin, *Ping-Pong Diplomacy: The Secret History Behind the Game That Changed the World* (New York: Scribner, 2014), 77-86. According to Griffin, Jiang Yongning, one of Hong Kong's "Ping Pong pioneers" had already "returned" to the mainland (80), presumably to help build up a competitive program. It seems that Chinese officials first noticed Rong, however, in 1957 when, as part of the Hong Kong team, he beat the reigning Japanese champion Oginura, and then traveled to Beijing where he beat all the Chinese athletes he played (78). Soon thereafter, Rong was wined and dined by none other than vice premiers Chen Yi and He Long and, following a convincing visit in Guangzhou from Jiang Yongning and an official letter from He Long, went to Beijing for training the same year (80-81). Griffin also notes that Rong gained other huge benefits from his status as a sought-after ping pong athlete: instead of going through lengthy political reeducation programs like other returning Chinese, Rong lived in one of Chiang Kai-shek's former houses, "appointed a number one-ranker" meaning he had the best food and housing, and received one hundred yuan per month (81).

⁶⁷ Rong Gaotang, "The Rapid Progress of Sports in China," *China's Sports*, no. 5, 1959, 8.

⁶⁸ Rong, "The Rapid Progress of Sports in China," 3.

the Soviet Union with “other socialist countries” and claimed a relationship with all of them based on “solidarity and friendship” that had helped improve “sports standards.”⁶⁹ The scale of the Games surpassed those of the first Spartakiad, a similar event held in the Soviet Union in 1956 at which more than 9,000 athletes competed in twenty Olympic sports.⁷⁰ Chinese leaders thus had at least some concrete reason to claim that the country’s sports development should be treated on equal footing with that in the Soviet Union, even if China had largely adopted Soviet models for that development.

Additionally, after the Games ended, Chinese leaders set up similar nationwide tours for visiting international delegations and leaders to observe Chinese socialist achievements in *tiyu* that had come leading up to and under the Great Leap Forward. About two weeks before the Games, the State Sports Commission had sent out instructions to the *tiyu* committee in cities and provinces where approximately thirty-four foreign *tiyu* representatives from eleven fraternal socialist countries would visit or likely visit.⁷¹ The purpose of these visits was for foreign guests to “see our nation’s achievements in *tiyu* over the past ten years,” including the rapid rise of sports skill level and the expansion and development of mass *tiyu*. The instructions

⁶⁹ Rong, “The Rapid Progress of Sports in China,” 3-4.

⁷⁰ James Riordan, *Sport in Soviet Society : Development of Sport and Physical Education in Russia and the USSR* (Cambridge [Eng.]; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1977), 174.

⁷¹ This included representatives from Bulgaria, Vietnam, Hungary, the DDR/East Germany, Mongolia, Romania, Poland, the Soviet Union, Czechoslovakia, France, Sudan, England (the two couples listed, the Evans’ and the Vints, were associated with the International Table Tennis Federation), Pakistan, and Iraq. On the list of places to visit in China were Sichuan, Chengdu, Chongqing, Yunnan, Kunming, and Shanghai. SMA B126-1-485: Canguan quanguo yundonghui ji guoqing guanli tiyujie waibing qingkuangbiao [Fact sheet on the foreign guests from the sports world visiting for the National Games and National Day], August? 1959.

also called for showing the guests the achievements of the Great Leap Forward thus far and to promote the campaign, for instance by sending the guests off to visit National Games facilities, as well as some factories and people's communes.⁷²

Chinese official reports of these visits provided evidence during these visits of a clearly deteriorating relationship with the Soviet sports leaders and an increasingly strong one with the non-Soviet-led sports world. A report published after the start of the 1959 National Games noted disparagingly that the vice chair of the Soviet State Sports Commission (*tizong*), Mikhail Pesliak, had arrived several days after these other delegations: so late, in fact, that he had to "rush from the airport to the stadium" in order to attend the opening ceremony.⁷³ A later report from the Shanghai municipal *tiyu* committee reported on September 19 that while the North Korean representatives visited the Chinese ping-pong factory in the morning, Pesliak decided to rest and go shopping. The tone of the official report thus presented Pesliak, as the representative sports leader from the Soviet Union, as not taking the significance of China's first National Games seriously enough.

When both Soviet and North Korean sports representatives visited the Long March people's commune, the official report noted crucial differences in the reactions of the two to what they saw. The reaction of the North Korean group leader was glowing, as it had been of the ping-pong factory. Pesliak, on the other hand, felt the

⁷² SMA, B126-1-485: Zhongghua renmin gongheguo tiyu yundonghui canguan quanyundonghui ji guoqing xiongdí guojia tiyu daibiaotuan jiedai gongzuo jihua [The State Sports Commission's plans for receiving the representative sports groups from fraternal countries visiting for the National Games and National Day], August 29, 1959.

⁷³ SMA B126-1-485: Tiwei guoqing waibing qingkuang jianbao, di 4 hao [State Sports Commission briefing on the foreign guests visiting for National Day], September 13, 1959.

need to point out inconsistencies in his experience of Chinese socialism, such as on the visit to the commune. He commented that Soviets who'd returned from communes in the north of China told him that they hadn't paid to eat, and they'd received free clothing and a monthly allowance. However, he noted with some skepticism, there seemed to be "another principle of distribution" in this commune. That night, he simply remarked that visiting the people's commune had been "very interesting."⁷⁴ Pesliak's words thus indicate an increasingly tense relationship between Soviet sports leaders and Chinese ones, or at least an official desire to make it appear tense, by recording his less-than-positive comments in a report sent to leaders.

Sports representatives from some socialist bloc countries, such as Romania, appear to have been a bit friendlier, but the tone of the reports is ambivalent – sometimes these representatives were uninterested, pedantic, or critical of Chinese programs. On their visit to Shanghai, the Romanian group leader reinforced the principle of socialist unity, and he stated that China and Romania were "on the same side" (*yi kuai tudi shang*) with other socialist countries in a struggle to "beat" imperialism.⁷⁵ But beyond that, little interest was shown and no praise offered regarding Chinese socialist projects, such as when visiting the people's commune.

During a visit to the Hangzhou Rowing Club, one of the representatives commented that the boats were not up to par and still didn't "conform to standards." Although this

⁷⁴ SMA B126-1-485: Shanghaishi tiyu yundong weiyuanhui jiedai Su, Luo, Chao tiyu daibiaotuan qingkuang jianbao (di 3 hao) [Shanghai sports committee briefing on receiving Soviet, Romanian, North Korean sports delegations], September 19, 1959.

⁷⁵ SMA B126-1-485: Shanghaishi tiyu yundong weiyuanhui jiedai Su, Luo, Chao tiyu daibiaotuan qingkuang jianbao (di 3 hao), September 19, 1959.

was fine for participation or training at the mass level, he noted, it would be an issue for any higher-level competition. The Romanian side also offered to send China two of their well-known and experienced coaches, including the Romanian champion of twenty-five years who was familiar with boat design and had textbook knowledge of the sport.

In sharp contrast to the Soviet and Romanian representatives, the reports indicate growing relations with Vietnam and North Korea. Vietnamese sports leaders had a schedule in Beijing that included watching the National Games competitions in swimming, basketball, parachuting, ping-pong, volleyball, and gymnastics, as well as touring various sports facilities. The schedule also included non-sports-specific activities, such as visits to the Forbidden City, the Summer Palace, the revolutionary and military museums, and the national No. 2 Cotton Factory, participating in various cultural and national activities, and holding five days' worth of meetings with officials.⁷⁶ North Korean representatives decided to stay slightly longer in Shanghai and get in some more sports-related visits. On September 20, after the Soviets had already left, the North Koreans visited the Shanghai Wooden Sports Apparatuses Factory in the morning and the Shanghai Rowing Club in the afternoon. At the factory, according to the report, the North Korean representatives praised the quality of the goods produced, and added that Chinese rowing had already reached "world

⁷⁶ SMA B126-1-485: Yuenan tiyu daibiaotuan quanguo richeng [Vietnam sports delegation national schedule], September? 1959. The schedule for their visit was really packed: there are more activities than those I've listed here, and they all were to take place between September 16 and October 3, then the team was to head to Guangzhou October 5-10, and Nanning October 11-13, for more activities.

levels.”⁷⁷ After being introduced to rowing club members, a North Korea representative was apparently so impressed with their training that he inquired about available teaching materials for the sport, presumably to bring back to North Korea. When the deputy director in charge of the local *tiyu* committee’s national defense sports replied that none existed, the representative joked that China was “the leader of national defense sports” so why couldn’t it “resolve the teaching materials issue (*jiaocao wenti*)?”⁷⁸ Thus, in these official reports at least, China had something that countries like North Korea and Vietnam wanted: successful sports programs. Chinese officials attributed these programs to the success of their own brand of Chinese socialism. The scene surrounding the first National Games was thus simultaneously the culmination of mass *tiyu* development that began in earnest in 1956 – and which received a boost with the Great Leap Forward – as well as a major public showcase of China and Chinese sport as strong, socialist and standing on its own, free from Soviet leadership.

***Tiyu* Popular Culture and Film, 1956-1959**

The late 1950s, particularly during the Great Leap Forward, saw a ramping up of *tiyu* propaganda in everyday life that went beyond associations or structured programs in schools and the workplace. In the years between 1956 and 1959, the average citizen was increasingly exposed to *tiyu* through various forms of media and

⁷⁷ SMA B126-1-485: Shanghaishi tiyu yundong weiyuanhui jiedai Su, Luo, Chao tiyu daibiaotuan qingkuang jianbao (di 4 hao), September 20, 1959.

⁷⁸ SMA B126-1-485: Shanghaishi tiyu yundong weiyuanhui jiedai Su, Luo, Chao tiyu daibiaotuan qingkuang jianbao (di 4 hao), September 20, 1959.

everyday life, and was expected to partake in what constituted an entire culture of it promoted through magazines, newspapers, feature films and other paraphernalia. *Xin tiyu* began printing biweekly instead of monthly in late 1955 and in September 1958, at the height of the Great Leap, *Tiyu bao*, a newspaper exclusively covering the subject, offered *tiyu* enthusiasts – youth, students, factory workers, and anyone else who was interested – extended doses of it twice per week. An English-language magazine called *China's Sports* appeared, so that a foreign audience could stay up-to-date with the latest on all kinds of related activities on the mainland.

Tiyu-related paraphernalia, such as mass-produced diary books (*tiyu riji*) and stamps, although not necessarily new in these years, proliferated on an unprecedented scale. *Tiyu*-themed diary books often included photographs, while stamps covered a variety of *tiyu* activities, and often served as memorabilia for large-scale competitions like the 1959 National Games. Photographs of famous, record-breaking athletes, *tiyu* slogans and common themes, and even the rules of the *laoweizhi* were reproduced in diaries [Figure 19]. These objects reflect the ways in which a culture of *tiyu* permeated everyday society through cultural consumption that stemmed beyond physical, active participation in exercise or sport.

A new kind of feature film on *tiyu* (*tiyu pian*) also began to appear in these years as part of a larger shift in Chinese film production. Whereas in the Republican period just one feature film appeared exclusively on *tiyu* (*Sports Queen*, 1934), approximately a dozen *tiyu* feature films were produced for general consumption in

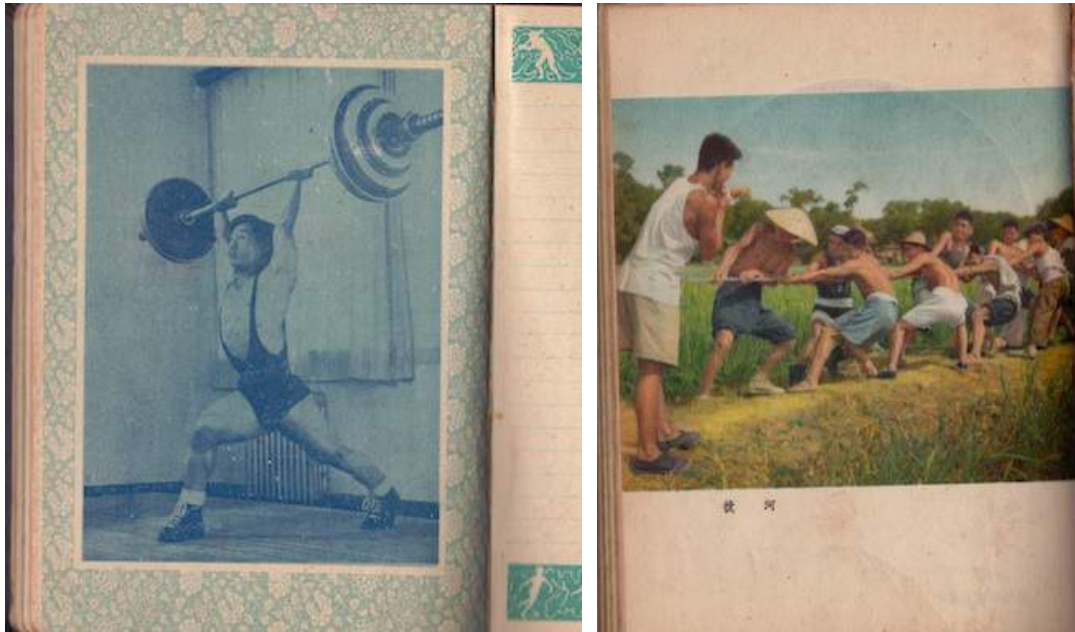


Figure 19. Images from *tiyu* diaries. Left: The famous weightlifter Chen Jingkai. Right: tug-of-war. Property of Amanda Shuman.

the ten-year period between 1956-1966. Feature films were, in general, a particularly powerful medium in the Maoist period for helping spread national messages because they could be transported across the country by projector teams and manipulating their content was technically difficult for ordinary people.⁷⁹

Beginning in 1956, Chinese directors and film studios also largely discarded earlier practices of following Soviet cinema and socialist realism in favor of forging a new mass, national culture in film as part of what Clark has called “a sinification of film.”⁸⁰ An increasing control of the state over film production and the widespread viewing of films fostered a rise of a mass nationalized cultural production that

⁷⁹ Paul Clark, *Chinese Cinema: Culture and Politics Since 1949* (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1987). Clark argues that, in contrast to film, printed publications and local drama or opera troupes were often locally adapted performances to specific areas, implying that officially endorsed national messages could be misconstrued or lost at the local level.

⁸⁰ Clark, *Chinese Cinema*, 56-57.

“deemphasized regional and class variation”⁸¹ while including new audiences, such as those in rural areas, and provided a platform to spread standard Mandarin as the national language. Although Shanghai studios were responsible for many of the *tiyu* films, especially in the years 1956-1957, film production in China generally and gradually shifted away from its exclusive Shanghai base and towards inland cities,⁸² and studios in Changchun, Beijing, and Xi’an began producing *tiyu* films.

Common genres of films included those films that emphasized remembering the past, cheerful and youthful idealism, and incorporated nationalized styles (such as musical films).⁸³ *Tiyu* films often mixed several genres and included *tiyu*-specific elements in order to educate general audiences on the societal importance of *tiyu* and how to become an ideal Chinese socialist citizen. Several *tiyu* films criticized “old” (pre-Liberation) *tiyu* and praised “new” *tiyu* as well as emphasized the rewards of hard work, strict discipline, and collective (over individual) effort. Many films also explicitly imbued the pursuits of elite athletics with national importance. In all of them, participation in *tiyu* extended across society in multiple ways and included not only elite athletes but also ordinary citizens and the importance of spectatorship at local and national events. This included introducing new *tiyu* institutional structures and activities, such as spare-time sports schools and *tiyu* associations, and providing a glimpse into how leaders envisioned they might be run. And if one wasn’t participating actively in any of these *tiyu* activities, then these films showed how one

⁸¹ Clark, *Chinese Cinema*, 57.

⁸² Clark, *Chinese Cinema*, 58-59.

⁸³ Clark, “Chapter 5: Film genres, 1956-1964,” in *Chinese Cinema*, 94-118.

was still expected to offer their utmost support for Chinese athletes – large crowds of enthusiastic fans and spectators cheer at all the competitions, clearly engaged in the athletic activity at hand. The films were also popular, particularly in urban areas. In Beijing, locals recall that they sometimes watched *tiyu* films in open-air squares with their friends, and some remember film titles and plots many decades later.⁸⁴ In short, in the late 1950s, anyone and everyone needed to pay attention to *tiyu* in order to become a better citizen and these films would teach appropriate ways of achieving that goal.

Two Small Soccer Teams (*Liangge xiao zuqiudui*, black and white, Shanghai, 1956),⁸⁵ one of the first of such *tiyu* films, emphasized the importance of collective teamwork over individual effort. The film follows the lives of three soccer-loving friends and first-year high school students – Wang Li, Zhou Bin, and Li Ming – in their quest for classroom glory from interclass soccer matches. Separated into two different classes, Zhou Bin and Li Ming are each made directors of their respective class *tiyu* activities. Wang, who is in the same class as Zhou, convinces Zhou to form a soccer team and let him become team captain; he also convinces Li to form one against his wishes (Li claims that his classmates have not asked for a soccer team, and that he should follow their requests). Aside from their love for soccer, Wang and Li's personalities and approaches to handling their teams differ radically. Wang, a fiercely proud and arrogant individual, likes to dominate the match and control the ball play

⁸⁴ Two local Beijingers immediately recalled watching films like *Girl Basketball Ball Player no. 5* and *Ice Sisters* (see later discussion) in this manner.

⁸⁵ *Liang ge xiao zuqiudui* [Two Small Soccer Teams]. Directed by Liu Qiong. Shanghai Film Studio. 1956. Guangzhou: Guangdong dasheng wenhua chuanbo youxian gongsi, 2011. DVD.

on his own, and during a practice match with Li's class even accuses his own teammates of playing poorly. His team loses the practice match and, needless to say, he's also a sore loser. In contrast, Li is humble, encourages teamwork, and promotes good sportsmanship. In the official match with Li's class, in front of an audience of people that includes teachers, classmates, and his father, Wang arrogantly hogs the ball and when his team begins to lose, continues to place the blame on other teammates. His father decides to leave the match and Wang continues to play viciously until, when making a goal attempt, he accidentally injures Li – to the extent that Li hobbles off the field with classmates and ends up in the hospital. Wang's teacher finally makes the decision to send in a substitute and dismiss Wang, who walks off alone to reflect on the situation. At home Wang discovers that his father, a cartoonist by trade, has sketched out his son's arrogant behavior from the match and hung the cartoons in Wang's bedroom, tagging the cartoons with titles like "Give me the ball more!" and "Rely on me to win!" [Figure 20] Upon further self-reflection on his mistakes, Wang apologizes to Li and the school lets them play another "friendship" match – the film ends on a high note as Wang plays contentedly with his teammates and has clearly learned his lesson [Figure 21]. The main message of the film is straightforward and simple: if you act individually, the team loses in more way than one; if you work together and practice good sportsmanship, the whole team wins. In other words, friendly, team-spirited, collective work is the only acceptable path to follow.



Figure 20. High school student and soccer player Wang Li reflects on his mistakes. Cartoons drawn by his father hang on the wall behind him. Scene from *Two Small Soccer Teams*.



Figure 21. Final scene from *Two Small Soccer Teams*.

The emphasis on the necessity of collective effort and teamwork was also the subject of *A New Soccer Ball* (*Yi ge xin zuqiu*, color, 1957). This short Claymation film written for children tells the story of a boy who refuses to share his new soccer ball but ultimately realizes he cannot play soccer without a team.⁸⁶ Although the idea of teamwork in sports may not be a concept unique to socialist *tiyu* (“there is no ‘I’ in ‘team’” is a constant refrain heard in the Anglo-American sports world), extra effort was made to explicitly delineate between acting like a greedy individual versus the good-natured glorification of the collective. Not once is an individual athlete praised in a positive way in these films – indeed, in *Two Small Soccer Teams*, athletic skills and even sport itself is really of secondary importance to the message that winning must come from humble individuals who participate in collective efforts both on and off the playing field.

The theme of collectivism was picked up again in the most popular *tiyu* film of the decade, *Girl Basketball Player no. 5* (*Nü lan wuhao*, color, Shanghai Tianma, 1957),⁸⁷ which also set a high standard for the genre. As the first color *tiyu* film in China,⁸⁸ and the first written and directed by Xie Jin who later went on to even greater fame with such films as *The Red Detachment of Women* (1961) and *Two Stage Sisters* (1965), the film is thus also considered an exemplar for reasons extending

⁸⁶ *Peking Review*, March 25, 1958, 23. A short description of this film can also be found online at <http://www.tudou.com/albumcover/R07t8pSVRng.html> and viewed at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oVq2bcM116A> [Both last accessed August 20, 2014]

⁸⁷ *Nülan wuhao* [Girl Basketball Players no. 5]. Directed by Xie Jin. Shanghai Tian Ma, 1957. Beijing: Zhongguo aolinpike weiyuanhui chu pin, Guojia tiyu zongju tiyu wenhua fazhan zhongxin bianzhi, Zhongying yinxiang chubanshe chuban, 2008. DVD.

⁸⁸ Xiao Qiang, “Zhengzai paishe de ‘Nü lan wu hao’” [‘Girl Basketball Player no.5’ being filmed], *Xin tiyu*, August 1957, 23-24.

beyond its subject matter.⁸⁹ The plot follows the lives of Lin Xiaojie, a young female basketball player who has just signed up with a Shanghai basketball training school, her teammates, and their new coach, Tian Zhenhua, who was formerly a coach for the Southwest Army team. Throughout the film the audience is reminded of contemporary socialist themes, such as collectivism, discipline, and hard work, as well as the utopian socialist idealism that marked the period of the Hundred Flowers through the Great Leap Forward.

Discipline and the importance of collective effort are themes in the film, most of which takes place in or around the sports school. The cheerful teammates train intensely [Figure 22] and spend all their time together in sparse but relatively nice living quarters. Aside from the strenuous group training, all team members gather together for meetings to discuss strategy [Figure 23], and are expected to share playing time on the court. Poor sportsmanship is also frowned upon. In one scene, when Lin Xiaojie suggests taking advantage of another team's weak offense, the coach decides to bench her for the practice game. She then decides that instead of attending a mandatory team meeting (which will decide whether or not the game will even be held), she will have dinner with her boyfriend's family. When she misses the meeting and subsequently shows up late to the game, Coach Tian reprimands her indirectly, stating that "someone who is undisciplined and does not think of the group" can be of no use in the game. Never mind that all of this also happens to occur

⁸⁹ It also went on to win the silver prize at the sixth International Youth Film Festival held in 1957. Wang Yanyun, "Gongheguo chuqi dianying zhong de feidian xinghua xushi—yi 'Nü lan wu hao' zhong de Shanghai dianying chuantong weili" [Atypical narrative style of early PRC film – with 'Girl Basketball Player no. 5' as the example of Shanghai tradition], *Dangdai dianying*, June 2011, 144.



Figure 22. Basketball drills. Scene from *Girl Basketball Player no. 5*.



Figure 23. Discussing strategy as team. Lin Xiaojie leans over the board while Coach Tian looks on. Note the team's sparse living quarters. Scene from *Girl Basketball Player no. 5*.

on her birthday – the team and maintaining strict discipline are far more important than any individual matters.

The film also makes a clear political statement: the Party, through Liberation, has successfully overcome national humiliation. Coach Tian is a former star basketball player from the Republican period East China team in Shanghai who experiences a series of flashbacks that remind the audience of the differences between basketball in the “new” versus the “old” China. In one scene, set in the late 1930s, the East China team is in the middle of beating a foreign team of sailors when two foreign audience members decide to bribe the boss of the East China team so that his team loses. Initially the players, though annoyed, follow orders and begin to play poorly. Tian, one of the leading players for the East China team, is distraught and refuses to come through for his boss: he calls a timeout and goads his teammates with “We can’t lose! We have to win!” They agree with him and beat the foreign team, ultimately defying their boss. Soon after the East China team’s successful victory, thugs beat up Tian and a teammate in an alley, resulting in Tian’s hospitalization. The message to filmgoers is thus quite clear: in pre-Liberation China, when greedy capitalists like this boss of the East China team ran society, national dignity meant very little when compared to the power of money. It was simply impossible at the time to fight for China and overcome national humiliation in such a climate.

In the scene following Tian’s accusation that Lin Xiaojie has neglected strict discipline and the collective, Lin tells the team she’s quitting – and Coach Tian

returns to this earlier period of time to justify the importance of not quitting. As he explains to the team:

When I was young I knew an athlete who represented his country in an international competition. But foreigners laughed at him. They thought it was funny that the Chinese “Sick Man of East Asia” was going to take part in a sports competition. Reporters wanted him to take off his shirt so they could take pictures of him bare-chested. At the time he didn’t get it, but later he realized that they weren’t insulting him, they were insulting our country, our people.⁹⁰

To this one of the players innocently asks, “what happened?” to which Tian replies, “What happened? ... He won a championship for China.” Here we can see that Tian explicitly uses the “sick man” stereotype to associate national humiliation with the earlier basketball match and, by extension, emphasizing the connection with international sports competition in general. With the medal from the earlier competition in his hand, Tian adds that, in contrast to basketball athletes in the Republican period, “Things are different for your generation. Every second, every moment of your lives is blessed [Figure 24].”⁹¹

In one of the next scenes, Coach Tian goes a step further by arguing that international sports is as important as or perhaps even more vital to the national’s health than almost anything else. Tao Kai, Lin Xiaojie’s nerdy boyfriend (he is not

⁹⁰ *Girl Basketball Player no. 5 - Film Script*, trans. Tim McCahill and Tom Moran, published by MCLC Resource Center, December 2005 and available online at <http://mclc.osu.edu/rc/pubs/moran.htm> [Last accessed August 20, 2014].

⁹¹ *Girl Basketball Player no. 5 - Film Script*.



Figure 24. Coach Tian tells the team about Old China. Note the Olympic poster in the background with the caption: “Athletes strive for glory for the motherland.” The film was completed before the PRC’s withdrawal from the IOC. Scene from *Girl Basketball Players no. 5*.

athletic and spends all his time studying), complains to Tian that Lin has not spent enough time studying for her college entrance exams. Tao argues that Lin “could make an outstanding engineer” for the country in its pursuit of Socialism, but instead “she’s wasting time jumping around and playing ball.” Tian immediately gives Tao a stern justification for the absolute necessity of international sports competition for national health. In fact, visible displays of Chinese athletic recognition were precisely what the nation needed to overcome national humiliation. Speaking of his own experience, Tian states:

A few years ago, I had the chance to go with a sports delegation overseas. I saw the flags of the Soviet Union, the USA, and England flying over the stadium, even flags of countries with populations of no more than a couple of hundred thousand. As a veteran athlete . . . as a Chinese . . . nothing hurts more than to look up and not see your nation's flag flying... Just think, if we could raise our red flag with its five stars at an international meet and play our national anthem, then no matter what country you were from, even if you were against us, you'd have to stand up and take your hat off to our flag and think about the fact that you were up against a country of six hundred million people.⁹²

Such pro-Chinese statements, which reference the humiliation of the past and the present miracle of having overcome the “sick man,” give no explicit credit to the adoption of Soviet models in past years. Indeed, it would seem from these statements that the Chinese Communist Party was the only one to thank. Nevertheless, Coach Tian Zhenhua's office includes two posters hanging on the wall that are present in several scenes of the movie. One is of an Olympic athlete [see Figure 24] and the other promoting the *laoweizhi* – a brief reminder that the basis of elite athletic training began with this Soviet-inspired program. Given that the film was released in the wake of the 1956 Melbourne Olympics, this was probably also a timely effort to remind citizens of the connection between the strides being made to build up an elite

⁹² *Girl Basketball Player no. 5 - Film Script.*

athletic program and the end goal of international (Olympic) glory. Overall, these monologues indicate the supreme importance of elite athletic participation in international sports competitions in establishing China's position on the world stage. They also shed light on how the Party's narrative of overcoming humiliation through sport was linked to strict discipline and collective effort, both on and off the court.

Yet perhaps one of the most compelling aspects of the film – and what made it truly stand apart from so many other films from the time period – was the inclusion of a romantic plot that appealed to many while also reminding viewers of other ways in which the living standards and quality of life for athletes was that much better in the new China than it had been before 1949. In the very first scene of the film, which begins when Tian arrives at the new girls' coach at the Shanghai school, his old friend Lao Meng (also a former East China team athlete) teases Tian for still being a bachelor. The audience also learns soon thereafter that Lin Xiaojie's mother, Lin Jie, disapproves of her choice to play basketball. In a twist of fate, we find out through a combination of Tian's pensive encounters with Lin Xiaojie and flashbacks that his love interest in the 1930s was none other than Lin Jie – who also happened to be a basketball player and the daughter of the scheming East China team boss. When Tian is beaten up in the alleyway following the East China team's victory, it is Lin who rushes to his side and gives up her most valuable possessions at the hospital – including a medal given to her by Tian – so that he can have surgery. While Tian is recovering in the hospital Lin's father, who clearly disapproves of Tian on many levels (in addition to Tian's disobedience in the game, he also lives with teammate

Lao Meng in a dilapidated apartment), pays him a visit. He returns the medal to Tian without telling Lin and convinces Tian to move on. Lin subsequently is forced to marry a rich man. Through Lin Jie's flashbacks we see that this marriage was so unhappy that she took her infant daughter and fled, and we come to understand that this past has clearly made her apprehensive about her daughter's interest in basketball because she believes that nothing good can come of becoming an athlete. When Lin finds out from her daughter that the new coach is Tian she is visibly shocked but says nothing.

It is at this point in the film that the story of an unfulfilled romantic relationship leaves the audience hanging in suspense: will Tian and Lin meet each other again and, if so, what will happen? It is not until Lin Xiaojie ends up in the hospital with a knee injury that the two meet face-to-face for the first time in nearly two decades and discover that Lin's father lied to them both – and that they both still harbor feelings for one another [Figure 25]. In the final scene, as Coach Tian and Lin Xiaojie get ready to board a plane for an international competition, Tian assures Lin that they'll be back soon, to which she replies affectionately, “No matter how long it is, I'll be waiting for you.” Although this happy ending may seem clichéd, it captivated audiences. For some filmgoers this “very human” plot full of “complex emotions”⁹³ in a changed society is what made the film, in addition to superb directing and acting, well worth watching. Most likely that was because the film was about more than just *tiyu*.

⁹³ Qiu Yang, “Qing chun yong zai – guochan pian ‘nü lan wuhao’ guan hou” [Eternal Youth –view on domestic film ‘Girl Basketball Player no. 5’], *Renmin ribao*, August 29, 1957.



Figure 25. Coach Tian and Lin Jie rekindle their love. Scene from *Girl Basketball Player no. 5*.

Film critics have continued to highlight the script's plot as "where the value lies"⁹⁴ and what has made the film's legacy endure.⁹⁵ Outstanding direction, a multilayered plot, and the use of color all contributed to a sense that contemporary

⁹⁴ Chen Yuan, "Tai ci, dianying de jiazhi suozai: zhongkan shanghai dianying zhipianchan gushipian 'Nulan wuhao' you gan" [Lines, where the value of the film lies: feelings re-watching Shanghai film studio's feature film 'Girl Basketball Player no. 5'], *Jiating yingyuan jishu*, June 2009, 103.

⁹⁵ This film has left a lasting legacy. It made a comeback in the late 1970s (and included a *lianhuanhua*, or linked picture book, to go with it), and in 2008 it was included in a collection of popular sports movies produced for the Olympic games. In the latter case, however, the romantic storyline is downplayed in the accompanying plot description on the DVD case. *Nulan wuhao* [Girl Basketball Player no. 5] in the DVD compilation: *Zhongguo aolinpike weiyuanhui chu pin, Guojia tiyu zongju tiyu wenhua fazhan zhongxin bianzhi, Zhongying yinxiang chubanshe chuban, Zhongguo tiyu dianying jingxuan* [Selected Chinese *tiyu* films]: *The Best of Chinese Sports Movies*, July 2008.

“political undertones” appeared to “take a backseat”⁹⁶ to the film as a whole – something that was highly unusual in early PRC cinema. The film’s popularity and mass appeal at the time also indicate that there was something beyond political messages attracting filmgoers. Even the haircut of actress Cao Qiwei, who played Lin Xiaojie in the film, inspired schools to have their students adopt the same “Number 5” (*wu hao tou*) style—a simple short cut with bangs.⁹⁷

Girl Basketball Player no. 5 also established the trend in *tiyu* films to use actual athletes instead of relying just on established actors and actresses. Cao Qiwei was an 18-year-old volleyball athlete who had just entered the Shanghai *tiyu* institute when Xie Jin chose her to play the lead role as Lin Xiaojie⁹⁸; she later went on to play for the national volleyball team. Cao was chosen because she resembled Yang Jie, the real life “Number 5” who had played for China’s national women’s basketball team since 1954: both were originally from Shanghai and of the same height.⁹⁹ Indeed, Xie Jin’s portrayal of what life was like for the women’s basketball team was based on his study of Yang Jie’s life. This use of real athletes and the study of their lives signaled a certain degree of realism sought in cultural production.

⁹⁶ Simon Fowler, *101 Essential Chinese Movies* (Hong Kong: Earnshaw Books, 2010), 204-205.

⁹⁷ A Beijinger who remembered the popularity of the haircut in the late 1950s and early 1960s first brought this to my attention. Additionally, Sina bloggers have noted the popularity of the haircut at time. For example: http://blog.sina.com.cn/s/blog_4b6144ca0100ii34.html and http://blog.sina.com.cn/s/blog_4bcedc0b010009ze.html [Both last accessed August 20, 2014]

⁹⁸ Zhonggong zhongyang wenxian yanjiushi di er bian yanbu [CPC Literature Research Center Second Research Department], compiler., comp., *Gongheguo tiyu: 110 wei jianzhengzhe fangtan* [PRC Sport: 110 witness interviews] (Guiyang: Guizhou Renmin chubanshe, 2008), 88.

⁹⁹ Liang Mai, “Yi bu dianying, yi ge haoma, he yi ge guojia de nülan” [One movie, one number, and one national basketball girl], *Quanqiu tiyu shichang* [Global Sports Market], March 2009, no. 2. Cao was also chosen over at least one other potential athlete because she spoke with a standard Mandarin accent. Xiao Qiang, “Zhengzai paishe de ‘Nü lan wu hao’,” 24.

The film did receive some relatively minor criticism. Some apparently felt that the basketball team's lack of a Party representative did not reflect the Party's leadership; others believed that the film's focus on skills and technique indicated an air of "trophyism."¹⁰⁰ One critic complained that the clothing and some of the sets (such as the one of Lin Jie's house) tended to "beautify life" (*meihua shenghuo*) beyond reality,¹⁰¹ and also suggested wasteful spending in film production. But these were minor criticisms, and the film became a yardstick by which critics measured other *tiyu* films. Furthermore, the overall quality of the film and its strong socialist and patriotic messages meant that it was useful both domestically and internationally to project the importance of elite sport in overcoming humiliation and positioning China in the world. With backing from both Zhou Enlai and He Long, Xie Jin's first film continued on its path to success across the country.¹⁰² The film was also apparently widely played and well-received in Moscow.¹⁰³ In fact, Chinese leaders liked the film so much that it was often shown to visiting foreign delegations or shipped off to other countries for viewing. For example, it was sent to North Korea in October 1958 as part of "Chinese Film Week" during "DPRK-China Friendship

¹⁰⁰ Wang Yanyun, "Gongheguo chuqi dianying zhong de feidian xinghua xushi—yi 'Nü lan wu hao' zhong de Shanghai dianying chuantong weili," 144.

¹⁰¹ Ren Hui, "Cong 'nulan wuhao' xiangqi de yixie wenti" [Several issues (I've) thought of from 'Girl Basketball Player no. 5'], *Renmin ribao*, January 13, 1958. A rebuttal published the following month in *Renmin ribao* justified the spending by reiterating the film's main political messages.

¹⁰² Wang Yanyun, "Gongheguo chuqi dianying zhong de feidian xinghua xushi—yi 'Nü lan wu hao' zhong de Shanghai dianying chuantong weili," 144.

¹⁰³ "China and the World," *Peking Review*, June 10, 1958, 20.

Month”¹⁰⁴ and in 1963 it was one of a handful of films sent with the Chinese delegation to the Games of the New Emerging Forces held in Indonesia.¹⁰⁵

The political climate surrounding the anti-rightist movement and the beginning of the Great Leap Forward meant that not all films at the time were as well received as *Girl Basketball Player no. 5*; one film that received particularly harsh reviews was *Trouble on the Playground* (*Qiuchang fengbo*, black and white, Shanghai, 1957).¹⁰⁶ Instead of elite athletes and sports schools, this film follows the trials and tribulations of Zhao Hui and Qian Zhengming, young office workers at the Shanghai Medical Devices and Drug Supply Bureau who like to play basketball and are enthusiastic about starting a *tiyu* association in their work unit. Some of the workers are in poor health and *tiyu* enthusiasts suggest that exercise might help them. But their boss, Zhang Renjie [Figure 26], sees *tiyu* as a waste of time, with no benefit to his employees’ health (he prefers to treat ailments with medicine), and as even hazardous – he goes so far as having the outdoor *tiyu* training equipment, such as the parallel bars, plastered with signs that say “dangerous.”

Meanwhile, Zhao and Qian become acquainted with Lin Ruijuan, a female athlete worker at the People’s Bank and who is also head of that work unit’s *tiyu* association.

¹⁰⁴ “Zhong Chao renmin qingshen yihou: Chaoxian gedi relie qingzhu ‘Chao Zhong yuhao yue’” [The Chinese and Korean peoples’ friendship is thick: ‘North Korea-China Friendship Month’ celebrated throughout North Korea], *Renmin ribao*, October 19, 1958.

¹⁰⁵ Chinese Foreign Ministry Archives (CFMA) 105-01548-03: Peihe Xinyunhui fangying yingpian shi [Coordination for the GANEFO screening of films]. Telegram sent from the Chinese Foreign Ministry’s external cultural affairs bureau to the Chinese embassy in Indonesia. October 18, 1963.

¹⁰⁶ *Qiuchang fengbo* [Trouble on the Playground]. Directed by Mao Yu. Shanghai Haiyan Film Studio. 1957. Guangzhou: Guangdong dasheng wenhua chuanbo youxian gongsi, 2011. DVD.



Figure 26. Zhao Hui tries to convince Boss Zhang to improve the work unit's sports facilities. Scene from *Trouble on the Playground*.

When the Medical Devices and Drug Supply Bureau's basketball team is invited to play the People's Bank for the first time, it's obvious how much better the Bank's facilities and skills are because of the kind of support their worker-athletes receive from the *tiyu* association. Both men are attracted to Lin's athletic prowess – in one scene we see her in a swimming competition and in another practicing gymnastics – and even more interested in her when they find out that her father, Lin Yunwen, is a *tiyu* professor. In a twist of fate, Zhao and Qian are able to convince director Zhang of agreeing to a *tiyu* association when Zhang believes an important local superior

assumes the work unit already has one. Nevertheless, Zhang names himself leader of the association and reminds his workers that they are workers first and foremost and that this association is “not a sports school.” Little improves until Zhao convinces Lin Yunwen, the *tiyu* professor, to meet and speak with the boss about training and facilities. Zhang agrees to make improvements to training facilities, although this is largely because he is told that Lin Yunwen is also a representative of the sports committee, and Lin informs him that the work unit’s basketball team has chance of winning the championship [Figure 27]. In the final scene the Medical Devices and Drug Supply Bureau team beat the People’s Bank to win the basketball championship, largely thanks to Zhao’s last minute foul shots. Zhang pushes himself into a team photo after the game while Zhao escapes; instead we see him walking away with Lin Ruijuan. In short, the film is primarily about how optimistic, youth office workers and *tiyu* enthusiasts in urban Shanghai persevere in their efforts to establish a *tiyu* association in the face of continued difficulties from their older generation boss – portrayed as a non-believer in *tiyu*, a corrupt work unit leader, and a selfish man interested only in trophyism and personal glory.

Although *Trouble on the Playground* revealed what, according to some, may have been a common complaint from *tiyu* enthusiasts – that bosses did not always positively support the development of a *tiyu* association in the work unit¹⁰⁷ – it received particularly scathing reviews for being at best unconvincing and at worst promoting capitalism and individualism. One film critic stated that the movie was a

¹⁰⁷ Dong Zhangcheng, “Yi ge tiyu gongzuo zhe kan ‘Qiuchang fengbo’” [A *tiyu* worker watches ‘Trouble on the Playground’], *Xin tiyu*, May 6, 1958, 25.

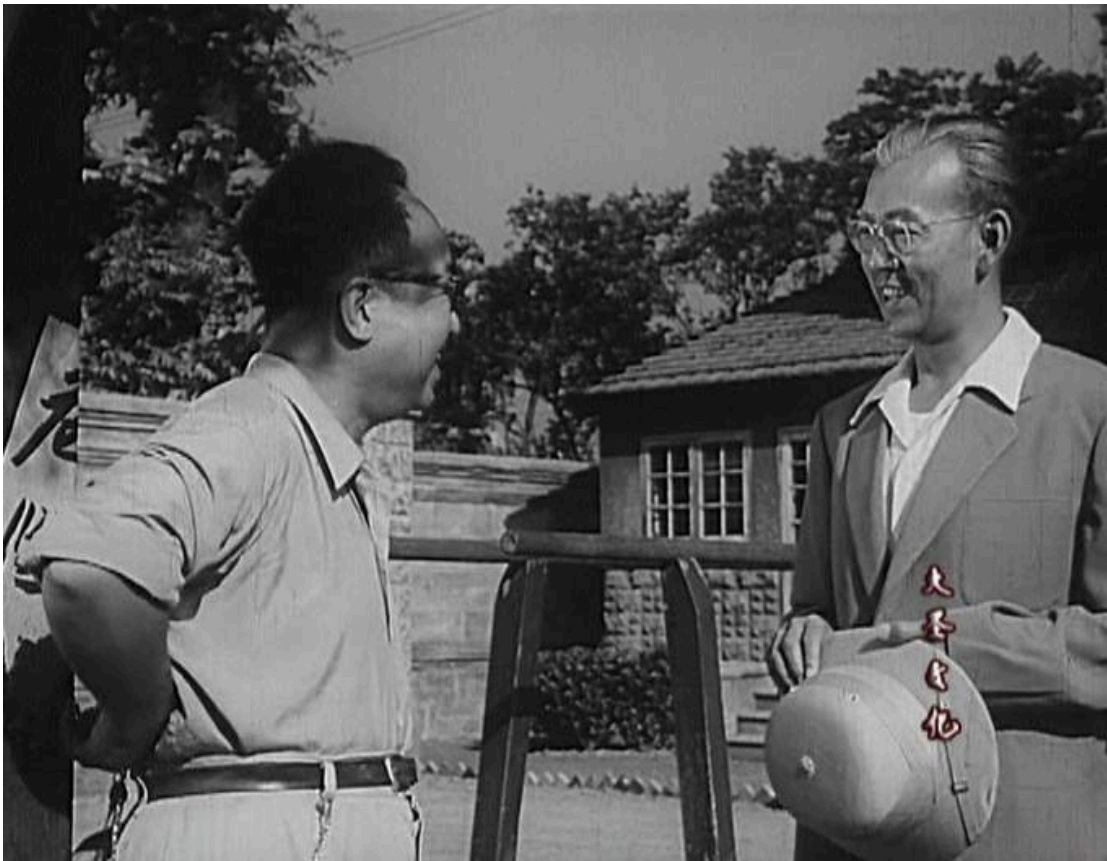


Figure 27. Boss Zhang leads Professor Lin Yunwen around the work unit sports grounds. Note that Boss Zhang is trying to cover up a sign that says “dangerous,” which he affixed to the sports equipment earlier in the film. Scene from *Trouble on the Playground*.

“failure or one could even say a vile (*elie*) film.”¹⁰⁸ The film not only lacked a clear, central theme and had a fragmented plot, but it also contained no real contradictions or conflict. Instead, the plot followed an “artificial” struggle between basketball team captain Zhao and director Zhang that led “from bureaucraticism to bureaucraticism”

¹⁰⁸ Lu Si, “Meiyou fengbo de ‘Qiuchang fengbo’” [No trouble in ‘Trouble on the Playground’], *Zhongguo dianying*, May 1958, 34.

and “from personal fame to personal fame”¹⁰⁹ – in other words, characters like Zhang had not learned from their misdoings. Furthermore, the political thought undergirding the situation remained unchanged at the end of the film. According to this critic, Zhang is satisfied with his continued role as a leader and with sports “trophyism,” while Zhao successfully woos his love interest. Both characters thus promote individualism and capitalist thought. After eight years under the Party’s leadership, education, and the changes in political thought that had taken place, such characters were simply not believable. Their relationships between each another remained unchanged and continued to resemble those of the hierarchical “old society” rather than those of equally footed “comrades” in “new society.”¹¹⁰ A *Xin tiyu* article written by a *tiyu* worker likewise found fault with the characters and claimed that the film “distorted reality.”¹¹¹ Although the film was moderately beneficial in showcasing the benefits of *tiyu* (such as improved health), it had too many shortcomings. The main fault was Boss Zhang, whose lack of enthusiasm for *tiyu* was entirely plausible, but whose behavior was erratic to the point of being laughable – in particular the scenes where he lies to his superiors about having already created a *tiyu* association when in fact he had not yet done so. And if Zhang is such a morally degenerate person in the revolutionary ranks, and one who should be castigated, it seemed unlikely that he should remain in a leadership position at the end or suddenly become an enthusiastic protector and participant in *tiyu*. On top of that, the actress playing Lin Rujian lacked

¹⁰⁹ Lu Si, “Meiyou fengbo de ‘Qiuchang fengbo’.”

¹¹⁰ Lu Si, “Meiyou fengbo de ‘Qiuchang fengbo’.”

¹¹¹ Dong Zhangcheng, “Yi ge tiyu gongzuoze kan ‘Qiuchang fengbo’.”

an athletic disposition and associated characteristics, and seemed “excessively delicate and weak.”¹¹² The film, this reviewer claimed, thus suffered from improbable characters that did not accurately reflect the real lives of *tiyu* workers and athletes. This reviewer hoped instead for more films like *Girl Basketball Player no. 5*.

Two subsequent *tiyu* films released in 1959, *Ice Sisters* (*Bingshang jiemei*, color, Changchun) and *Two Generations of Swimmers* (*Shuishang chunqiu*, color, Beijing),¹¹³ reflect changes that came with the height of the Great Leap Forward and changes in *tiyu* leading up to the 1959 National Games. Like *Girl Basketball Player no. 5*, the plots of these two films focused on elite athletes as the harbingers of national glory. They also continued to reiterate common socialist themes such as the importance of good sportsmanship and the collective, and (implicitly or explicitly) criticized the old regime. Unlike earlier *tiyu* films, however, the athletes in these are not just athletes – they are also workers and laborers who year-round spend their leisure time training in spare-time sports schools. In other words, elite athletes were not (and implicitly should not be) like Lin Xiaojie in ignoring their academic studies or other professional pursuits for the purposes of sport; likewise, workers were not (and should not be) limited to workplace *tiyu* associations and should be able to join spare-time sports schools. The line between what divided mass from elite *tiyu* is thus blurred in these films, as it was in Beijing and Shanghai leading up to the 1959

¹¹² Dong Zhangcheng, “Yi ge tiyu gongzuozhe kan ‘Qiuchang fengbo’.”

¹¹³ *Bingshang jiemei* [Ice Sisters], directed by Wu Zhaodi, Changchun, 1959, and *Shuishang chunqiu* [Two Generations of Swimmers], directed by Xie Tian, Beijing, 1959. Zhongguo aolinpike weiyuanhui chu pin, Guojia tiyu zongju tiyu wenhua fazhan zhongxin bianzhi, Zhongying yinxiang chubanshe chuban, 2008. DVD.

National Games. Athletes of all backgrounds had the chance to train with spare-time sports schools and, technically speaking, a possibility at national-level competitions.

The star of the film *Ice Sisters* [Figure 28] is textile factory worker and elite speed skater Ding Shuping, praised for her good sportsmanship in competition and her self-sacrifice. In the first scene of the film rookie skater Ding beats veteran speed skater Wang Dongyou in a provincial competition. Instead of congratulating Ding for her victory, Wang is clearly annoyed and shrugs her off in the locker room afterwards – the example of an older generation athlete who has still not reformed her thought properly. Furthermore, unlike Wang, Ding dedicates much of her spare time and energy to training Yu Liping, a speed skating fan with potential who joins their sports school. She also acts as a big sister to Yu – even taking care of her when Yu becomes ill and consoling her when the training regime gets tough. Meanwhile, as the athletes go through rigorous, year-round training, Wang criticizes Yu at every opportunity instead of encouraging her as Ding does. (In one particularly telling scene about the errors of individualism and self-sacrifice for the greater good, the school goes off for a hike in the mountains and Wang leaves the group to climb on her own. Ding follows her and pleads she not go alone, but Wang resists. A few seconds later Wang slips and falls, only to be caught by Ding who then takes the tumble herself and ends up in the hospital with a broken leg; it takes months for her to heal.) Ding's guidance and Yu Liping's adaptation to the strict discipline and hard work at the sports school pays off and in the final scene of the film she beats both Wang and Ding to win the national championship in the 3000-meter competition. Ding is nothing but proud of



Figure 28. Scenes from *Ice Sisters*. *Xin tiyu*, July 6, 1959.

Yu's victory and they share in the glory. The message is clear: working together to improve the sport is far more important for the socialist collective than an individual victory. The film was hailed for being "highly educational" and reflecting the new generation's "strong will and noble communist style" in both ice-skating as well as physical exercise more generally.¹¹⁴

Two Generations of Swimmers follows the very different trajectories of a father and his son in order to show the evils of old society and the vast improvements under the new regime. In the 1930s in the Chinese countryside, wealthy Chinese businessman Hua Qiye is being pulled along in a rickshaw when stumbles upon peasant fisherman Hua Zhenlong's rescue of a drowning boy one day. He convinces Hua to come to Tianjin to participate in swimming competitions with foreigners for money; the purpose of which we soon find out is primarily so that wealthy Chinese and foreigners can gamble. In the breaststroke competition, Hua surprises everyone by easily beating the (white and clearly well-off) foreign athletes. However, he then only narrowly escapes being beaten up by thugs – who are sent by gamblers who had bet against him, and bet for the foreign athletes – thanks to some kind-hearted local university students who tell him that "one day China will change." Furthermore, despite his success, Hua continues an impoverished existence with his wife and their infant son.

Years later, following the end of the war with Japan when national competitions have resumed, Hua decides on his own to go to Tianjin and participate in another

¹¹⁴ Yu Ce, "Xin de tical, xie de renwu—yingpian 'bing shang jiemei' guanhou" [New themes, new characters – view on the film 'Ice Sisters'], *Renmin ribao*, March 12, 1960.

competition. This time he is unable to even participate when the lackeys of a wealthy Chinese athlete meet Hua at the entrance of the competition venue and lock him up for the night. In short, above all else, Hua's status in pre-Liberation society hinders his ability to become an elite athlete. After Liberation, in sharp contrast, one of the former college students he met in the 1930s becomes an official and invites Hua to help run a youth spare-time sports school and serve as a swimming coach. Hua at first scoffs at the prospect, "Me? Run a school?" he asks surprised, "You're just joking!" After all, he points out, "I am not cultured (*meiyou wenhua*)!" Nevertheless, Hua soon becomes a popular swimming coach at the school and begins to lead a professional life and more comfortable lifestyle; at one point we see that his wife is even learning how to read and write. The audience is thus explicitly shown how life in post-Liberation society is materially better than it was under the Guomindang.

Another major theme is that youth who work hard, are disciplined, and show dedication to their sport will ultimately succeed in even the (seemingly) loftiest of goals. Hua's son Xiao Long, also a swimmer under his father's tutelage, trains hard and breaks the national record in breaststroke. He then decides, however, that his real aim is the world record and, in addition to his stepping up his normal training sessions with his father that include jogging, cycling, and more dry land practice [Figure 29], Xiao Long also starts secretly adding weight-training sessions at night. His fellow athlete and friend Zhou Huiliang, also a top swimmer, trains alongside and encourages Xiao Long. In the final scene this hard work and camaraderie pays off as



Figure 29. Swimmers at the spare-time sports school crawl across the floor in dry land practice. Scene from *Two Generations of Swimmers*.

both compete in the 100-meter breaststroke and break the world record with Xiao Long barely edging out Zhou for the win. Zhou is not jealous: he has sacrificed his own hard work for the greater good and, together, they happily celebrate their hard work as the film comes to a close.

While *tiyu* films introduced audiences to the recently established spare-time sports schools and the kinds of training activities there within, both *Ice Sisters* and *Two Generations of Swimmers* also reflected major changes taking place in both *tiyu* and society as a whole in 1959. Spare-time sports schools, launched in 1956 and 1957,

proliferated during the Great Leap Forward, especially in the year leading up to the first National Games in October 1959. Sprinkled throughout these two films are lively scenes full of athletes, mostly workers and students from a variety of backgrounds, voluntarily and enthusiastically spending their leisure time on dedicated training in such schools. Additionally, the influence of the *laoweizhi*, while never explicitly mentioned, is omnipresent as all athletes participate in a variety of year-round activities that constitute a well-rounded athletic body. In *Ice Sisters*, Ding Shuping and Wang Dongyan are textile factory workers who balance work with year-round intense training at a school that includes a variety of sports disciplines [Figure 30]. Likewise, the swimmers in *Two Generations of Swimmers* include the swimmer-peasant-turned-coach Hua Zhenlong, as well as his son and friends, who are engineering students and work in a local factory. In both films, spare-time school athletes participate in off-season training and a diverse set of activities that includes calisthenics, weight room and dry land training, jogging, cycling, and even *taiji*.

Produced and released at the height of the Leap, there are several other characteristics about these films that make them stand out as products of these specific years. Reflecting the long-term goals announced with the ten-year plan, in both these films the athletes not only strive towards breaking national and world records in their disciplines, they accomplish this feat in the final scenes. When Xiao Long creates a new national record in the breaststroke, it's not good enough for him or his father – he must strive to break the world record and show that Chinese athletes



Figure 30. Ding Shuping discusses fabric designs with her factory co-workers. Ding is second from right. Scene from *Ice Sisters*.

are no longer lagging behind in sport, but rather are making great strides towards accomplishing national goals. Furthermore, *Two Generations of Swimmers* includes scenes where these urban-based athletes visit villages in the countryside and learn how to fish and work in the fields; they even hold a swimming exhibition for the peasants in the local, very primitive-looking, pool [Figure 31]. Like other films of the period, there is also a musical element that smacks of the Great Leap Forward's revolutionary and patriotic tone. Two athletes cheerily sing about labor while on a rural fishing boat in one scene; in another, several teammates gather around a piano



Figure 31. Swimmers host an exhibition for a rural audience. Scene from *Two Generations of Swimmers*.

and happily sing, “We are swimmers, under the red flag we exercise and grow...and strive for greater glory for the motherland [Figure 32].”¹¹⁵ The strong messages of patriotism in this film and *Ice Sisters* also helped propel their long-term popularity for official use: along with *Girl Basketball Player no. 5*, both were selected to be sent with the Chinese delegation to the Games of the New Emerging Forces held in Jakarta in 1963,¹¹⁶ and were included as part of a DVD set of Chinese sports films produced in 2008 in the lead-up to the Beijing Olympics.¹¹⁷

¹¹⁵ “Women shi shuishang de yundongyuan, zai hongqixia duanlian chengchang... weizuguo zhengqu genda de rongguang.”

¹¹⁶ CFMA 105-01548-03: Peihe Xinyunhui fangying yingpian shi [Coordination for the GANEFO screening of films]. Telegram sent from the Chinese Foreign Ministry’s external cultural affairs bureau to the Chinese embassy in Indonesia. October 18, 1963.

¹¹⁷ Zhongguo aolinpike weiyuanhui chu pin, Guojia tiyu zongju tiyu wenhua fazhan zhongxin bianzhi, Zhongying yinxiang chubanshe chuban [Chinese Olympic Committee publisher, State Sports Commission Sports Cultural Development Center compilers, China Film and Audiovisual publishing



Figure 32. Athletes gather around a piano and sing. The lyric displayed here, “We are swimmers,” presumably invited the film audience to sing along. Scene from *Two Generations of Swimmers*.

Not to be left out of the mix, national defense sports also got their own film produced during the height of the Great Leap Forward, the feature film *Female Paratroopers* (*Bikong yinhua*, 1960, color, Xi’an).¹¹⁸ Parachuting was one of the more popular national defense sports, particularly because Chinese women did so well in international sports competitions held with other socialist bloc countries – in

house], *Zhongguo tiyu dianying jingxuan* [Selected Chinese *tiyu* films]: *The Best of Chinese Sports Movies*, July 2008. The English title on the box differs from the Chinese one. I believe “selected” is a better translation for *jingxuan* than “best,” although the compilers’ choice in choosing “best” is very telling and probably does reflect their decision to choose these specific films in 2008.

¹¹⁸ *Bikong yinhua* [Paratroopers]. Directed by Sang Fu. Xi’an Film Studio, 1960. Accessed November 26, 2014. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kJRTP4nS8J0>

1958 three female parachuting athletes set a new world record in the 1000-meter collective base jump event.¹¹⁹ The film plot centers on several female athletes at a sports school, including Bai Ying, who is overly individualistic in her training and disliked by her fellow athletes, and Lin Ping, who is well liked because she always makes decisions for the collective good. In the climactic scene, the athletes are called to help put out a grasslands fire and the parachutes of Lin and Bai get wrapped together midair. Instead of both risking the consequences, Lin cuts her own parachute and lands in the fire. Visiting Lin afterwards in the hospital, Bai admits her mistakes, and together with the other athletes they break the women's world record in a competition. The film thus portrays Lin, and most of the female athletes at the sports school, as admirable not only for their athletic skills and working for the collective good, but also for their courage and bravery in the face of disaster. The film's main message of overcoming individualism and working for the collective does not differ from other sports films in these years, and it did not receive any notable criticism at the time.¹²⁰ National defense sports remained popular for a few years, and there was a film on female pilots produced in 1966 and based on the People Liberation Army's stage production of the same name,¹²¹ but they fell out of fashion after the Cultural Revolution and so did the related films. However, the focus of *Female Paratroopers*

¹¹⁹ The three athletes were prominently featured on the front cover of *Xin tiyu*'s October 21, 1958 issue (front cover caption noting their world record on page 34 of the same issue).

¹²⁰ An article in *Renmin ribao* praised the film's premise and plot, but noted also that, "Bai Ying's process of ideological transformation was somewhat simple." Xu Wen, "Zai chunfeng zhong chengzhang – kan yingpian bikong yinhua" [Growth in the spring – watch the film *Female Paratroopers*], March 22, 1960.

¹²¹ This was the film *Nü feixingyuan* [Female pilots] (color, Beijing, 1966). As it was produced closer to the Cultural Revolution, there's also a much deeper concern for the class background of each of the characters and for studying Mao Zedong Thought.

on developing paramilitary skills, and risking one's own well being for the greater collective, fell perfectly in line with the "everyone a soldier" movement during the Great Leap Forward.

Conclusion

Already before the National Games took place there were signs that the Great Leap Forward policies were in trouble. General Peng Dehuai voiced criticisms of agricultural problems in summer 1959 at the Lushan conference, a move that backfired when Mao decided instead to remove Peng and march on with the campaign. More than another year passed, however, before other top leaders stepped in to halt the Great Leap policies, assess the magnitude of damage, and begin damage control.

In the meantime, competitive sports activities reached a height with the 1959 National Games, to which they would never fully return to after the Great Leap Forward ended. As Chapter 3 indicated, the basis for many sports programs existed prior to the campaign, and as the following chapter will show they continued to exist after it ended. But never again would more than 10,000 athletes have the opportunity to participate in a large-scale nationwide athletic meet. Of broader significance, as the next chapter explains, never again would training in competitive sports programs be open to such widespread participation. During the Great Leap Forward, inclusion – in this case maximizing the number of participants who could compete – took precedence over everything else.

At the same time, the buildup to the National Games emerged from the state's interest in creating new national records and eventually enabling Chinese athletes to compete at world levels in all sports. Training competitive athletes also probably grew out of a desire among top sports leaders eventually to compete with and surpass Soviet athletes, although this was left largely unspoken in the public record at the time. In order to reach such lofty goals, all potential athletes had to be trained and to work towards breaking records.

Finally, in these years the production of popular culture surrounding *tiyu* grew in importance, especially in film. This cultural production sought to build enthusiasm and support in the population, as well as teach the average citizen about the importance of sport, and especially of competitive athletes, to Chinese socialist society. These films displayed to wider audiences the structures and activities of sports schools, athletic training, and competitions, and they focused primarily on youth. The importance of developing competitive athletes, when combined with the desire to intensely train them to reach world levels in all sport (and as the ten-year plan indicated, to produce winners) and simultaneously shape them into patriotic models, reached its peak during the Great Leap Forward and has remained a key feature of PRC sport up until the present.

Chapter 5

“Onward! No Retreat!”: Building International Community through Elite Sport and the Games of the New Emerging Forces

In 1961, the Chinese sports world faced a challenge originating far from the playing fields. At the Lushan conference held in July 1959, General Peng Dehuai and other top leaders had attempted to offer criticism regarding major economic and agricultural problems associated with the Great Leap Forward. Mao Zedong took the criticism as a direct challenge to his leadership and, after purging Peng, decided to push forward with the Great Leap policies and program. Not until the ninth CCP Central Committee plenum held in January 1961, following another disastrous year, did he begin to acknowledge the seriousness of the situation – the result of which was widespread famine in the years 1959-1961.¹ After the plenum, Mao retreated from daily decision-making for about a year and a half as central leadership, under the direction of Liu Shaoqi, Deng Xiaoping, and Zhou Enlai, worked quickly to restabilize the economy and reverse the damage by introducing more pragmatic rural policies.² This primarily entailed rolling back to policies of the early 1950s and the First Five-Year Plan, along with major budget and program cuts across Chinese society. Thus in 1961 *tiyu* leaders braced for an intense period of reflection, reorganization, and evaluation at all levels to determine which programs and athletes would continue to receive precious state resources.

¹ Lorenz Lüthi, *The Sino-Soviet Split: Cold War in the Communist World* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2008), 196-197; Roderick MacFarquhar, *The Origins of the Cultural Revolution, Vol. 3: The Coming of the Cataclysm 1961-1966* (London: Oxford University Press, 1997), 12-13.

² Lüthi, *The Sino-Soviet Split*, 196.

The adjusted domestic policies also contributed to major changes in foreign policy in 1962.³ Mao's retreat, followed by the official end of the Sino-Soviet alliance in 1962, opened up a space for Liu, Zhou, and other central leaders to work on developing a more pragmatic (and stable) foreign policy that also worked to forge new sets of foreign relations. The result was subdued relations with the socialist bloc and Soviet-friendly countries, and far more interaction with recently decolonized African and Asian nations than in previous years.

What emerged in the wake of these changes in the athletic realm was a very clear divide between elite sport and mass *tiyu* activities. Massive budget cuts led to a need for consolidation at all levels, but *tiyu* leaders in the central government, under the direction of Liu Shaoqi and Zhou Enlai, decided to allocate limited financial resources almost exclusively to elite programs. The very best elite athletes served an important role of representing China internationally, as they had done already for several decades. Elite athletics also contributed, as delegation visits with the Soviet-led socialist bloc showed, to larger foreign policy and diplomatic efforts. Meanwhile, mass *tiyu* activities became increasingly decentralized, with local resources geared primarily towards national defense *tiyu* and militia training (*minbing xunlian*). The number of international exchanges and elite athletes decreased in 1962 as compared to previous years, but now only the best athletes – essentially only those who

³ Niu Jun, "1962: The Eve of the Left Turn in China's Foreign Policy," Working Paper #48, Cold War International History Project (October 2005), 35-36. Available online at <http://www.wilsoncenter.org/sites/default/files/NiuJunWP481.pdf> [Last accessed November 24, 2014].

consistently broke national and international records – and the most important sports leaders received the resources to participate in such exchanges.

Despite domestic financial hardship, the role of elite athletes grew in importance during these years as PRC leaders sought to use sports delegation visits as a method of establishing and exercising socialist influence in Asian and African countries. Such was the case, for example, with the ping-pong delegation's visit to several African countries in mid-1962. The leadership also exercised powerful influence in elite international sport beginning with the Asian Games held in August 1962. In fact, the PRC did not send athletes to these Games, since it was still not a member of the Asian Games Federation, but PRC leaders exerted pressure on Indonesian leaders resulting in Indonesia's denial of entry cards to athletes from Taiwan (ROC). Subsequently, China and Indonesia teamed up to establish the Games of the New Emerging Forces (GANEFO). The first GANEFO, held in 1963, was a large-scale sports competition like the Olympics, but geared towards Afro-Asian and nonaligned nations. After examining the post-Great Leap retrenchment in sport, this chapter concludes with a case study of these Games, and the subsequent establishment of a permanent GANEFO organization, as the culmination of PRC involvement in the larger Afro-Asian project.

Recovery, Evaluation, and Refocusing: *Tiyu* 1961-62

In the summer of 1961 Liu Shaoqi, summarizing the failures of the Great Leap Forward, stated that there had been a “disregard for the investigation and study of

objective reality”⁴ and that in some cases the Chinese had even repeated the same mistakes as the Soviets.⁵ Liu and others began to advocate more pragmatic policies aimed at economic recovery and stability, and by early 1962 these policies had reached Chinese *tiyu* leaders. The State Sports Commission announced in March 1962 that the goals presented in the 1958 ten-year plan were simply unrealistic and that *tiyu* programs had to be scaled back.⁶ The main problem, according to the Commission’s report, was that too many developments had taken place too quickly, without taking into consideration the economic situation. Furthermore, not enough emphasis had been placed on an understanding of basic sports principles, and training had taken place with neither a good understanding of objective laws nor a realistic approach.⁷

The Commission noted that one of the consequences had been the poor supervision of athletes, which had led to injuries and accidents. A 1961 survey on “outstanding athletes” claimed that of the 8,623 athletes surveyed, about 45 percent had sustained some level of injury.⁸ Speaking several decades later, Huang Xinhe, a former national gymnastics champion, noted in an interview that she had suffered from a serious head injury in training a week prior to the 1959 National Games.

⁴ Liu Shaoqi, “Address at the Meeting in Celebration of the 40th Anniversary of the Founding of the CCP” (June 30, 1961), in Liu Shaoqi, *Collected Works of Liu Shaoqi*, vol. 3 (Kowloon, Hong Kong: Union Research Institute, 1968), 142. As quoted in Lüthi, *The Sino-Soviet Split*, 197.

⁵ Lorenz Lüthi, *The Sino-Soviet Split*, 197.

⁶ “1961 nian quanguo tiyu gongzuo huiyi jiyao (zhailu) (guojia tiwei 1962 nian 3 yue 9 ri xiafa) [1961 National *tiyu* work meeting report (excerpts) (issued by the State Sports Commission March 9, 1962)]” in *Tiyu yundong wenjian xuanbian 1949-1981*, comp. Guojia tiwei zhengce yanjiushi (Renmin tiyu chubanshe: Beijing, 1982), 59.

⁷ “1961 nian quanguo tiyu gongzuo huiyi jiyao,” 59.

⁸ “1961 nian quanguo tiyu gongzuo huiyi jiyao,” 60.

Released from the hospital just three days before they began, she claims she “forgot both the pain and the danger and concentrated on the competition.”⁹ As previous chapters have noted, athletes in the early PRC often spoke of having overcome difficulties in order to succeed. Huang’s example, however, sheds light on the extent to which athletes were expected or willing to sacrifice their physical health in order for the National Games – the culmination of Great Leap Forward policies in competitive sport – to succeed.

The State Sports Commission’s first recommendations for solving these problems followed that of the general central leadership: a more pragmatic approach to stabilize activities. This included consolidating all *tiyu* activities and scaling back existing programs in high-level competitive sport, in addition to large-scale international and domestic competitive activities, in order to “rest and reorganize.”¹⁰ The overall numbers of competitive athletes were also to be reduced, and only athletes in national, provincial, municipal or autonomous region training programs would continue to receive training supported by state funds. As in the nationwide ten-year plan, certain sports – track and field, gymnastics, swimming, soccer, basketball, volleyball, ping-pong, shooting, weightlifting and speed skating – were prioritized over others. In some cases, such as ping-pong, shooting, speed skating, and

⁹ Quoted in Dong Jinxia, *Women, Sport, and Society in Modern China: Holding up More Than Half the Sky* (London; Portland, OR: Frank Cass, 2003), 64. Dong interviewed Huang in 1995. In 1959 Huang won the gymnastics floor exercise and placed fourth overall at the National Games. She also had a knee operation she claimed resulted from overtraining. It’s hard to tell here the extent to which she’s being critical of the government programs or just highlighting her own heroism, especially since overtraining was pervasive at the time and “overcoming difficulties” (*kefu kunnan*) was a common theme.

¹⁰ “1961 nian quanguo tiyu gongzuo huiyi jiyao,” 61.

weightlifting, Chinese athletes had already done well internationally and the Commission decided that athletes in these sports were worthy of their own dedicated training facilities.¹¹

The official work meeting report stated that leaders had already begun to scale back on *tiyu* facilities. Between 1957 and 1960, the report noted, the number of *tiyu* institutions (e.g., research institutes and national-level sports schools) had increased from six to twenty-nine, but by 1961 there were only twenty. Likewise, only 500 national defense clubs now existed whereas during the Great Leap Forward there had been an increase from 174 to 1,408. The report recommended decreasing the number of competitive activities as well, stating that there had been too many large-scale competitions held in the past at all levels (provincial, municipal, clubs).¹² According to recent research by sports scholar Dong Jinxia, the result of these new policies was an overall decline in national competitions. Some spare-time sports schools and research institutes discontinued training and then disappeared altogether.¹³

Since the very best athletes would now be the only ones receiving state funds, more attention could be paid to training them better. The Commission called for more “practical” and “scientific” training plans, especially to address the previous issues of

¹¹ This sort of consolidation meant that the best athletes would go to training facilities designed exclusively for them, thereby eliminating the need for each facility to have its own coaches and equipment in multiple sports.

¹² “1961 nian quanguo tiyu gongzuo huiyi jiyao,” 70.

¹³ Dong, *Women, Sport and Society in Modern China*, 61. Her source is a statistical collection I have been unable thus far to track down: Zhonghua renmin gongheguo guojia tiyu yundong weiyuanhui [State Sports Commission of the PRC], *Quanguo tiyu shiye tongji ziliao huibian* [Collection of Statistical Information on Sport in China] (1949-1978) (Beijing: Renmin tiyu chubanshe, 1979), op. Cit. 105. This is the case with several of Dong’s sources, some of which are unpublished. Dong is a prestigious professor at Beida and her husband is vice-president at Beijing Sport University.

poor training methods, overtraining, and injury. It also issued an explicit statement, to be applied nationwide, that injured athletes needed to rest and recover before returning to their normal training.¹⁴

Official publications reflected these central mandated changes by decreasing in volume and shifting their focus away from encouraging ordinary citizens to participate in competitive sport.¹⁵ The magazine's coverage of competitive sport continued to extend to elite athletes, but articles no longer encouraged ordinary citizens to participate in competitive sport. In fact, mass *tiyu* seemed to be limited in many issues to photographs of average people engaged either in simple and inexpensive activities that required little or no equipment, such as broadcast calisthenics, jump rope, ping-pong, swimming in lakes, and *taijiquan* (shadowboxing), or national defense, militarized *tiyu* activities. Often these two different kinds of mass activities would be juxtaposed in the same issue. In the January 1962 issue, for example, an article on different kinds of airplane modeling¹⁶ immediately precedes a page with photographs of women from the Changchun Chemical Pharmaceutical Factory playing shuttlecock and jumping rope.¹⁷ The July 1962 issue included three photographs in the inside front cover from the first Shandong photographic art

¹⁴ “1961 nian quanguo tiyu gongzuo huiyi jiyao,” 61.

¹⁵ *Xin tiyu*, for example, which during the Great Leap Forward had published issues of at least 30 pages twice per month, was scaled back to 24 pages per issue in the first half of 1962; by May the magazine was again up to 32 pages, but by July it had become a monthly (as it had been prior to the Great Leap Forward). Zhongguo tiyu nianjian bianji weiyuanhui, ed., *Zhongguo tiyu nianjian 1949-1962* [China Sports Yearbook 1949-1962] (Beijing: Renmin tiyu chubanse, 1964), 1896.

¹⁶ Wei Feng and Han Binxiu, “Fengfu duocai de hangkong moxing yundong” [A variety of sport model airplanes], *Xin tiyu*, January 1962, 11-12.

¹⁷ “Changchun huaxue zhiyaochang jianchi kaizhan tiyu huodong [Changchun Chemical Pharmaceutical Factory starts sports],” *Xin tiyu*, January 1962, photographs appear immediately after page 12.

exhibition of children titled “architects of tomorrow’s airplanes,” “small airplane model enthusiast,” and “radio transmitter enthusiast” respectively [Figure 33], while a photograph in the inside back cover of the same issue shows people swimming in Kunming’s Cuihu Lake.¹⁸ The message was clear: there was little to no state-sponsored financial support for the average person to participate in *tiyu* activities – unless those activities were paramilitary and related to national defense.

At the municipal level, there were also concerted efforts to decentralize most *tiyu* activities and tone down competitive sport for the masses while reserving and improving it for an elite few. Following national recommendations, the Beijing municipal *tiwei* report in July 1962 called for more emphasis in elite sport on planned and “scientific” training, an area that had already seen some recent improvements.¹⁹ This included placing more value on research theories, cadre training, finding coaches who specialized in the training of specific sports, and collecting “scientific research” (presumably information on actual sports performance) in order to compile “experiential summaries.”²⁰ But even if such changes could be made, gymnastics coaches, athletes, and referees complained to the *tiwei* about the poor quality of equipment, such as that used in the national competition held in Beijing earlier in the year.²¹ Thus, even though the emphasis on improving competitive sport now only

¹⁸ “Cuihu xishui” [Cuihu swimming], *Xin tiyu*, July 1962, inside back cover.

¹⁹ BMA 185-001-00049: Beijingshi tiyu gongzuozhe daibiao dahui wenjian zhisan: guanyu Beijingshi tiyu gongzuo baogao [Beijing *tiyu* workers representative conference documents: Beijing *tiyu* work report], July 26, 1962.

²⁰ BMA 185-001-00049: Beijingshi tiyu gongzuozhe daibiao dahui wenjian zhisan: guanyu Beijingshi tiyu gongzuo baogao.

²¹ BMA, 185-001-00052: Shi tiwei: gongzuo jianbao [Municipal *tiwei*: work report], #31, May 27, 1962.



Figure 33. “Selected works from Shandong’s First Photographic Art Exhibition.” *Xin tiyu*, 1962.

applied to an elite few, the scarcity of resources continued to an issue in competitive sport.

In Beijing, larger organizational and directional changes also took place alongside efforts to decentralize and scale back on competitive sports activities for the masses. The *tiwei* held a meeting in July 1962 in which members discussed the organization as a whole, including its constitution and membership procedures. After reasserting that the *tiwei* was a “mass amateur *tiyu* organization” participants proposed opening membership to “all *tiyu* workers...and all *tiyu* enthusiasts” in the city.²² A summary report produced at the same meeting also stated that efforts to “strike a balance between work and rest” – that is, focus less on competitive sports activities and give workers more time to rest – had already begun in mid-1961 at all levels of work units and would continue. The report noted that one of the problems in previous years, especially 1958 and 1959, was that the focus had been too much on training athletes for the National Games at the expense of the national economy; in other words, production had suffered from too much emphasis on competitive sport [*jingsai tiyu*].²³ Officials still encouraged work units to hold small-scale *tiyu* activities and a few small competitions, but these were not to “consume a lot of [people’s] strength and power.”²⁴ In other words, competitive sport for the average person was

²² BMA 185-001-00049: Guanyu Beijingshi tiyu fenhui zuzhi tiaolie (cao’an) de shuoming [Instructions concerning Beijing *tiyu* branch organization regulations (draft)], July 26, 1962.

²³ BMA 185-001-00049: Beijingshi tiyu gongzuozhe daibiao dahui wenjian zhisan: guanyu Beijingshi tiyu gongzuo baogao.

²⁴ BMA 185-001-00049: Beijingshi tiyu gongzuozhe daibiao dahui wenjian zhisan: guanyu Beijingshi tiyu gongzuo baogao.

now going to be paid for and rely on local support, so it should not necessarily be discouraged – but neither should it be hyped up as it was during the Great Leap Forward or place a strain on important economic and financial resources.

National defense *tiyu* activities for the masses increased at the municipal level. The November 1962 issue of *Xin tiyu* included three photographs in the inside back cover of Shenyang aviation club parachuting athletes, along with a caption stating that the club had already trained more than 1,500 workers, students, and government cadres to parachute in a short period of time. The caption also claimed that these athletes had, through learning how to parachute, cultivated a “courageous, determined, calm, and firm spirit.”²⁵ At the July 1962 *tiwei* meeting in Beijing, officials praised the development of national defense *tiyu* activities that had taken place in 1961 and encouraged more of the same, albeit with better management. Such activities, they claimed, were beneficial for educating the masses, and especially children, in patriotism and internationalism, as well as providing them with military skills that would increase their “sense of national defense” (*guofang guannian*) and cultivate them into “national defense reserve forces” (*guofang houbai de lilian*).²⁶

National defense activities, however, were not simple and cheap like other activities, as they required both appropriate equipment and management. A survey of municipal national defense clubs in Beijing from December 1961 listed an existing

²⁵ “Shenyangshi hangkong julebu” [Shenyang aviation club], *Xin tiyu*, November 1962, inside back cover.

²⁶ BMA 185-001-00049: Beijingshi tiyu gongzuozhe daibiao dahui wenjian zhisan: guanyu Beijingshi tiyu gongzuo baogao.

stock of aviation, shooting, and naval equipment left over from previous years,²⁷ but municipal leaders complained about a lack of management and specialists knowledgeable about the equipment. Earlier that year the municipal *tiwei* had started an equipment management registration system for some items, such as small-caliber rifles, which the security bureau monitored. Other equipment, however, such as 140 motor vehicles, remained in a state of disrepair because many clubs simply lacked the personnel to fix them. The *tiwei* promised to immediately begin creating a better system for managing equipment and related state assets (*guojia zicai*).²⁸

Leaders of the State Sports Commission and the Beijing *tiwei* also made efforts to minimize their workloads by entrusting individual work units with responsibility for activities or finances. Speaking at a January forum in Beijing about winter break activities for children, Li Da from the State Sports Commission called for activities that would provide safety, reduce the burden on parents, and “maintain societal order” (*weihu shehui zhixu*).²⁹ These activities were to be small-scale, dispersed, close by, and last only a short period of time, with a focus on balancing work and rest. Li stated that *tiyu* competitions were good for cultivating a “spirit of

²⁷ BMA 185-001-00051: Shi tiwei: gongzuo jianbao [Municipal *tiwei*: work report] #1: Guofang tiyu qicai guanli gongzuo qingkuang [National defense *tiyu* management work], December 9, 1961, 1. This includes a very long list of equipment, for example: 2,125 small-caliber rifles, 178 motorcycles, and 455 parachutes. On p. 2 the report states that some of the above had been bought before 1959 – some purchased and some appropriated by the State Sports Commission and by the army units (*budui*). After 1960, the municipal *tiwei* had bought some of it and the remaining had been allocated at no cost from the State Sports Commission and the army troops (*jundui*).

²⁸ BMA 185-001-00051: Shi tiwei: gongzuo jianbao #1. The work report also criticized work units with clubs for not having “serious control” over motor vehicles, which had led to crashes and injuries. It also claimed that some club members had used personal relations and the motor club’s gasoline to buy things from other work units.

²⁹ BMA 185-001-00051: Shi tiwei: gongzuo jianbao [Municipal *tiwei*: work report] #4, January 15, 1962.

victory” but they should also remain small in size. None of this was to be managed by the State Sports Commission, but the Beijing *tiwei* promised to immediately organize some activities with every club and sports venue.³⁰

Large-scale mass *tiyu* activities, which were less frequent and often coincided with holidays or celebrations, also focused on national defense activities. In March, the city’s rifle club held activities to celebrate International Women’s Day.³¹ As part of the May Fourth festival about 35,000 people, including Zhu De, showed up at the airport to watch the city-sponsored air show.³² These kinds of events, though far less grandiose than the earlier National Games, clearly show the direction that mass *tiyu* was headed: if the government paid for it, then it was likely some form of paramilitary activity. No longer would anyone, including the municipal *tiyu* committee, be held responsible for the long-term training of ordinary citizens in a myriad of sports disciplines. Mass *tiyu* would include some non-militarized, small-scale activities that were inexpensive (e.g., broadcast calisthenics) and sponsored at the work unit level (e.g., basketball) and which did not consume state resources. However, state-sponsored mass *tiyu* focused on building a nationwide people’s militia through national defense activities, while elite athletes – an increasingly smaller cadre of only the very best – served a different purpose altogether.

Bandung, Chinese Socialism, and Elite Competitive Sport

³⁰ BMA, 185-001-00051: Shi tiwei: gongzuo jianbao #4.

³¹ BMA 185-001-00052: Shi tiwei: gongzuo jianbao [Municipal *tiwei*: work report] #22, March 14, 1962.

³² BMA 185-001-00052: Shi tiwei: gongzuo jianbao [Municipal *tiwei*: work report] #30, May 14, 1962.

By the early 1960s, elite athletes in China had already represented the nation on the world stage for several decades. Athletes served particularly important roles in the early PRC, as previous chapters have noted, through their participation in friendly delegation visits and competitions primarily with the Soviet Union and the Eastern bloc. As Sino-Soviet relations deteriorated in the second half of the 1950s, elite sport played an increasingly crucial role in Chinese efforts to get more involved in the burgeoning Afro-Asian, Third World-led movements. Chinese leaders had come to believe that China, as the greatest underdeveloped nation in the world and having already gone through a social revolution, should lead the rest of the world's revolutionary movements.³³ Elite sport became a way for Chinese leaders to demonstrate this by competing with the Soviet Union for socialist influence in African and Asian countries, using sport to build a new kind of international socialist community.

The idea for this new international community can be traced to the Bandung conference held in Indonesia in April 1955. More than two-dozen national leaders, including Zhou Enlai, convened at Bandung to discuss future economic and cultural cooperation, united on the basis of a common opposition to colonialism and imperialism.³⁴ Those who called for the Bandung Conference, including Indian Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru and Indonesian President Sukarno, were interested in looking for ways to unify and represent the interests of decolonized nations in an

³³ Franz Schurmann, *Ideology and Organization in Communist China* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1968), 29, 37-43.

³⁴ For more on Bandung, see the chapter titled "Bandung" in Vijay Prashad, *The Darker Nations: A People's History of the Third World* (New York: New Press, 2007), 31-50, and Antonia Finnane and Douglas McDougall, eds., *Bandung 1955: Little Histories* (Victoria: Monash University Press, 2010).

increasingly polarized political situation. Conference participants unified around general themes expressed through a common repertoire of terms, such as “peaceful coexistence,” Afro-Asian solidarity, and the shared struggles against colonialism and imperialism. In a memorable speech, Zhou Enlai praised the goals of the conference and called for Asians and Africans to “rise against colonialism” and unite for “peace and independence.”³⁵

The Bandung Conference is often considered the beginning of the Afro-Asian and nonaligned movements, or the Third World project,³⁶ as it took place in the context of massive decolonization and the rise of anti-colonial nationalist movements. Positioned between the end of European imperialism and the height of the Cold War, the Bandung meeting became an important turning point between colonial and post-colonial periods.³⁷ Despite political differences among some participants, Bandung resulted in a kind of political and moral solidarity³⁸ that one scholar has described as a “community of feeling.”³⁹ Sentimental rather than geopolitical in nature, this community united on “a shared experience of western imperialism,” with the goal to produce “a distinct, even utopian alternative to the preceding era through a discourse of Afro-Asian solidarity.”⁴⁰ The conference offered leaders a venue to discuss

³⁵ Chou En-lai, “Main Speech by Premier Chou En-lai, Head of the Delegation of the People’s Republic of China, Distributed at the Plenary Session of the Asian-African Conference,” in *China and the Asian-African Conference: Documents* (Peking: Foreign Languages Press, 1955), 10, 19.

³⁶ Prashad, *The Darker Nations*, 1.

³⁷ MacFarquhar, *The Origins of the Cultural Revolution, Vol. 3*, 12–13.

³⁸ Odd Arne Westad, *The Global Cold War: Third World Interventions and the Making of Our Times*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 106.

³⁹ Christopher J. Lee, “Introduction,” in *Making a World After Empire: The Bandung Moment and Its Political Afterlives*, ed. Christopher J. Lee (Athens: Ohio University Press, 2010), 25.

⁴⁰ Lee, “Introduction,” 26.

colonial pasts and possible postcolonial futures. Sukarno acknowledged this purpose at the opening session:

“Our nations and countries are colonies no more. Now we are free, sovereign, and independent. We are again masters in our own house. We do not need to go to other continents to confer.”⁴¹

Bandung thus set the framework for the rise of a community of leaders from decolonized nations, armed with hopeful optimism for the future even as they continued to deal with decolonization’s discontents at home.

In 1956, following on the heels of Bandung, Nehru called for a policy of “nonalignment”—in other words, for countries and peoples who did not wish to align themselves with either the United States (U.S.) or the Soviet Union, instead promoting “nonaggression and non-interference” between countries.⁴² PRC leaders, not willing to completely sever relations with the Soviet Union, remained hesitant on nonalignment, but they attended the first Afro-Asian Peoples’ Solidarity conference held in Cairo in late 1957 and subsequently joined the Afro-Asian Peoples’ Solidarity Organization (AAPSO) established in 1960. The AAPSO upheld many of the principles of Bandung and coincided with major changes in PRC foreign policy. The Sino-Soviet split in 1960 led to increasing isolation from Soviet “brother” countries (*xiongdi guojia*) and PRC leaders simultaneously began to compete with the Soviet

⁴¹ As quoted in Prashad, *The Darker Nations*, 30.

⁴² Jawaharlal Nehru, “Economic Development and Nonalignment” from a speech in Washington, D.C., December 18, 1956, printed in the *U.S. Department of State Bulletin*, January 14, 1957, 49-50.

Union for socialist influence in Africa and Asia. Zhou Enlai, as well other high-level PRC leaders, worked hard at cultivating Afro-Asian relations.⁴³

The Non-Aligned Movement and the AAPSO both claimed that nation-states could choose independent ideological paths, but goals such as uniting oppressed peoples in anti-colonial struggles conveniently blended with the goals of international socialism as interpreted by the Chinese Communist Party. The Soviet Union, in the Chinese Communist Party's analysis, had abandoned the international socialist movement and forgotten about oppressed peoples around the world; the PRC should instead set the example for others to follow. Socialist China, according to the PRC leadership, would lead the rest of the world in the development of peaceful coexistence and economic cooperation.⁴⁴

Between 1961 and 1965, the influence of Chinese leaders vis-à-vis Soviet and Indian leaders in the AAPSO reached its height, with sports playing an important role.⁴⁵ PRC leaders participated in numerous state-to-state visits, but at a time when prominent international organizations like the United Nations did not recognize the PRC, sport visits and cultural exchanges with AAPSO nations often helped foster diplomatic relations. Indeed, the PRC's active establishment of sports relations with decolonized nations grew alongside these Afro-Asian and non-aligned movements.

⁴³ MacFarquhar, *The Origins of the Cultural Revolution*, Vol. 3, 298, 310-312. Sino-Indian relations meanwhile deteriorated following unresolved border conflicts in 1962, and the PRC never joined the Indian-backed non-aligned movement established in 1961.

⁴⁴ Mao Zedong, "Speech At The Tenth Plenum Of The Eighth Central Committee," in *Selected Works of Mao Tse-Tung Vol. VIII* (India: Kranti Publications, 1990), and available online at http://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/mao/selected-works/volume-8/mswv8_63.htm [Last accessed November 24, 2014].

⁴⁵ Omar Ali Amer, "China and the Afro-Asian Peoples' Solidarity Organization" (PhD diss., Université de Genève Institut Universitaire de Hautes Études Internationales, 1972), 10.

Already by 1960, as PRC and Soviet leaders competed for socialist influence in Africa and Asia, international sports exchanges had become sites for PRC leaders to promote Chinese socialism—in the name of Afro-Asian solidarity and friendship. Official sports delegation visits with African and Asian nations grew during subsequent years and included exchanges with Indonesia, Japan, North Korea, Vietnam, Cambodia, Mali, Guinea, Ghana, and Sudan, among others.⁴⁶

These visits occurred directly in the aftermath of the disastrous economic effects of the Great Leap Forward as Chinese leaders decided to use scarce financial resources exclusively for elite athletic development. Ping-pong was one of the most popular sports the state continued to fund because of the earlier international success in the sport – specifically, when Rong Guotuan won the singles title at the 1959 World Championships – and because the International Table Tennis Federation (ITTF) was one of the few international sports organizations that consistently recognized the PRC.⁴⁷ Indeed, the ITTF gave the nation its first opportunity to host a major international sporting event when in April 1961 Beijing held the ping-pong world championships. Athletes from more than 30 nations showed up to watch the Chinese take home most the awards.⁴⁸

⁴⁶ “Dashiji” [Memorable Events] in *Zhongguo tiyu nianjian 1949-1991*, ed. Guojia tiwei (Beijing: Renmin tiyu chubanshe, 1993), which covers sports delegation visits between 1961 and 1965.

Although sports exchanges with the Soviet bloc (i.e., the Soviet Union, Poland, Romania, Czechoslovakia, etc.) declined, and could sometimes grow tense, they did continue in this period.

⁴⁷ The ITTF president at the time, Ivor Montagu, was a staunch communist (a British spy for the Russians) who supported the PRC and did not allow ROC participation. For more on Montagu, see Nicholas Griffin, *Ping-Pong Diplomacy: The Secret History Behind the Game That Changed the World* (New York: Scribner, 2014).

⁴⁸ For an account of this event see Griffin, *Ping-Pong Diplomacy*, 120-125. Coincidentally Beijing held this international event around the same time the central leadership and sports leaders began

Beginning with ping-pong, there was a concerted attempt to use delegation visits as a space for negotiating Afro-Asian solidarities. In the summer of 1962, the government sent top ping-pong athletes to Africa where, over the course of two months, they visited Egypt, Ghana, Guinea, Mali, and Sudan. Delegation leader Huang Zhong enthusiastically reported that the Chinese athletes had expressed “Chinese and African people’s deep camaraderie” through, for example, playing exhibition matches covered by the local press as well as visits to historic and cultural sites to learn about the “heroic struggle” of African people against imperialism and colonialism.⁴⁹ In Ghana the delegation visited the Cape Coast Castle (*Kepu-Kesijie*),⁵⁰ a black slave castle that had served as a prison in colonial times, the report noting that slaves from this particular castle had also been “fettered and handcuffed” and then sent to North America. The delegation found a common historical thread with locals when they visited the memorial of Khartoum Mahdi in Sudan, where they saw the yellow robe and mandarin jacket presented to British General Charles Gordon by the Qing court for his help in suppressing the Taiping rebellion in the 1860s. Chinese revolutionary leaders, including Mao, admired the Taiping rebels as early heroes in their attempt to overthrow the Qing dynasty, and they viewed Gordon as an interfering British colonialist siding with the Qing. Gordon was later killed during an

discussing budget cuts and readjustments across the board following the financial disaster from the Great Leap Forward.

⁴⁹ CFMA 108-00816-01: Zhongguo pingpangqiu dui fangwen Feizhou baogao [Report on the Chinese ping-pong team’s visit to Africa], August 1, 1962.

⁵⁰ This is my best guess for the transliteration Ke-pu.Ke-si-jie.

attempt to suppress Mahdist rebels in Khartoum and with his clothing on display had thus been, according to the Chinese delegation report, “duly punished” in Sudan.⁵¹

Couched in terms of Afro-Asian solidarity, exchanges such as this one also served as platforms for promoting China and Chinese socialism, beginning with sport. In Egypt, the visit had been preceded by one week of showing a documentary on Chinese ping-pong in movie theaters, and Huang reported that the team had been overwhelmed by fans’ requests for autographs and photos. *The Ghanaian Times* called the 1961 World Championship in Beijing a “milestone” and noted that sixteen of the world’s best players now came from China. The newspaper argued that these achievements resulted from the improvement in peoples’ material and cultural lives under Chinese socialism.

Meanwhile, Huang also commented that *tiyu* activities in African countries, especially Guinea, Mali, and Sudan, were somewhat “backward” and “low level,” their sports programs “incomplete,” and they lacked mass participation, appropriate sports facilities and equipment, and (especially) specialized sports talent. The only exception to this was some “rather good” advances made in sport in Egypt, where the delegation watched the national soccer team beat Euro Cup champion Portugal. (Huang concluded that the Chinese national soccer team was only as good as those in Ghana, Guinea, and Nigeria.) The report also added with disgust that sport in Egypt was unfortunately “in the hands of the rich” (*zai youqianren de shouli*), a comment that was clearly meant to disparage Egyptian President Nasser and the Soviet-leaning

⁵¹ CFMA 108-00816-01: Zhongguo pingpangqiu dui fangwen Feizhou baogao.

Egyptian leadership at the time. However, the outlook in all of these African countries was optimistic, according to the report, because following independence their governments had placed a lot of importance on sports.⁵² The Chinese ping-pong delegation expanded its influence in practical ways. In countries where the skill level was considered “low,” such as Guinea and Mali, the Chinese delegation helped establish ping-pong associations, visited schools and work units at all levels, and held various exhibitions for the masses. In fact, a few months prior to this visit, the Chinese government had already made the decision to send Guinea a modest amount of *tiyu* equipment, including a few ping-pong tables.⁵³ In Ghana and Egypt, where the skill level was considered better, the focus was on promoting and extending the sport through exhibitions held at, for example, local schools. Several practice competitions were also held with the Ghanaian national team to help improve their skills.

The report also made an effort to go a step further by showing that PRC superiority over African countries extended beyond sport. Huang argued that the visit showed African people China’s “vigorous development” across all of society. For example, he noted that the female ping-pong players from China, where officially the slogan was “men and women are equal,” had especially drawn attention in Guinea,

⁵² CFMA 108-00816-01: Zhongguo pingpangqiu dui fangwen Feizhou baogao. The report notes that in 1962 an All-African united sports organization (Quanfei tiyu lianhehui) had been established, with branches in individual sports disciplines, and some disciplines had even held championships.

⁵³ CFMA 108-00723-07: Guanyu zengsong Jineiya yaoqiu yuanzhu tiyu yongpin qicai shi [Concerning presenting as a gift Guinea’s request for sports good and equipment]. Sent from the State Sports Commission to the Foreign Ministry’s Foreign Affairs Cultural Committee (Waijiaobu duiwai wenwei). November 20?, 1961. They sent them about 21,000 RMB worth. The original request was from the Guinean government for over 180,000 RMB worth of equipment, but the *tiwei* felt this was overkill and suggested sending a much smaller amount, because other countries might also make similar requests.

Mali, and Sudan “where women have not been fully liberated.”⁵⁴ Huang also claimed that all countries admired not only China’s “anti-imperialist position” but also “the achievements of our nation’s socialist construction.” For example, the report cited the president of Guinea praising the Chinese leadership and socialist system for support of the worldwide people’s liberation movement based on a real desire to eliminate the foundation of imperialism, and Ghana’s national defense leader as stating that Ghana could gain a lot from China’s experience with socialist construction. Such praise was also likely helped by the fact that in the previous year Chinese leaders had already satisfied some Ghanaian ping-pong related requests, such as providing them with an unspecified number of paddles and issues of the English-language magazine *China Sports*.⁵⁵

These PRC efforts to use sport as a means to expand its own influence among AAPSO nations reached an apex with the 1963 Games of the New Emerging Forces, an international sports mega-event co-orchestrated with Indonesian leaders following the Fourth Asian Games held in Jakarta in 1962. By then PRC leadership had developed a particularly close political relationship with Indonesian president Sukarno; there was no formal alliance between the two nations, but Chinese leaders and leftist Indonesian leaders shared common communist goals.⁵⁶ The Fourth Asian

⁵⁴ CFMA 108-00816-01: Zhongguo pingpangqiu dui fangwen Feizhou baogao.

⁵⁵ CFMA 108-00251-07: Guanyu Jiana zuqiudui he pingpangqiudui fanghua shi [Concerning the visit of Ghana’s soccer team and ping-pong team to China], March 1-24, 1961. Not all requests were fulfilled, the most interesting one being requests to see the blue prints for the workers’ stadium, which the Foreign Ministry noted were “classified” (*jimi*), thus suggesting these blue prints were not to be given out to anyone without official permission.

⁵⁶ MacFarquhar, *The Origins of the Cultural Revolution*, Vol. 3, 121, 134, 339.

Games demonstrated the influence of PRC leaders in this relationship as they successfully pressured Indonesian leaders to prevent ROC athletes from participation.

“Ever Onward”⁵⁷: The Fourth Asian Games (1962)

Sports and politics remained intertwined during planning of the 1962 Fourth Asian Games, as Sino-Indonesian relations grew closer in the lead-up to the event. The Asian Games Federation (AGF) still recognized the ROC but not the PRC as a member, and although the AGF was not technically officially affiliated with governments, the politics and decisions of its leaders often reflected specific national interests.⁵⁸ Jakarta had won the bid to host the 1962 Games in 1958, and Sukarno wanted to use the event to promote Indonesia’s national image.⁵⁹ Some members of the AGF (Japan, India and the Philippines) expressed concern, however, over how Sino-Indonesian relations might affect the Games – would the planning committee send invitations to the PRC and not the ROC (Taiwan)?⁶⁰ Indeed, leading up to the event, Chinese embassy officials in Jakarta discussed how to exert pressure on the Indonesian Foreign Ministry and national sports leaders to prevent ROC

⁵⁷ The official motto of the Fourth Asian Games.

⁵⁸ “Asia’s Rich Sports History,” in *Asia on the March: History of the Asian Games* (Bangkok: St. Joseph’s publ., 1995), 24-27.

⁵⁹ Stefan Hübner, “The Fourth Asian Games (Jakarta 1962) in a Transnational Perspective: Japanese and Indian Reactions to Indonesia’s Political Instrumentalisation of the Games,” *The International Journal of the History of Sport* 29, no. 9 (2012): 1298.

⁶⁰ See collected news briefs from January 18, 1962 in CFMA 105-01086-03: Youguan guojia zai guoji tiyu huodong zhong dui Taiwan dangju de taidu [The attitudes of some nations towards Taiwan in international sports activities], May 16-August 6, 1962. Also, in 1959 the IOC ruled that the ROC Olympic committee, since they did not represent the majority of the Chinese people, could not use “China” in its name. However, throughout the 1960s ROC leaders protested this decision and the IOC continued to remain divided over an appropriate name. Xu Guoqi, *Olympic Dreams: China and Sports, 1895-2008* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2008), 90-94.

participation.⁶¹ PRC leaders, as part of a larger anti-American campaign, and in the face of a growing Sino-Soviet split, saw an opportunity to use the Games to further their own agenda.

When Gunsun Hoh (Hao Gengsheng), the AGF member from ROC (Taiwan), visited Indonesia in the spring – despite Indonesian promises to the Chinese that he would not – top Chinese leaders decided to take action. Vice Premier Chen Yi warned the Indonesian ambassador to China that allowing Taiwan to participate would be detrimental because it would make the outside world think that Indonesia’s policy toward China had changed. He also argued that people would suspect that Indonesia was “not determined to recover the [Dutch colonial territory] West Irian [West Papua].”⁶² China, he noted, supported Indonesia’s counter-insurgency in West Irian,⁶³ while Taiwan did not. Thus it was “difficult to understand” why Indonesia wanted Taiwan in the Asian Games. A month later, during discussions on the upcoming Afro-Asian conference preparatory meeting to be held in Indonesia, the ambassador claimed that if Taiwan was banned then some nations might boycott the Games (namely Thailand, Philippines, Hong Kong, Malaysia and Japan) and that would

⁶¹ CFMA 105-01492-01: Guanyu yinni ni yaoqing Taiwan dangju canjia di si jie yayunhui wenti [Concerning the issue of Indonesia inviting Taiwan to participate in the 4th Asian Games], telegram December 2, 1961.

⁶² CFMA 105-01085-03: Chen fuzongli tong Sukani dashi tan Yayunhui wenti (ci ci tanhua jilu cun Xi yiliyan yi fen) [Vice Premier Chen and Ambassador Sukani discuss the Asian Games issue (this conversation record touches on the West Irian)], telegram sent from the Chinese Foreign Ministry’s First Department of Asian Affairs to the Chinese embassy in Indonesia, May 29, 1962.

⁶³ The West Irian was a part of the Dutch East Indies. Although Indonesia had laid claim to all former Dutch colonies following independence in 1949, the West Irian remained an area of dispute. Charles A Coppel, *Indonesian Chinese in Crisis* (Kuala Lumpur: Oxford University Press, 1983), 24, 34. At the time of these talks, Sukarno was in the midst of military operations to take over the territory, which was still technically under the control of the Dutch. In fall 1962 the territory became part of Indonesia. R.B. Cribb and Colin Brown, *Modern Indonesia: A History Since 1945* (London, New York: Longman, 1995), 85-86.

“affect the prestige of Indonesia and Sukarno.”⁶⁴ Chen retorted that Sukarno’s prestige rested on his “anti-imperialism, anti-colonialism, and peaceful founding of the country” and he compared Taiwan to West Irian, asking, “if we invited a representative group from West Irian to participate in an activity in China how would Indonesia feel?” PRC leaders simply would not do that, he claimed, because that would be “engaging together in colonialism.”⁶⁵

By late July, the Chinese embassy in Jakarta had sent numerous telegrams to Chinese leaders outlining the preparations being made for the arrival of the Taiwanese. Distressed PRC leaders called for more pressure on Sukarno, and stepped up propaganda on the “American conspiracy.”⁶⁶ An article in *Xin tiyu* linked the situation at the Asian Games to the IOC and its American president Avery Brundage. Outlining the entire history of the “two Chinas” issue in the IOC, it claimed that international sports organizations hypocritically stated, “sports and politics don’t mix” while carrying out their own political plot under the influence of American imperialism.⁶⁷ One cartoon depicts a white man from the U.S. holding a banner with the words “sports is not involved in politics” (*tiyu buwen zhengzhi*). In the bag of volleyballs he holds is Chiang Kai-shek, with his signature moustache and the

⁶⁴ CFMA105-01085-03: Zhaigao Chen zong yu Yinni dashi de tanhua [Excerpts from the conversation between Vice Premier Chen and the Indonesian Ambassador], telegram sent from the Chinese Foreign Ministry’s First Department of Asian Affairs to the Chinese embassy in Indonesia, June 22, 1962.

⁶⁵ CFMA 105-01085-03: Zhaigao Chen zong yu Yinni dashi de tanhua. June 22, 1962.

⁶⁶ CFMA 105-01083-01: Guanyu zuzhi Jiangbang canjia Yayunhui de douzheng [Concerning organizing the Chiang clique’s participation in the Asian Games struggle], telegram sent from the Chinese Foreign Ministry to the Chinese embassy in Jakarta, July 24, 1962.

⁶⁷ “Mei diguozhuyi yi gui zai guoji tiyu huodong zhong wannong ‘liangge zhongguo’ de yinmou” [America imperialism has always played the “two Chinas” plot in international sports activities], *Xin tiyu*, August 6, 1962, 2-3.

Republic of China emblem on the bottom of his shoe, suggesting that U.S. imperialism had the ROC “in the bag” [Figure 34]. Cartoons like these were often juxtaposed with images and articles about international sports competitions that stressed friendship, peace, and unity over competition.⁶⁸



Figure 34. “Personal goods.” *Xin tiyu*, August 6, 1962.

In August the Indonesian organizing committee made its move: the Taiwan delegation received blank slips of paper instead of entry cards for its athletes.⁶⁹ The PRC celebrated this decision, but officials in the ROC and the AGF, many of whom were also IOC members, protested and blamed the situation on a PRC plot.⁷⁰ The IOC

⁶⁸ *Xin tiyu*, August 6, 1962, 6.

⁶⁹ Hübner, “The Fourth Asian Games,” 1299.

⁷⁰ IOCA: “China and the Jakarta Games: A Factual Summary of How Indonesia Barred the Republic of China,” 6.

refused to take an official stance on the matter. In a cable sent August 11, 1962, from Avery Brundage to the Taiwan member of the AGF, Gunsun Hoh, Brundage stated that the “IOC has no connection whatsoever with Djakarta.”⁷¹ Although the IOC deplored the actions taken by the Indonesian organizing committee, he stated it was a matter for the AGF—and not the IOC—to settle. Some AGF leaders tried desperately to reverse the situation at the last minute, but behind the scenes PRC leadership pressured Indonesian leaders through their embassy in Jakarta and intelligence agents.⁷² Officially, Sukarno waited until the opening ceremonies to publicly ban Taiwan. Emergency AGF meetings were held and G. D. Sondhi, Indian delegation leader and IOC-friendly AGF member, convinced the IOC executive board to withdraw support of the Games. When news of the decision became public, riots directed at Sondi broke out in Jakarta and he fled, but he continued to lobby the IOC for suspension of Indonesian membership.⁷³

The successful blocking of Taiwan from participation in these Asian Games suggested to PRC leaders that their time spent in the world of international sport had been worthwhile. Zhou Enlai and Chen Yi sent personal messages to Indonesian leaders thanking them for blocking the Taiwanese delegation from participation.⁷⁴

⁷¹ IOCA: Cable sent from Avery Brundage to Gunsun Hoh, August 11, 1962.

⁷² See the numerous telegrams, sent from the Foreign Ministry to the Chinese embassy in Jakarta, during August 1962 in CFMA 105-01086-01: Zhu yinni shiguan guanyu zuzhi Taiwan dangju canjia yayunhui douzheng xingshi de baogao ji yinni gejie dui Taiwan canjia yayunhui de fanying [The Embassy in Indonesia’s report concerning the forms of struggle to prevent Taiwan participation in the Asian Games and the general Indonesian reaction towards Taiwan participation in the Asian Games], March 31-September 5, 1962.

⁷³ Hübner, “The Fourth Asian Games,” 1295, 1304-1305.

⁷⁴ CFMA 105-01085-05: Zhou Enlai zongli, Chen Yi fuzongli dui Yinni zuzhi Taiwan dangju canjia yayunhui biaoshi ganxie [Premier Zhou Enlai and Vice Premier Chen Yi express their thanks for Indonesia blocking the participation of Taiwan in the Asian Games], September 3, 1962.

Sukarno thanked the PRC for its support and replied that the event “further strengthened the friendship between Indonesia and China.”⁷⁵ Shortly thereafter, Indonesian leaders requested Chinese support for organizing an Afro-Asian sports structure. International sports organizations, they believed, needed to have a “revolution.”⁷⁶

Chinese leaders supported the idea. In an official summary of “achievements and weakness” for 1962, the State Sports Commission stated that the year’s most important accomplishments in international activities had been increasing “understanding and friendship” particularly between Asians and Africans—as well as “coordinating foreign struggles and expanding political influence.”⁷⁷ Furthermore, in light of the fact that the Olympics had become a stage for showcasing American and Soviet athletes, and that Chinese ping-pong athletes had brought international glory through their wins in the world championships, the leadership in the PRC knew that one way to display their power would be through the talent of Chinese athletes in a large-scale, international, multi-sport competition. Outside of ping-pong, many Chinese athletes had yet to participate in any large-scale sports competition outside

⁷⁵ CFMA 105-01085-06: Youguan Yinni zongtong Sukanuo zhixin Zhou Enlai zongli, Chen Yi fuzongli shi [Letter from Indonesian President Sukarno to Premier Zhou Enlai and Vice Premier Chen Yi], October 4, 1962.

⁷⁶ CFMA 105-01789-05: Yinni zhushiguan dashi Sukani tan yayunhui he dierci yafeihuiyi wenti [Indonesian ambassador Sukani discusses the Asian Games and the 2nd Afro-Asian conference issue], October 12, 1962.

⁷⁷ “1962 nian quanguo tiyu gongzuo huiyi jiyao (zhailu) (ci jian jing zhongyang xuanchuanbu tongyi. Guojia tiwei 1963 nian 3 yue 21 ri xiafa) [Summary of the 1962 nationwide sports conference (excerpts) (the Central Propaganda Department approves this piece. State Sports Commission issued March 21, 1963)]” in *Tiyu yundong wenjian xuanbian 1949-1981*, comp. Guojia tiwei zhengce yanjiushi (Beijing: Renmin tiyu chunbanshe, 1982), 85.

the socialist world. The creation of an alternative organization thus appealed not only to top leaders, but also to Chinese sports leaders and athletes.

The IOC position on the Fourth Asian Games meanwhile changed following several months of discussions and worldwide media attention. Rumors about a new set of Games had begun to appear in newspaper articles, leading Brundage to write to IOC Chancellor Otto Mayer that the Indonesians were “apparently joining with the Red Chinese to promote an event for the so-called ‘Emerging Forces’.”⁷⁸ On February 8, 1963, the IOC passed a resolution that banned any nation guilty of “discrimination against foreign athletes on political, racial, or religious grounds.”⁷⁹ Anticipating its fate, the Indonesian Olympic Committee voluntarily withdrew from the IOC within a week, but was also soon banned from participation in the Olympics.⁸⁰ For the first time in its nearly 70 years of existence, the IOC had officially suspended one of its members.

The GANEFO as Idea: Sport and Politics

Several days later, on February 13, 1963, Sukarno officially announced the creation of the Games of the New Emerging Forces (GANEFO). Politically inspired by the Bandung conference, the GANEFO would have specific and explicit political aims in line with Sukarno’s larger political project. In Sukarno’s view, the world was made up of “New Emerging Forces” and “Old Established Forces.” The new

⁷⁸ IOCA: Personal correspondence from Avery Brundage to Otto Mayer, January 5, 1963.

⁷⁹ Jonathan Kolatch, *Sports, Politics, and Ideology in China* (New York: Jonathan David Publishers, 1972), 190.

⁸⁰ Ewa T. Pauker, “Ganefo I: Sports and Politics in Djakarta” in *Asian Survey* 5, no. 4 (1965): 173.

emerging forces would “constitute all countries opposing imperialism and colonialism and struggling for justice and prosperity,”⁸¹ whereas the old forces were essentially those of colonialism. Apart from these divergent political aims, the Games themselves would resemble the Olympics in nearly every aspect.

From the start, PRC leaders at the highest levels endorsed the GANEFO and played a central role in seeing the first Games come to fruition. A week after the announcement Zhou Enlai wrote Sukarno in praise of the decision to uphold “the national dignity of Indonesia as well as that of the Asian-African countries and peoples.” “The Chinese government and people,” he stated, would “strive jointly with the Government and people of Indonesia to bring about the realization of this proposal.”⁸²

But the Chinese interest in GANEFO also extended beyond the Sino-Indonesian alliance, with the intent to use the event to re-position China on the world stage as the Afro-Asian leader. Chinese leaders privately concluded that even though Sukarno’s definition of “new emerging forces” was “vague,” China should “strive for the GANEFO to become a gradual realization of African-Asian-Latin American strength and a world competition opposite to the IOC.”⁸³ Even though participation in this first GANEFO would probably be limited, the potential long-term importance was enough to conclude that “no matter what how many athletes, whatever the

⁸¹ “Imperialist Intrigues in Olympic Games,” *Peking Review*, February 22, 1963, 8-9.

⁸² CFMA 105-01833-01: Zhou Enlai zongli zhihan yinni zongli Sujianuo zhichi yinni tuichu guoji aolinpike weiyuanhui [Premier Zhou Enlai’s letter to Indonesian President Sukarno supporting Indonesia leaving the IOC], February 20, 1963.

⁸³ CFMA 105-01169-01: Guanyu wo zhichi zhaokai xinxing liliang yundonghui de fangzhen [Policies concerning our support of holding the GANEFO], March 23, 1963.

budget” they should “make [this first one] happen.” A week prior to the preparatory conference for the first GANEFO, held in April 1963, a joint declaration by Liu Shaoqi and Sukarno publicly condemned the actions taken by the IOC against Indonesia, and expressed PRC “willingness to contribute in every way possible towards the realization of [the GANEFO].”⁸⁴

So confident were Chinese leaders of their own influence among African and Asian nations that the only concern they had at this point was possible Soviet-led sabotage.

Furthermore, having devoted ten years to building state-sponsored sports programs and relationships with socialist countries, and having successfully held the first National Games in 1959, the leadership of the PRC knew that one way to display national power on a global scale would be through the talent of its athletes in a large-scale, international, multi-sport competition like the Olympics. The GANEFO would provide an alternative to the Olympics, while also allowing the PRC to establish a kind of “Revolutionary United Nations” among the “small” nations in the anti-imperial and anti-colonial struggle.⁸⁵

At the preparatory conference in April 1963, Sukarno highlighted the inconsistent actions of the IOC, and directly challenged Brundage, by unequivocally stating that the GANEFO was about the connection between sports and politics. Sukarno argued that the IOC had violated its own apolitical rules in its dealings with

⁸⁴ “China and Indonesia Cement Friendship,” *Peking Review*, April 26, 1963, 12.

⁸⁵ Liang Lijuan, *He Zhenliang and China's Olympic Dream*, trans. Susan Brownell (Beijing: Foreign Languages Press, 2007), 84.

Indonesia and in its recognition of “two Chinas.” The GANEFO would explicitly encourage governments rather than sports committees to send delegations in order to promote “friendship and world-peace in general.”⁸⁶ Starting with a quote from Bertrand Russell that the world is divided into two communities – that of the “Declaration of Independence” and that of the “Communist Manifesto” – Sukarno stated that some people said there was now a “third community” among the peoples and countries of Asia and Africa. However, he stated that in fact “mankind now...is **not** exclusively divided into **three** communities” but rather “**two** communities: the community of the Old Established Forces, and the community of the New Emerging Forces!”⁸⁷ These “New Emerging Forces” were those “against imperialism, against colonialism... against exploitation” and could “be found among the Asian peoples, African peoples, and the Latin American peoples and the peoples of the Socialist countries.”⁸⁸

Sukarno reiterated that it was not the idea of the Olympics, as laid out by its founder Pierre De Coubertin, that he rejected, but rather the current IOC leadership’s unfair politics. He stated that De Coubertin’s idea to “build an international structure of sports that encourages the flowering of international respects, friendship, and peace”⁸⁹ tied in well with the aim of the Indonesian revolution to build a “new world

⁸⁶ GANEFO Preparatory Committee, *Documents on Preparations of the First GANEFO, and Conference of the Preparatory Committee in Djakarta, November 1963* ([N.p.] Secretariat of the GANEFO Preparatory Committee, 1964), 6-8. Bold in original.

⁸⁷ GANEFO Preparatory Committee, *Documents on Preparations of the First GANEFO*, 3. Bold in original.

⁸⁸ GANEFO Preparatory Committee, *Documents on Preparations of the First GANEFO*, 4.

⁸⁹ CFMA 105-01833-02: Yinni yaoqing wo canjia xinxing liliang yundonghui choubei huiyi he xinxing liliang yundonghui ji wo fang fuzhao [Indonesia invites us to participate in the GANEFO preparatory

order of friendly brotherhood.” Turning to the Chinese representatives, Sukarno rhetorically asked, “Were you not excluded from these International Games [e.g., Asian Games], because you are said to be communist?”

Not surprisingly, PRC representative Huang Zhong gave by far the most supportive speech in favor of the GANEFO. Huang emphasized that both Indonesia and the PRC had suffered from “discrimination, restriction and interference” by the IOC “under the manipulation of the American imperialist elements” and that the GANEFO would unite all countries together “on the basis on the common struggle against imperialism.”⁹⁰ The point was made much more explicitly in a clause added to the charter stating that only one sports delegation from each country could participate—a clause that specifically excluded the ROC from eligibility.⁹¹

Not many structural differences separated the GANEFO from the Olympics. The format, goals, proposed mottos, and the committee’s adoption of certain Olympic ideals such as sportsmanship and international “respect, friendship, and peace” all looked remarkably similar. All countries were encouraged to develop independent youth sports movements. Friendly, equal, amateur competitions would be held every four years in a country from the “New Emerging Forces.”⁹² Indonesia was chosen to

committee meeting and GANEFO and our side’s fuzhao], Sukarno’s speech at the preparatory conference pp. 32-36, April 1963.

⁹⁰ GANEFO Preparatory Committee, *Documents on Preparations of the First GANEFO*, 23.

⁹¹ GANEFO Federation, *Charter of the Games of the New Emerging Forces, the GANEFO* ([n.p., 1963), 19.

⁹² GANEFO Preparatory Committee, *Documents on Preparations of the First GANEFO*, 5.

host the first GANEFO mostly because it already had the infrastructure and facilities built for the Fourth Asian Games.⁹³

Each country could send one delegation, though membership in the GANEFO was not a prerequisite. The committee for the GANEFO, consisting of four vice-presidents from Asia, Africa, Latin American, and Europe, would send invitations to nations, but other nations (or “forces” who were not yet nations) could also apply to participate.⁹⁴ An International Village for athletes, complete with a press house, transportation facilities, and a guesthouse, would be offered free of charge (paid for by the Indonesian government) to participating athletes. Twenty Olympic sports would be played over a period of 12 days and an arts festival would accompany the event.⁹⁵

A flag, song, logo, and other symbols and emblems were designed uniquely for the GANEFO [Figure 35]. The logo used on all official event publications was a revolving globe with a sea of flags and the words “Onward! No Retreat!”—a specific reference to the “Ever Onward” motto of the Asian Games. It accompanied official publications, including committee documents, press releases, and reports from the games. The globe represented “Onward!” in the motto and symbolized a march “toward a new world...eternally new” based on “the right conviction and ideals.” The flags represented “No Retreat!” and symbolized nations “fighting for truth and

⁹³ Rusli Lutan, “Indonesia and the Asian Games: Sport, Nationalism and the ‘New Order’,” in *Sports, Nationalism, and Orientalism: The Asian Games*, ed. Fan Hong (New York: Routledge, 2007).

⁹⁴ GANEFO Preparatory Committee, *Documents on Preparations of the First GANEFO*, 11.

⁹⁵ GANEFO Preparatory Committee, *Documents on Preparations of the First GANEFO*, 22-23.



Figure 35. Official logo of the GANEFO. From *Charter of the Games of the New Emerging Forces, the GANEFO*, 1963.

justice” by participating in “an international unity to build together a new world, to eliminate imperialism and colonialism in all their manifestations.”⁹⁶

Nevertheless, beneath all this talk of unity, some nations remained cautious about committing themselves to the GANEFO. Some were concerned about the IOC reaction to participation in the Games—and what that might do to eligibility at the 1964 Tokyo Olympics. The representative from the Soviet Union, for instance, voiced concern that the Games “not be bound with any limitations concerning future participation of national sports organizations in the world sports movement, official championships of the world... and Olympic Games.”⁹⁷ Indeed, at the time, the IOC reaction to the Games was still unclear, as was that of the International Federations, who were often the reigning authorities determining which athletes could compete for their National Olympic Committees (NOCs). The correspondence among IOC

⁹⁶ GANEFO Federation, *Charter of the Games of the New Emerging Forces*, 13.

⁹⁷ GANEFO Preparatory Committee, *Documents on Preparations of the First GANEFO*, 23.

leadership reflects that as late as September 1963, the effect that the GANEFO would have on the Olympics remained uncertain, but potentially troublesome.⁹⁸

Preparations for the first GANEFO also brought to light the growing Sino-Soviet struggle for socialist influence and leadership in Asia and Africa. This can be seen in the ambivalent position Soviet leaders seemed to take with the GANEFO.⁹⁹ On the one hand, they had to participate because they did not want to lose ground among nations to which they had devoted so much time and money; on the other hand, they also continued their efforts to “democratize” and gain authority in the IOC and other International Federations. Soviet leaders did their best to negotiate the use of Olympic language in GANEFO documents, while at the same time trying to convince the IOC Executive Board that the Games were more about meetings of youth, rather than sports competitions. The Soviets increasingly worried about the role of the PRC in GANEFO, which they interpreted as a Chinese attempt to divide the world of international sport in which they had invested so much time and effort.¹⁰⁰ The official Soviet position on the GANEFO was that they had to participate for the purposes of maintaining relations with Afro-Asian and socialist countries – but they were not willing to do so at the expense of losing everything they had accomplished with the IOC. After all, one of the main Soviet goals was to hold the Olympics in Moscow.¹⁰¹ The efforts of Soviet leaders in GANEFO thus centered on getting the

⁹⁸ IOCA: Personal correspondence from Avery Brundage to Otto Mayer on September 12 and September 26, 1963.

⁹⁹ Jenifer Parks, “Red sport, red tape the Olympic games, the Soviet sports bureaucracy, and the Cold War, 1952-1980” (PhD diss., University of North Carolina, 2009), 180-182.

¹⁰⁰ Parks, “Red sport, red tape,” 184-186.

¹⁰¹ Parks, “Red sport, red tape,” 196-198, 207-208.

games recognized by the IOC as a significant event based on Olympic ideals, but conducted for African and Asian countries, and in no way competing with the Olympics.

Meanwhile, the PRC quickly became the GANEFO's most prominent advocate and patron. The hesitation of a few countries over sending athletic delegations to the GANEFO did not stop the PRC's determination—in addition to providing ample funding to the Indonesian government, they offered funds to some athletic delegations.¹⁰² Media in the PRC meanwhile promoted the GANEFO on a regular basis. In May, the *Peking Review* highlighted that this was the first time the “anti-imperialist peoples” had “their own” international sports organization like the Olympics. But unlike the Olympics, the GANEFO remained faithful to promoting “friendship and understanding and serving the interests of world peace.”¹⁰³ Active preparation for the first GANEFO was also mentioned in articles about other international sports competitions.¹⁰⁴ An official government directive sent to media outlets around the country stated that the GANEFO would also help nations realize independent and self-reliant development (*dedao duli zizhu de fazhan*), in addition to becoming an important aspect of the “international political struggle...an anti-imperialist revolutionary struggle in the international sports world.”¹⁰⁵

PRC publications often created a connection between the GANEFO and a larger PRC attempt to place itself as the leader of an international movement, usually

¹⁰² Xu, *Olympic Dreams*, 52-3; Kolatch, *Sports, Politics, and Ideology in China*, 196.

¹⁰³ “GANEFO: Sports and Anti-Imperialism,” *Peking Review*, May 3, 1963, 19.

¹⁰⁴ “Indonesian Badminton Team in China,” *Peking Review*, July 19, 1963, 31.

¹⁰⁵ Shanghai Municipal Archives B126-1-688: Guanyu xinxing liliang yundonghui de xuanchuan yaodian [Propaganda points concerning the GANEFO], July 13, 1963.

by reminding readers that “friendly” sport competitions had already offered the PRC successful ways of cultivating relationships with peoples all over the world. A political cartoon in the May 1963 *Xin tiyu* magazine accompanied an article about recent wins in international ping-pong competitions [Figure 36]. (The article also mentions the upcoming GANEFO.) A set of photographers takes the picture of three female athletes – on the left a dark-skinned athlete holding a table tennis racket, on the right a white-skinned athlete, and in the center a Chinese athlete represented by her “China” shirt. The Chinese athlete holds a bouquet of flowers, a symbol that she has won the competition. Her centrality between two athletes—who might very well represent Africa and Latin America—is also representative of how the PRC saw itself in leading international sports competitions among Asian, African, and Latin American nations. On the right side of the cartoon a Chinese male athlete wearing an identical “China” jersey faces the reader and carries in one hand a bouquet of flowers that says “friendship” (*youyi*) and three trophies that say “honor” (*rongyu*). The words “friendship and honor” were reiterated by the PRC in international sports competitions: friendship with others would bring honor; honor and friendship went hand-in-hand.

This emphasis on shared friendship expresses the goals of the GANEFO and also the Afro-Asian and non-aligned movements, but it particularly shows how the

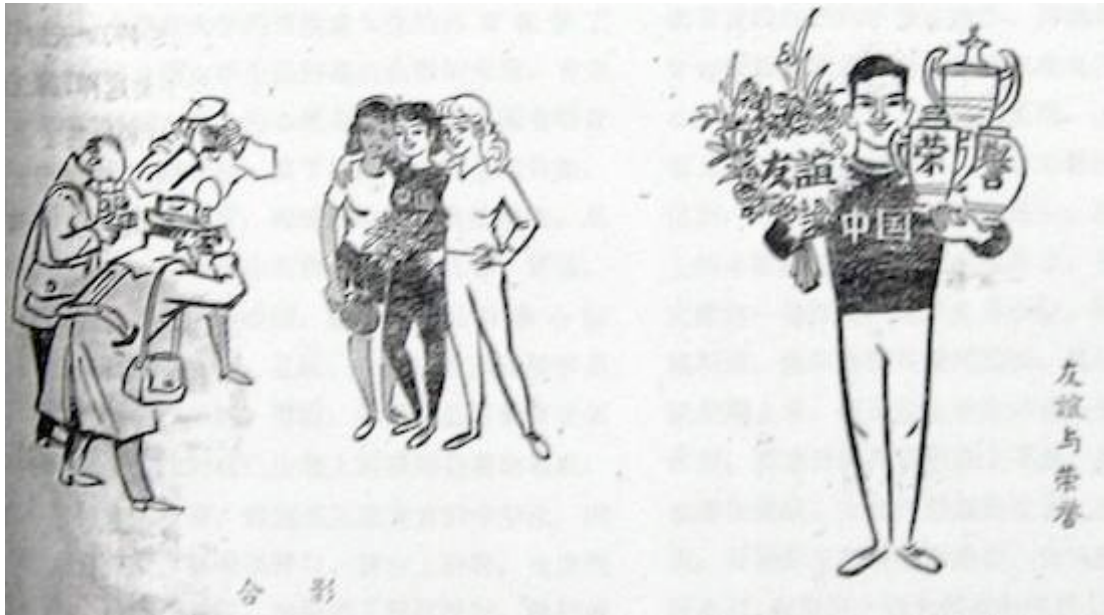


Figure 36. “Friendship and honor.” *Xin tiyu*, May 6, 1963.

PRC perceived itself in these international sports competitions. Sports could and did bring honor to the nation, but they could also offer a way to wield power over other nations.

The GANEFO as Event: Onward, No retreat!

“We the Youth of the New Emerging Forces, do hereby solemnly pledge that we will take part in our Games, in the true Spirit of Fairness, of Sportsmanship [sic] and of Solidarity among New Emerging Forces, For the Honour of our Countries and for the Victory of our Common Ideas.” – Athlete Pledge¹⁰⁶

¹⁰⁶ *China’s Sports*, Vol. 1, 1964, 21.

Leading up to the event, elite athletes in the PRC prepared for their first large-scale international games since the founding of “New China” in 1949. Trials for spots on the team took place in Beijing in September 1963 and 238 athletes were selected to go to Jakarta. Given the overwhelming numbers who participated at the trials, and the lack of opportunities elsewhere, it is clear that the PRC was most assuredly sending its top athletes to the GANEFO.¹⁰⁷ Indeed, PRC leaders wanted to use these GANEFO as a platform on which Chinese athletes would dominate the international sporting world, thereby promoting China as the leader of the world revolution.¹⁰⁸

The IOC grew concerned with the potential threat posed by the GANEFO to the 1964 Tokyo Olympics. Although the initial IOC reactions seemed uncertain and ambiguous, by early November 1963 the influence of the media had taken its toll. Although it was not clear exactly which countries and athletes would participate in the November games, the French newspaper *L'Équipe* publicly announced a few weeks before the Games that Japan would be sending a delegation of 56 athletes and 100 officials to participate at the GANEFO. This shocked the IOC. Brundage sent a thinly veiled threat in an official letter on November 6, 1963, five days before the opening of the first GANEFO, to the Japanese National Olympic Committee (NOC) members. He directly asked them what they thought this participation in the GANEFO would “do to your eligibility for the Games of the XVIII Olympiad in

¹⁰⁷ Kolatch, *Sports, Politics, and Ideology in China*, 193.

¹⁰⁸ Liang, *He Zhenliang and China's Olympic Dream*, 84.

Tokyo next year?”¹⁰⁹ The Japanese NOC members, however, had not been responsible for this decision and they felt that the *L'Équipe* article had been misleading. According to their reply, sent after the GANEFO had already begun, the invitation to the GANEFO had been sent to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and not the Japanese Olympic Committee. Therefore, they had not chosen to send athletes and instead a Japanese commercial firm “closely connected with the Indonesian business circle” had only sent some “Japanese nationals” to participate, which was then interpreted as “Japan’s participation.”¹¹⁰ Nevertheless, some people in Japan obviously wanted to participate in these new politically inspired Games.

As tensions increased, the IOC became determined to see these new Games fail. Brundage and other leaders convinced international sports federations to institute a 12-month ban on Olympic participation for any athlete who participated in the GANEFO.¹¹¹ These federations issued a warning to the National Olympic Committees, although in some cases it was already a violation for athletes in these federations to compete with non-federation members like the PRC and North Korea. Brundage privately wrote to IOC Chancellor Mayer that the ban was necessary because the GANEFO had become “unquestionably the first move in a campaign to take over international sport in one way or another.”¹¹²

¹⁰⁹ IOCA: Correspondence sent from Avery Brundage to Ryotaro Azuma and Singoro Takaishi, November 6, 1963.

¹¹⁰ IOCA: Correspondence from Ryotaro Azuma to Avery Brundage, November 18, 1963.

¹¹¹ Susan Brownell, “Globalization is not a Dinner Party: He Zhenliang and China’s 30-Year Struggle for Recognition by the International Olympic Committee” (paper presented at the Conference on Globalization and Sport in Historical Context, University of California, San Diego, March 2005), 19.

¹¹² IOCA: Personal correspondence from Avery Brundage to Otto Mayer, November 9, 1963.

Some countries' sports leaders, most notably those from the Soviet Union and Japan, panicked. They had already publicly announced their plans to participate in both Games. Neither country wanted to sever relations with the PRC entirely, nor did they want to sacrifice their opportunities in the 1964 games. The Soviet Union, concerned about the future eligibility of its own Olympic athletes, asked that the Games be defined as a "youth festival" so they would not appear in competition with the Olympics.¹¹³ Japanese Olympic Committee officials worried about the quality of the athletes who would participate in the 1964 Olympics: would countries decide to send their top athletes to the GANEFO instead of Tokyo? The Japanese government attempted to have Indonesia re-instated as a member of the IOC. The government claimed that "it was very clear" that the IOC was willing to reconcile. However, if this was unlikely, Japanese officials also hoped that the Indonesians might cancel the Games altogether.¹¹⁴

When the GANEFO finally began on November 10, 1963, they attracted media worldwide. At the opening ceremonies, forty-eight nations were represented in front of a 100,000-person crowd at Bung Karno stadium in Jakarta. After Sukarno officially opened the games and recognized the PRC delegation, the athletes' pledge and torch lighting were followed by a flag procession [Figure 37]. Indonesian Minister of Sports Maladi then declared the GANEFO the beginning of "a revolution in athletics."¹¹⁵

¹¹³ "Russian-Chinese Clash Expected to Follow GANEFO," *The Japan Times*, November 21, 1963.

¹¹⁴ "Azuma Has Hopes for Indonesia," *The Japan Times*, June 10, 1963.

¹¹⁵ "Hail the First Games of the New Emerging Forces," *Peking Review*, November 15, 1963, 21.

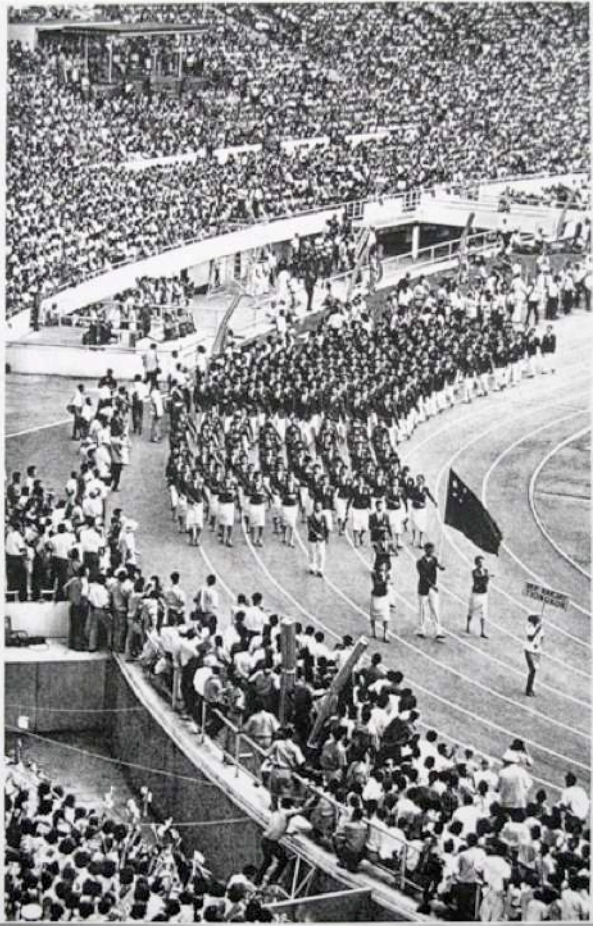


Figure 37. Opening ceremony of the Games of the New Emerging Forces. November 10, 1963. *GANEFO Opens New Era in World Sports* (Beijing: Renmin tiyu chubanshe, 1964).

Most invited countries, despite the IOC ban, sent government-sponsored delegations of athletes whom they did not intend to send to Tokyo. (In fact, the PRC, Indonesia, and North Korea may have been the only ones to send Olympic-caliber athletes.) The importance of mere participation in these Games was not lost on national leaders—many of whom, like Soviet leaders, had a continued interest in the

Afro-Asian and non-aligned movements. GANEFO participation signalled support of the larger political goals of these burgeoning movements.

The first GANEFO lasted twelve days, with media mostly highlighting the success of Chinese athletes. By the early 1960s, the Olympic games had already long been a media spectacle, but few other sporting events could boast the same amount of exposure. For the first time in their sixty-seven years of existence the Olympics were being challenged by another sports competition. Thus the fact that the GANEFO occurred at all—and in a manner even remotely similar to the Olympic games—was, according to some, a “victory in itself.”¹¹⁶ The French newspaper *L'Équipe* ran day-by-day accounts of the Games, including extended commentaries on the ceremonies, competitions, speeches, the International Village, and the lives of GANEFO athletes.¹¹⁷ Newspapers also praised the athletic achievements of the Games. By far the most successful delegation, PRC athletes appeared in nearly every article on the GANEFO. The *New York Times*, for example, reported on November 14 that after four days the Chinese team had already won seventy-six medals.¹¹⁸ On November 18 the article “China Dominates Jakarta Games” listed the names of Chinese athletes and events in which they had picked up additional gold medals.¹¹⁹ And when athletes such as Chinese weightlifter Li Chi-yuan broke world records, newspapers also reported

¹¹⁶ “Sukarno’s GANEFO Is An ‘Emerging Sport; How to Qualify? Bite Hand That Feeds You,” *The Japan Times*, November 11, 1963.

¹¹⁷ *L'Équipe*, November 11-23, 1963. For example: “Pour les ‘Non-Olympiques’ Ce Fut Le Grand Événement” [For ‘non-Olympic’ this was the great event] and “Aux Yeux du Tiers-Monde. L’URSS Fut La Grande Perdante De Djakarta” [In the eyes of the third world. The USSR the big loser in Jakarta].

¹¹⁸ “Chinese Capture 7 First Places,” *New York Times*, November 14, 1963.

¹¹⁹ “China Dominates Jakarta Games,” *New York Times*, November 18, 1963.

the story.¹²⁰ In total, Chinese athletes won sixty-five gold medals; in second place was the Soviet Union with twenty-seven.¹²¹

In China the GANEFO became a huge media sensation. *Xin tiyu* devoted its entire November 1963 issue (and a substantial portion of its December issue) to reporting on the GANEFO. *People's Daily* published numerous articles and photographs on its front page. Articulated in the language of the Afro-Asian movement, the GANEFO's main political goals were to unite all oppressed peoples in the struggle against colonialism and American imperialism. One cartoon published in *Xin tiyu* highlighted the political importance of the Games [Figure 38]. A character who closely resembles JFK dons a shirt with the characters "imperialism" and carries a caricature of a colonialist on his shoulders, as evidenced by the word "colonialism" on his hat. A sports ball inscribed with the words "Games of the New Emerging Forces" slams into the face of the colonialist, knocking him back. Song lyrics accompanying this cartoon remind readers that the "New Emerging Forces link up and surge forward" in order to "oppose imperialism and colonialism!"¹²²

¹²⁰ "Chinese Weight-Lifter Sets World Record in Jakarta," *New York Times*, November 11, 1963.

¹²¹ "First GANEFO Comes Through with Flying Colors," *Peking Review*, November 29, 1963, 18.

¹²² *Xin tiyu*, November 1963, 3.



Figure 38. GANEFO cartoon with figure resembling JFK. *Xin tiyu*, November, 1963.

Media in the PRC emphasized the success of Chinese athletes alongside the political significance of the GANEFO and critiques of the IOC under American imperialism. A cartoon in the *People's Daily* depicts GANEFO athletes happily and gallantly marching ahead led by a Chinese male athlete who carries a flag that says “Games of the New Emerging Forces” [Figure 39]. The athletes seem oblivious to the three men holding sports equipment in the bottom right corner, one of whom wears a shirt with Olympic rings and the letters “U.S.” on it. One man wears boxing gloves and the other holds a baseball bat.

Although the IOC continued to remain silent publicly, the critiques from the PRC media grew more brutal. A cartoon printed a week into the Games [Figure 40] depicts three men in business suits, each with his head buried in a mound of sand, participating in an “International Olympic Committee Ostrich Competition.” The first

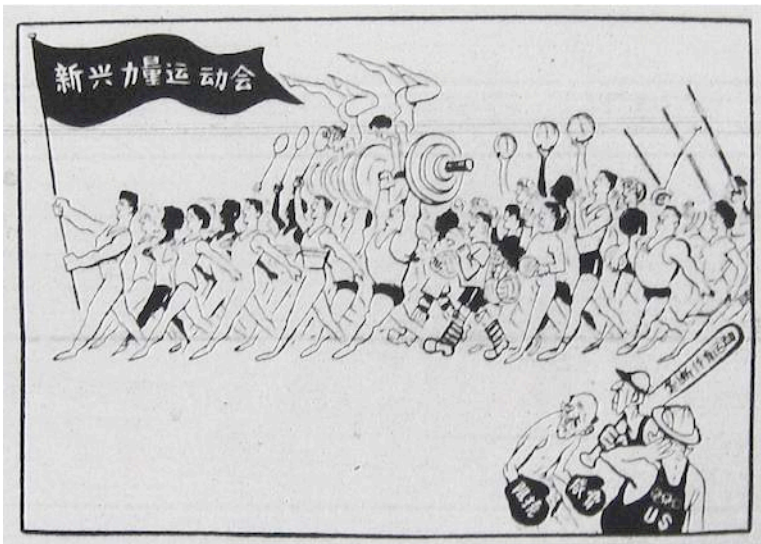


Figure 39. GANEFO parade cartoon. *People's Daily*, November 13, 1963.



Figure 40. "International Olympic Committee Ostrich Competition." *People's Daily*, November 17, 1963.

mound says “non-recognition of GANEFO,” the second mound “non-recognition of new world records,” and the third “we don’t know anything about the Games of the New Emerging Forces.” The caption succinctly states the PRC message about the huge media success of the Games in light of the IOC’s ignorance: “Who can keep their head buried the longest?”

The PRC, Indonesia, and numerous other countries such as North Korea, Vietnam, Cuba, Albania, and the Czech Republic issued additional paraphernalia and souvenirs for the Games. Posters and commemorative stamps were popularly distributed items, but the message was not always uniform. For example, although posters in Indonesia evidence a more ambiguous equality between peoples of the world in the GANEFO [Figure 41], items from the PRC place Chinese athletes directly in the center of the struggle, indicating the centrality of China to the GANEFO [Figure 42].

Photographs circulating in the PRC of the Games were often quite positive and stressed that the GANEFO offered athletes of all nations the opportunity for strong unity through cultural sharing, friendship, cooperation, and mutual aid. Whether in the form of newspaper articles, magazines, images, athlete interviews, or post-event books and publications, the reader was constantly reminded that friendship and sharing were far more important than competition between athletes and countries.¹²³ The International Village in particular was the scene of athletes from various countries sharing cultural experiences with one another. The art exhibition

¹²³ *China’s Sports*, Vol. 1, 1964.



Figure 41. A poster displayed in Jakarta, Indonesia that says “Onward! No Retreat!” From the post-event publication *GANEFO Opens New Era in World Sports* (Beijing: Renmin tiyu chubanshe, 1964).



Figure 42. Stamps issued by the PRC for the first GANEFO. Note the theme of unification among diverse peoples in the bottom right stamp. They stand directly above the words “The first Games of the New Emerging Forces.” Property of Amanda Shuman.

included works from many different countries, and cultural performances from seven countries accompanied the events.¹²⁴ The *Peking Review* stated that all athletes

¹²⁴ “GANEFO: New Wave in Sports And Friendship,” *Peking Review*, November 22, 1963, 17-18.

“learnt from each other so that they all raised their athletic level together.”¹²⁵ Similar statements accompany pictures from the Games and show athletes smiling, laughing, and helping one another during and outside of competition [Figure 43]. The GANEFO was “a reality of tremendous power and potentials,” stated *China Sports*. “Athletes from various countries will meet again in the future. The torch of GANEFO will burn brightly forever.”¹²⁶ Thus, for the PRC, the Games projected an international image of friendship and unity on an unprecedented scale.



Figure 43. GANEFO athletes. *People’s Daily*, November 23, 1963. One of several photomontages of athletes printed the day after the Games ended. Photographs of competition are interspersed with those of “friendly” athletes.

PRC leadership reiterated their support of a new tradition in sports that emphasized anti-imperialism and anti-colonialism. Liu Shaoqi and Zhou Enlai sent a

¹²⁵ “First GANEFO Comes Through with Flying Colors,” 19.

¹²⁶ *China’s Sports*, 1964, Vol. 1, 10.

message to Sukarno declaring that the GANEFO marked “a tremendous victory gained by the people of the new emerging countries in their struggle against the... monopoly of international sports by imperialism.”¹²⁷ No matter what actually occurred in competition, the PRC leadership believed that the GANEFO would “become a household name.”

The GANEFO as Success

Following the successful first GANEFO, delegates from thirty-six nations met to form a permanent GANEFO. A conference held immediately following the Games in late November officially established a GANEFO constitution and hailed the success of the first Games. With so much participation after only 200 days of preparation, the Games proved that despite “fighting and struggling” many nations had awoken “in the spirit of confidence in [their] own power.” A permanent GANEFO organization was established and a second planned for Cairo in 1967. The PRC was chosen as a backup site in case there were “difficulties.”¹²⁸

Meanwhile the IOC leadership panicked over what to do. Press reports of participation counts and countries varied, making it difficult to determine who faced possible disqualification from the Tokyo Olympics. Although the IOC had agreed to let international federations handle the matter on their own, IOC leaders suddenly decided to take action themselves. Mayer reported to Brundage that some members of

¹²⁷ “Hail the First Games of the New Emerging Forces,” 22.

¹²⁸ *Documents of the First GANEFO Congress, Djakarta, 24th-25th November 1963* (Djakarta, 1964), 11, 19.

the IOC felt that the GANEFO situation could have been avoided if the IOC had never suspended Indonesia following the Fourth Asian Games. Brundage replied that the IOC “had every reason [*sic*] to suspend the NOC” and he did not think the Executive Board “acted too hastily.” He stated that an IOC circular would be delivered to all NOCs immediately asking them which athletes, if any, had participated in the GANEFO.¹²⁹

Responses to this circular indicate that many Olympic committees had not sent athletes to the GANEFO—however, some countries’ governments had indeed sent groups of workers, students, youth, or other non-Olympic athletes.¹³⁰ At the 61st IOC session held in January 1964, Brundage, armed with these responses and negative U.S. press reports, publicly criticized the GANEFO. He stated that the Games had been “on the whole badly organized” and largely a “festival” not only about sports but also “music and folk dancing.”¹³¹ Nevertheless, Brundage and other IOC leaders firmly enforced the Olympic ban on GANEFO athletes, and neither North Korean nor Indonesian athletes participated in the 1964 Tokyo Olympics.¹³²

The political message of the GANEFO was clear in PRC media: the Games helped cultivate friendships among athletes and nations, all of whom were united in a struggle against an IOC—and, by extension, the Western, capitalist world—

¹²⁹ IOCA: Personal correspondence from Avery Brundage to Otto Mayer, November 30, 1963.

¹³⁰ IOCA: List of Responses to Circular Letter no. 252, 12/15/63, Avery Brundage collection, box 201, reel 116.

¹³¹ IOCA: Letter to the IOC Executive Board from Avery Brundage, November 30, 1963, and International Olympic Committee meeting minutes, 61st session in Innsbruck. January 26-28, 1964.

¹³² “Brundage Condemns Political Interference in Sport,” *New York Times*, October 8, 1964.

dominated by U.S. imperialism. In post-event publications, however, attacks on U.S. imperialism were superseded by images and language about “friendly competition,” cultural sharing, and solidarity among peoples of the world who were united in a constant anti-imperialist and anti-colonialist struggle.

Moreover, post-event publications depicted Chinese athletes as initiating these friendships and leading efforts to share culture, knowledge, and experience with athletes from other nations. Images in publications produced one and two years after the first GANEFO (which included a full-length color film with English commentary¹³³) show contented athletes from various nations, engaged in friendly, non-competitive, non-sports activities [Figures 44-46]. Underlying these images, of course, was the reality of Chinese athletic superiority, demonstrated in the results of competition. But what these images and photographs all clearly show is that Chinese athletes were more than simply athletes—they were representatives and leaders for their nation, above and beyond their athletic duties. Indeed, taken out of context, none of these images shows evidence of the importance of sports competition, or any sign of sports at all.

The underlying political significance of the GANEFO as a unifying force among countries engaged in an anti-imperial, anti-colonial struggle did not disappear in these post-event publications. For example, in *GANEFO Opens New Era in World Sports* (1964) an introductory statement by Rong Gaotang, the leader of the Chinese Sports Delegation to Jakarta, states that the GANEFO “clearly demonstrates that

¹³³ Pauker, “Ganefo I,” 182. Despite this mention of a film, I have been unable to locate a copy.

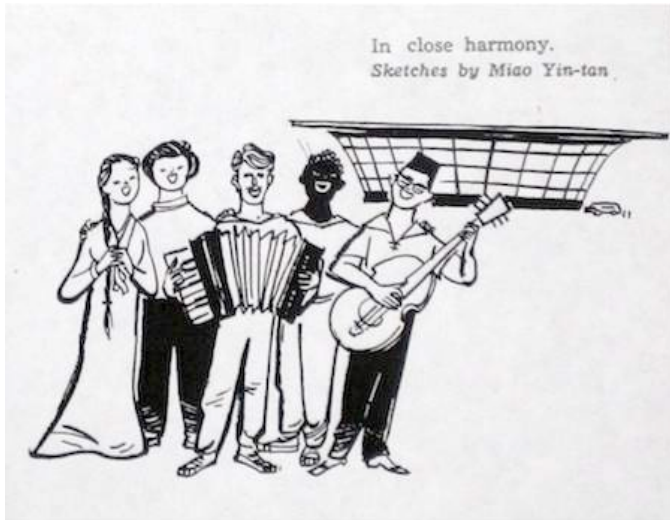


Figure 44. “In close harmony.” This cartoon, from *GANEFO Opens New Era in World Sports* (Beijing: Renmin tiyu chubanshe, 1964), highlights a friendly unity of peoples in front of Bung Karno sports stadium in Jakarta. Published for the anniversary of the first GANEFO, this book contains more images of diverse peoples engaged in non-sports activities than it does of sports competition.



Figure 45-46. GANEFO athletes displaying friendship, cultural sharing, and unity. *GANEFO Opens New Era in World Sports* (Beijing: Renmin tiyu chubanshe, 1964).

countries and peoples free from imperialist and colonialist control are fully able to organize and develop their own independent sports activities” and they could also “contribute much to the development of world sports.”¹³⁴ The importance of GANEFO, above all, was in strengthening solidarity “among the peoples of Asia, Africa, Latin America and the rest of the world.” World sport no longer included only those countries in the Olympics –the GANEFO torch would “shine forever” for all nations engaged in the anti-imperialist, anti-colonial struggle. PRC leaders fully recognized they had successfully created a large-scale media spectacle through international sports that promoted their own international political position. The GANEFO proved, at least to them, that Chinese athletes could serve as one method for China to position itself as a leader of Afro-Asian, underdeveloped, and third world nations.

Legacy and Aftermath of the GANEFO

Although the 1963 GANEFO was successful, a second large-scale GANEFO never took place. One scholar has recently argued that tensions in the GANEFO existed from the outset,¹³⁵ implying that the organization may never have been on solid ground. While this may be the case, the staging of the first GANEFO did largely play in the PRC’s favor and Chinese leaders exploited the event to their advantage—

¹³⁴ *GANEFO Opens New Era in World Sports; Chinese Sports Delegation in Djakarta*, introduction.

¹³⁵ Chris A. Connolly, “The Politics of the Games of the New Emerging Forces (GANEFO),” *The International Journal of the History of Sport*, 29:9: 1311-1324.

by projecting the image of a powerful China on the world stage, and spinning the most positive image back to Chinese citizens.

Sports delegation visits with African and Asian nations, as will be discussed in the next chapter, increased following the first GANEFO and promoted a Chinese version of socialism. However, political developments, such as the PRC opposition to the 1963 Partial Nuclear Test Ban Treaty and the subsequent detonation of a test bomb during the 1964 Tokyo Olympics,¹³⁶ strained relations with some members of the Afro-Asian and non-aligned movements. Then, in 1965, a military coup overturned Sukarno's authority and brought his successor to power on an anti-Communist, anti-China platform.¹³⁷ Subsequent changes in Chinese high politics, including the fall of Liu Shaoqi and the start of the Cultural Revolution in mid-1966, had a significant impact on foreign relations and the role of elite athletes in society. The state turned inwards, embroiled with internal ideological battles to purge "bourgeois" elements from its ranks and begin another mass movement. Publications like *Xin tiyu* no longer showed athletes breaking records or competing in friendly competitions, but instead portrayed them holding portraits of Mao and reading from the Little Red Book. The GANEFO organization thus lost the support of Indonesia and the PRC, its two main proponents, and an Asian-only GANEFO held in Cambodia in late 1966 was not nearly as popular as its predecessor.

¹³⁶ B. E. Shinde, "China and Afro-Asian Solidarity 1955-65: A Study of China's Policy and Diplomacy," *China Report* 1978 14(2): 48-71.

¹³⁷ Coppel, *Indonesian Chinese in Crisis*, 52; M.S.R. Manjunatha, "India and Indonesia: After 50 Years of Independence," *Economic and Political Weekly*, January 31-February 6, 1998, 218.

In China, by 1967 the GANEFO had all but disappeared from the public record. In the early years of the Cultural Revolution, sports newspapers and magazines ceased publication and few, if any, international sports competitions were held.¹³⁸ When sports publications and large-scale competitions resumed in 1971, the GANEFO remained absent from discussion.¹³⁹ Even in more recent publications, discussion of the Games centers on the achievements of the Chinese athletes in competition rather than the political significance of friendly sports competitions or the attempt by Chinese leaders to use sports to lead an international movement.¹⁴⁰

Nevertheless, elite athletes, international sports competition and especially the GANEFO played a defining role in China during the years of 1961-1965. The GANEFO expressed China's unbroken commitment to using elite competitive sports for nation building, but the Games also served as the culmination of a larger PRC political project involving non-aligned and Afro-Asian nations. The GANEFO illustrates how elite international sport offered Chinese socialism a way to represent itself to its own people as a successor to the "sick man of East Asia," while also challenging the Olympic movement and negotiating a new position for China on the world stage.

¹³⁸ See the paucity of events listed in "Da shiji" in *Zhongguo tiyu nianjian 1949-1991*, ed. Guojia tiwei (Renmin tiyuchubanshe, 1993) between 1967 and 1970.

¹³⁹ For example: Renmin tiyu chubanshe, *Sports in China* (Beijing: Foreign Languages Press, 1973); *Sports and Public Health*, ed. Zhongguo shouce bianji weiyuanhui (Beijing: Foreign Languages Press, 1983). The exception seems to be Rong Gaotang, *Dangdai Zhongguo tiyu [Tiyu in Contemporary China]* (Beijing: Zhongguo shehui kexu chubanshe, 1984), which offers a brief discussion of the event.

¹⁴⁰ For example: *Xin Zhongguo tiyu 50 nian [50 Years of Sports in New China]* (Shandong jiaoyu chubanshe, 1999); Wu Shaozu, *Zhonghua renmin gongheguo tiyushi, 1949-1998, zonghe juan [1949-1998 People's Republic of China Sports History, 1949-1998, a summary]* (Beijing: Zhongguo shuji chubanshe, 1999).

Conclusion

In the aftermath of the Great Leap Forward, financial hardships created an untenable situation across society and in *tiyu* programs, in which leaders had to decide which programs would continue to receive precious state resources and which would be scaled back or cut. As previous chapters have shown, for decades there had been an official desire to see Chinese athletes succeed internationally. When foreign relations with the Soviet Union deteriorated and eventually led to a Sino-Soviet split, Chinese officials looked for ways to compete with the Soviet Union for socialist influence in African and Asian nations. One way to do this was by showing the world how Chinese elite athletes had succeeded through Chinese-led socialist *tiyu* programs. Elite athletes, who in official eyes were seen as ambassadors of a kind of cultural diplomacy through sport, continued to represent the nation as they had previously, but now they also served vital roles as agents for showcasing an ideologically superior Chinese socialism to the rest of the world.

The tense international situation with the Soviets also meant that Chinese leaders increasingly viewed mass *tiyu* activities as primarily beneficial for building a people's militia equipped with paramilitary skills. Budget cuts in competitive basketball or gymnastics programs, for example, made sense, while those in rifle shooting did not. Chinese leaders thus chose to concentrate limited state resources almost exclusively on the very best elite athletes trained at the central level, and to deemphasize and decentralize state support for non-militarized competitive sports

activities that encouraged mass participation. As a result, mass *tiyu* activities primarily became locally sponsored events and programs, and even these often included paramilitary elements aimed at developing national defense skills.

Overall, in the years after the Great Leap Forward failed, there was a clear split between programs exclusively for elite athletes and *tiyu* activities aimed at developing a people's militia among ordinary citizens. Meanwhile, Chinese leaders began to utilize international sport and elite athletes as methods for competing with the Soviet Union for influence and reifying Chinese socialism in the decolonized world. The peak of this effort was the GANEFO, which attempted to solidify China's geopolitical position as a Third World leader. In the years immediately prior to the Cultural Revolution, as the next chapter will show, the split between elite and mass *tiyu* in China deepened, as elite athletes served crucial roles as agents of disseminating Chinese socialism in delegation visits and leaders invested heavily in providing them with some of the best training (and coaches) in the world.

Chapter 6

“Bitter Training” with Politics in Command: Elite Sport 1964-1966

This chapter tracks the increasingly militarized and politicized world of domestic elite sport in the years 1964-1966 primarily through a close investigation of several foreign sports delegation visits to China. These visits served as opportunities for Chinese officials to showcase China as the exemplar of socialist modernity. Foreign guests were often exposed to a portrayal of Chinese socialism through cultural performances, meetings with important Chinese leaders, and visits to important cultural or socialist model sites. Chinese leaders did everything possible to project China as the true inheritor of international socialism—evident in athletic achievements and across all of society—and reports from these visits implicitly suggested that international support for Chinese socialism and Chinese leaders was on the rise.

The previous chapter noted that following the end of the Great Leap Forward, a noticeable divide emerged between mass *tiyu* and elite sports programs. As this chapter demonstrates, that divide actually deepened in the years leading up to the Cultural Revolution. Few changes occurred in mass *tiyu* during these years, while elite sport functioned almost exclusively as an intrinsic part of Chinese foreign policy. This is most apparent than in the extensive document trail left by these visits in Chinese archives. Recently declassified official reports, produced by and for leaders at the municipal and central levels, record the day-by-day sport and non-sport activities of foreign guests, including their alleged opinions and verbatim comments.

Less important than the veracity of every comment made in these reports is the choice of content recorded in them. What officials chose to record indicates how visits became explicit conduits for pushing official political agendas and worldviews, while also attempting to shore up or demonstrate foreign support for Chinese policies.¹

Shifts in Chinese high politics in these years, as this chapter also shows, led to progressively more militarized and politicized elite sports programs and delegation visits. By 1964, Liu Shaoqi, in line to succeed Mao, and Zhou Enlai had become the main advocates for speeding up the development of an elite cadre of athletes that would dominate international elite sport. Mao was visibly less directly involved in the world of elite sport after the Great Leap Forward. However, the downfall of Khrushchev in late 1964 brought Mao's paranoia over losing ground to his successor and other rightists in the Party to a head. A power struggle between Liu and Mao at the December 1964-January 1965 Politburo work conference ended with Mao reasserting his dominant role. Mao, on a mission to remove his rivals at the top (who he accused of being "capitalist roaders"²), began efforts to push more radical leftist policies – including when he publicly commented that everyone should read ping-pong player Xu Yinsheng's speech for its emphasis on youth questioning authority. The Socialist Education Movement had helped introduce the study of Mao Zedong

¹ The content found in these reports was related to larger CCP political narratives at the time. I agree with Zachary Scarlett that these narratives were often "exaggerated, manipulated, or even imagined" and that official reports must therefore be understood (and, I would argue, can only be understood) within the context of official political discourse at the specific moment in time they were created. Zachary Scarlett, "China After the Sino-Soviet Split: Maoist Politics, Global Narratives, and the Imagination of the World" (Ph.D. diss., Northeastern University, 2012), 15-16.

² Roderick MacFarquhar, *The Origins of the Cultural Revolution, Vol. 3: The Coming of the Cataclysm 1961-1966* (London: Oxford University Press and Columbia University Press, 1997), 428, 431.

Thought to those in elite sport in 1964, but after Xu's speech this study quickly gained ground under the notion that athletic training needed to have "politics in command."

The chapter begins with a close look at the Japanese women's volleyball team's visit to China, and their infamous coach Daimatsu Hirobumi, which took place immediately following their gold medal win at the 1964 Tokyo Olympics. The reports from the visit indicate significant interest among the leadership in adopting Daimatsu's militaristic coaching style and simultaneously demonstrate how Chinese officials used the visit as a way to impress their visitors with Chinese socialism while cultivating relations based on a shared anti-American struggle.

The chapter then discusses elite sport in the aftermath of the Daimatsu visit, as volleyball coaches reappropriated Daimatsu's training methods and philosophy for the purposes of their own militarized sports policies. In 1965 and 1966, officials called for elite athletic "bitter training" with politics in command instead of scientifically based training. By mid-1966, however, sports publications and sports delegation visits had become so politicized and militant that they simply adhered to Mao Zedong Thought, reduced to boilerplate political language and Mao sloganeering about self-reliance and militant struggle. In contrast to late 1964, official reports from several delegation visits made by African nations to China in 1966 worked much harder to document the supposed exuberance of guests and their support of Mao, Mao Zedong Thought, and Chinese policies more broadly.

Elite sport dominated the attention of the State Sports Commission in the mid-1960s, but this chapter ends by briefly looking at how the advent of the Cultural Revolution led to the cessation of nearly all elite sports activities in China for several years. China's almost complete international isolation by late 1966 meant that there was no longer a pressing need for sports delegation visits. As this chapter concludes, elite sport and foreign policy were so closely intertwined by this point that once foreign delegation visits dwindled, so too did elite sport.

The “Witches of the Orient” Visit China

Nearly every history of volleyball in China today attributes the nation's later success in the sport – the women won the world championship in 1981 and Olympic gold in 1984 – to the foundation initially laid by the late 1964 and mid-1965 visits of the Japanese women's volleyball coach Daimatsu Hirobumi (*Dasong bowen*) and his famous team, known colloquially worldwide as the “Witches of the Orient.”³

Daimatsu coached this Nichibo Kaizuka factory women's team, which effectively served as the national team, from 1953 to 1965. In the early 1960s the team dominated women's volleyball as they won 175 consecutive matches,⁴ including the 1962 volleyball world championships and gold at the 1964 Tokyo Olympics – both

³ This name (Japanese: *Toyo no Majo*) apparently derived from a Soviet report published in Leningrad following the team's 1961 wins across Europe. According to Iwona Merklejn, Daimatsu went on to use this reference positively in his 1963 book *Ore ni tsuite Koi* [Follow Me], a bestseller published after the 1962 win in Moscow. The term was also picked up in the Japanese media coverage of the team. In the book, Daimatsu explained that, “the image associated with the word ‘witch’ (*majo*) used here is not that of a frightening, evil woman, but of someone who wields supernatural powers. On the whole, it is a positive image that transcends the limitations of human weakness.” Iwona Merklejn, “The Taming of the Witch: Daimatsu Hirobumi and Coaching Discourses of Women's Volleyball,” in *Japan, Asia Pacific Journal of Sport and Social Science*, vol. 3, iss. 2 (2014): 115-129.

⁴ Helen Macnaughtan, “The Oriental Witches: Women, Volleyball and the 1964 Tokyo Olympics,” *Sport in History*, 34:1 (2014): 137.

times beating the Soviet team in the final match. The team's success, along with Daimatsu's notorious training methods and new techniques, are well documented in the annals of sports history.⁵

Rarely discussed outside of Chinese publications on volleyball is the team's visit to China, at the invitation of the State Sports Commission with the backing of Zhou Enlai following the gold medal win in Tokyo.⁶ Eight players accompanied Daimatsu and a manager in late November 1964 for a three-week visit to Beijing, Shanghai, Hangzhou, and Guangzhou.⁷ Zhou's support in inviting such a high-profile

⁵ For example: Macnaughtan; Merklejn; Yoshikuni Igarashi, *Bodies of Memory: Narratives of War in Postwar Japanese Culture, 1945-1970* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000), pages 155-162; and Christian Tagsold, "Remember to Get Back on Your Feet Quickly: The Japanese Women's Volleyball Team at the 1964 Olympics as a Realm of Memory," *Sport in Society* 14:4 (2011): 443-452. Tagsold's work touches on Daimatsu, but he is more interested in the historical memory of the team at the Olympics. Igarashi and Merklejn include extended discussions of Daimatsu by analyzing his publications; Igarashi does so primarily as a way to connect Daimatsu's POW and war memories to his training methods, and Merklejn in order to argue that his patriarchal role can be connected to larger gender discourses in Japanese society. Macnaughtan is also interested in gender, but she looks at Daimatsu as a factory team manager and father figure in charge of helping his players find marriage partners. Macnaughtan's conclusions are based on her own interview with former team captain Kasai Masae who, at age 31, was also the oldest player on the team by four years and upon retirement relied on Daimatsu to help her find a suitable marriage partner (Macnaughtan, 131, 139, 143).

⁶ Meng Hong, "Zhou Enlai qing xi xin Zhongguo paiqiu shiye" [Zhou Enlai's ties to New China's volleyball], *Xiangchao (shang ban yue)*, December 2011, 8-11.

⁷ SMA B126-1-819: Jiedai Riben Beizhong nüzi paiqiudui zongjie [Summary of the Japanese Kaizuka women's volleyball team visit], December? 1964. The team was also accompanied by two businessmen representing the Nichibo textile factory, listed in the Chinese report as "manager Yuan Jiping" and "secretary Yan Benlairen," who unsuccessfully tried to use the visit as an opportunity to establish business contacts that, Yuan claimed would help promote Sino-Japanese relations, along with sport. Both men had apparently graduated from the Shanghai East Asia Common Culture Academy – Yuan in 1921 and Yan in 1937. This Academy was setup by the Tokyo-based East Asia Common Culture Association to train young Japanese for business and government positions related to China. (For more on this institution, Douglas Reynolds, "Chinese Area Studies in Prewar China: Japan's Toa Dobun Shoin in Shanghai, 1900-1945," *The Journal of Asian Studies*, Vol. 45, No. 5 (Nov. 1986): 945-970). Yuan, noted the internal report, had not returned to China since Liberation, while Yan had previously worked in Tianjin's spinning and weaving company and been back to China several times since. SMA B126-1-819: Tiyu yundong weiyuanhui guojisi waibin jiedai gongzuo jianbao: Riben Beizhong nüzi paiqiudui qingkuang: di yi qi [State Sports Commission brief work report on receiving foreign guests: Japanese Kaizuka women's volleyball team situation: number 1] (Guangzhou-Beijing: November 20-21, 1964) and Tiyu yundong weiyuanhui guojisi waibin jiedai gongzuo jianbao: Riben Beizhong nüzi paiqiudui qingkuang: di er qi [State Sports Commission brief work report on receiving

team shows how elite *tiyu* and elite athletes gained a heightened national importance in the mid-1960s. The invitation of a Japanese team despite the nation's status as a former enemy shows the extent to which Chinese leaders at the time wanted to improve Sino-Japanese relations for the sake of carrying out their struggle against American imperialism and Soviet revisionism.

Nevertheless, as records from the Japanese volleyball team visit indicate, in late 1964 the leadership was most interested in improving the nation's volleyball skills. In part the leadership's interest stemmed from a longstanding interest in developing competitive sport, which included He Long's dream to reach world levels in one of the "three big ball" sports – basketball, soccer, volleyball.⁸ Other reasons included the fact that Chinese leaders felt a certain level of identification with the Japanese team, which had beaten the Soviets to become number one in the world, despite the fact that the Japanese players were much shorter than their opponents (in other words, Chinese leaders had expected the physically taller and larger Soviet

foreign guests: Japanese Kaizuka women's volleyball team situation: number 2], Beijing, November 22-23, 1964. In her article about Daimatsu and the Nichibo factory team, Macnaughtan notes that, prior to WWII, Nichibo and other Japanese textile firms had factories in China, and that other scholars have suggested that Daimatsu's coaching was used as a kind of negotiation tool in these firms' attempts to reestablish their business (and factories) in China (Macnaughtan, 11). In any case, Nichibo's attempt during the Daimatsu visit seems to have gotten nowhere despite a meeting at Beijing hotel with Liao Chengzhi, and the summary report for the visit simply states that the two men left China on December 6.

⁸ Wang Ding, "San daqiu shang bu qu si bu mingmu: He Long tongzhi kaichuang xinzhongguo tiyu shiye pianduan" [If we don't make it in the three big ball sports then I will die with everlasting regret: snippets of Comrade He Long's innovations in New China's sports], *Tiyu wenshi*, February 1986, 4-7. See also the interview with Wang Zhiqiang in *Gongheguo tiyu: 110 wei jianzheng zhe fangtan* [PRC Sport: 110 witness interviews], comp. Zhonggong zhongyang wenxian yanjiushi di er bian yanbu, (Guiyang: Guizhou renmin chubanshe, 2008), 78.

athletes to win solely based on their stature).⁹ Finally, Daimatsu's training methods, based on a militarized "spirit," fell in line with Chinese sports policies in 1964 to follow the model of the People's Liberation Army, by starting from politics and actual combat in order to improve overall.

Studying Technical Skills and "Bitter Training" from the World Champions

The official internal announcement for the visit sent from the State Sports Commission to several central bureaus, including the Foreign Ministry, as well as the provincial foreign visitor offices (*waiban*) of Beijing, Shanghai, Zhejiang, and Guangdong, declared that the most attention should be paid to studying the skills and experience of the Japanese team in order to raise the level of volleyball.¹⁰ The schedule for the visit was packed with friendly matches, and called for at least two public practices (*gongtong lianxi*) with Chinese teams in Beijing and Shanghai, along

⁹ In fact, Dong Tianshu, one former elite volleyball athlete remembers Zhou Enlai as having stated that, "Japanese people are yellow people, Chinese people are also yellow people; [if] Japanese people can do it, we also should be able to do it, Chinese people can also take the volleyball world championship." Interview with Dong Tianshu in *Gongheguo tiyu*, 84. This view also stemmed from a longstanding belief among Chinese sports leaders that physical stature greatly mattered in the "three big ball" sports. For example, Mou Zuoyun, who by the mid-1950s was in charge of improving soccer, volleyball, and basketball programs, claimed many decades later that he had ordered the recruitment into basketball programs of "all girls who showed the potential to grow taller than 1.80 meters [5'11"]", and all boys who showed the potential to grow taller than two meters [nearly 6'7"]". As quoted in Brook Larmer, *Operation Yao Ming: The Chinese Sports Empire, American Big Business, and the Making of an NBA Superstar* (New York: Gotham Books, 2005), 15.

¹⁰ SMA B126-1-819: Zhonghua renmin gongheguo tiyu yundong weiyuanhui guanyu jiedai Riben Beizhong nüzi paiqiudui de tongzhi (jimi) [PRC State Sports Commission announcement concerning receiving the Japanese Kaizuka women's volleyball team (classified)], November 4, 1964.

with technical discussion forums (*jishu zuotanhui*) to be held in Beijing, Shanghai, and Guangzhou.¹¹

The central leadership was very interested in using the visit as a springboard for promoting more intense training in elite volleyball. In Beijing, Zhou Enlai, He Long, Chen Yi, and Beijing mayor Peng Zhen watched practices and competitions, and met with the foreign guests off court [Figure 47].¹² The absence of Mao Zedong did not go unnoticed by the guests, a fact that Chinese sports leaders made known in internal reports. After seeing that Zhou Enlai had attended an exhibition match held in Beijing, the team's manager reportedly asked, "Is Mao Zedong also in Beijing?"¹³ Several days later, even after Zhou had met privately with Daimatsu for a half-hour discussion, the manager and team captain Kasai Masae asked whether or not Mao would come watch the team play ball,¹⁴ a request that seems to have gone unfulfilled.

During the visit, the Japanese team was treated exceptionally well. Normally foreign sports guests would be met by a welcoming committee, and provided with lodging, sightseeing, private transportation and small amounts of spending money in

¹¹ SMA B126-1-819: Riben "Ni ji bo" (rifang) Beizhong nüzi paiqiu daibiaotuan quanguo huodong richeng [Japanese "Nichibo" (Japanese side) Kaizuka women's volleyball team representative delegation national activities schedule], November 4, 1964.

¹² SMA B126-1-819: Tiyu yundong weiyuanhui guojisi waibin jiedai gongzuo jianbao: Riben Beizhong nüzi paiqiudui qingkuang: di er qi [State Sports Commission brief work report on receiving foreign guests: Japanese Kaizuka women's volleyball team situation: number 2], Beijing, November 22-23, 1964.

¹³ SMA B126-1-819: Tiyu yundong weiyuanhui guojisi waibin jiedai gongzuo jianbao: Riben Beizhong nüzi paiqiudui qingkuang: di yi qi [State Sports Commission brief work report on receiving foreign guests: Japanese Kaizuka women's volleyball team situation: number 1], Guangzhou-Beijing, November 20-21, 1964.

¹⁴ SMA B126-1-819: Tiyu yundong weiyuanhui guojisi waibin jiedai gongzuo jianbao: Riben Beizhong nüzi paiqiudui qingkuang: di si qi [State Sports Commission brief work report on receiving foreign guests: Japanese Kaizuka women's volleyball team situation: number 4], Beijing, November 25, 1964.



Figure 46. Zhou Enlai shakes hands with members of the Japanese Nichibo women's volleyball team. *Xin tiyu*, January 1965.

each locale they stayed. The Japanese team received even more perks. In Shanghai, for example, a private lunch banquet was held for the team with Sino-Japanese Friendship Society President Liao Chengzhi and about a dozen other local leaders. Twelve dishes were served, including Shanghai's specialty Xiaolongbao (soup dumplings) and Peking duck, at a cost of roughly 60 *yuan* per person.¹⁵ Another less expensive banquet was held later the same day for the Japanese team and local sports leaders (at a cost of only 5.5 *yuan* per person), and included the participation of players from the women's Shanghai, Liaoning, and Beijing sports institute teams.¹⁶ Leaders even set up a special visit for player Yuriko Handa in Beijing to see an artwork exhibition from the graduates of the Meishuguan (National Art Gallery) advanced fine arts school because they had learned that she liked art.¹⁷ Chinese leaders clearly wanted please and impress these visitors.

By far the most important aspect of the visit was sports training and Daimatsu's "bitter training" (*kulian*) methods, which amazed (or frightened) those in the Chinese sports world. The Japanese players spent many hours on the court every day. Prior to the Olympics, the players told the Chinese, they had practiced every day

¹⁵ SMA B126-1-819: Canjia yan (jiu) hui, bian (pei) can renyuan dengjibiao [Registration form for personnel participating in banquets and cocktail parties], December 7, 1964 (noon), and Liao Chengzhi tongzhi yanqing Riben Beizhong nüzi paiqiudui caidan [Comrade Liao Chengzhi's menu for dining with the Japanese Nichibo women's volleyball team], December 7, 1964.

¹⁶ SMA B126-1-819: Canjia yan (jiu) hui, bian (pei) can renyuan dengjibiao [Registration form for personnel participating in banquets and cocktail parties], December 7, 1964 (afternoon). There were 35 people at a cost of 5.5 *yuan* at this banquet. One of the participating players was Cao Qiwei who, as discussed in Chapter 4 of this dissertation, played the lead role of Lin Xiaojie in the 1957 film *Girl Basketball Player Number 5*.

¹⁷ SMA B126-1-819: Tiyu yundong weiyuanhui guojisi waibin jiedai gongzuo jianbao: Riben Beizhong nüzi paiqiudui qingkuang: di si qi.

for 8 to 9 hours, from 4 p.m until 1 a.m.¹⁸ They had no weekend days off, few holidays, and an “extremely peculiar” schedule in which they slept through the mornings, ate breakfast at noon, and trained past midnight.¹⁹ After visiting Beihai, the Summer Palace, and the Beijing *Tiyu* institute, they held a practice at the institute. In fact, no matter what else was on the schedule, including actual competition, they still practiced, leading one report to conclude that, “basically, each day, if [they] aren’t competing then [they’re] practicing.”²⁰ After watching the “East is Red” ballet in Beijing one evening, for example, they went back to the court for practice from 11 p.m. until 1 a.m.²¹ In Shanghai, they practiced one evening for four hours with the Shanghai and Jiangsu teams, the next afternoon for three hours, watched an acrobatic performance in the evening and then headed back to the court for two and a half hours of late-night training with the Sichuan and Shandong teams.²²

Holding matches and joint volleyball practices was the primary goal of the visit as far as Daimatsu was also concerned. After arriving in Beijing, Daimatsu reiterated that the team had come to China “most importantly to hold matches” because he wanted to “give Chinese people a look at Olympic level [play].”²³ The

¹⁸ SMA B126-1-819: Tiyu yundong weiyuanhui guojisi waibin jiedai gongzuo jianbao: Riben Beizhong nüzi paiqiudui qingkuang: di yi qi.

¹⁹ SMA B126-1-819: Jiedai Riben Beizhong nüzi paiqiudui zongjie.

²⁰ SMA B126-1-819: Tiyu yundong weiyuanhui guojisi waibin jiedai gongzuo jianbao: Riben Beizhong nüzi paiqiudui qingkuang: di er qi.

²¹ SMA B126-1-819: Tiyu yundong weiyuanhui guojisi waibin jiedai gongzuo jianbao: Riben Beizhong nüzi paiqiudui qingkuang: di yi qi.

²² SMA B126-1-819: Tiyu yundong weiyuanhui guojisi waibin jiedai gongzuo jianbao: Riben Beizhong nüzi paiqiudui qingkuang: di qi qi [State Sports Commission brief work report on receiving foreign guests: Japanese Kaizuka women’s volleyball team situation: number 7], Shanghai, November 30-December 1, 1964.

²³ SMA B126-1-819: Tiyu yundong weiyuanhui guojisi waibin jiedai gongzuo jianbao: Riben Beizhong nüzi paiqiudui qingkuang: di yi qi.

official report correctly interpreted this to mean that Daimatsu was primarily interested in holding exhibition matches and public training sessions (*gongkai xunlian*), noting that prior to the Olympics this team's training had never been public.²⁴ Meeting with secretary of the State Sports Commission Zhang Lianhua on November 22 to discuss the schedule, Daimatsu agreed to eight matches, four public practices to be jointly held with Chinese players, and two or three informal discussion sessions.²⁵ In Shanghai, he hoped to use public practices (*gongtong lianxi*) in order to find 12 players he could train further upon his return the following year.²⁶ By the end of the visit, Daimatsu and the team had held a total of fifteen joint practice sessions of up to four hours each, with fifteen women's teams and six men's teams from all around China. Approximately 600 *tiyu* workers and athletes in Beijing and another 500 in Shanghai had come to watch and study the Japanese team. The scale of the visit was unprecedented: it was the first time in 15 years, according to the final report, that "a foreign sports team carried out this kind of large-scale skills exchange activity in our country."²⁷

At numerous public practices, Daimatsu introduced Chinese players to his training style while also offering advice and criticism. Each practice in Shanghai

²⁴ SMA B126-1-819: Tiyu yundong weiyuanhui guojisi waibin jiedai gongzuo jianbao: Riben Beizhong nüzi paiqiudui qingkuang: di yi qi.

²⁵ SMA B126-1-819: Tiyu yundong weiyuanhui guojisi waibin jiedai gongzuo jianbao: Riben Beizhong nüzi paiqiudui qingkuang: di er qi.

²⁶ SMA B126-1-819: Tiyu yundong weiyuanhui guojisi waibin jiedai gongzuo jianbao: Riben Beizhong nüzi paiqiudui qingkuang: di qi qi.

²⁷ SMA B126-1-819: Jiedai Riben Beizhong nüzi paiqiudui zongjie.

included teaching two or three new moves to Chinese coaches and athletes,²⁸ including moves such as the judo-inspired rolling dive that the Nichibo team had invented.²⁹ Athletes also gained “profound experience” with his style of “bitter training.”³⁰ Furthermore, noted one report, he taught by example, and during open practices with Chinese athletes was himself “soaked in sweat” from having performed more than 2,570 spikes, drop shots, and passes (i.e., feeding the ball to players) one day³¹ and more than 4,060 of these during a three and a half hour practice another day.³² Chinese sports leaders lauded the coach’s active participation, which they felt made training lively and was useful in guiding players.³³

Daimatsu’s own generosity also stemmed from a genuine interest in training the Chinese team, which he believed had the right kind of “spirit.” After watching “The East is Red,” Daimatsu stated that he was moved by China’s ability to “step by step overcome difficulties and grow.” In contrast, he deplored Japanese youth for “loving American education” and walking down a path of corruption and decay.³⁴ He felt the “Chinese spirit was the same as the Nichibo team’s spirit” in the commitment

²⁸ SMA B126-1-819: Tiyu yundong weiyuanhui guojisi waibin jiedai gongzuo jianbao: Riben Beizhong nüzi paiqiudui qingkuang: di qi qi.

²⁹ SMA B126-1-819: Tiyu yundong weiyuanhui guojisi waibin jiedai gongzuo jianbao: Riben Beizhong nüzi paiqiudui qingkuang: di jiu qi [State Sports Commission brief work report on receiving foreign guests: Japanese Kaizuka women’s volleyball team situation: number 9], Shanghai, December 4-6, 1964.

³⁰ SMA B126-1-819: Tiyu yundong weiyuanhui guojisi waibin jiedai gongzuo jianbao: Riben Beizhong nüzi paiqiudui qingkuang: di qi qi.

³¹ SMA B126-1-819: Tiyu yundong weiyuanhui guojisi waibin jiedai gongzuo jianbao: Riben Beizhong nüzi paiqiudui qingkuang: di ba qi [State Sports Commission brief work report on receiving foreign guests: Japanese Kaizuka women’s volleyball team situation: number 8], Shanghai, December 2-3, 1964.

³² SMA B126-1-819: Tiyu yundong weiyuanhui guojisi waibin jiedai gongzuo jianbao: Riben Beizhong nüzi paiqiudui qingkuang: di jiu qi.

³³ SMA B126-1-819: Jiedai Riben Beizhong nüzi paiqiudui zongjie.

³⁴ SMA B126-1-819: Tiyu yundong weiyuanhui guojisi waibin jiedai gongzuo jianbao: Riben Beizhong nüzi paiqiudui qingkuang: di er qi.

to overcoming difficulties and self-reliance (*zili gengsheng*).³⁵ This “spirit” also meant that he felt the Chinese could endure his training methods, a sentiment shared by some of his players. One stated that, compared to athletes in other countries who were scared of Daimatsu, “Chinese athletes had the drive [and] could walk with Daimatsu” (*gen Dasong zou*).³⁶

These positive comments also reflected his own desire to return to China in the future to coach, and he worked hard to impress the Chinese so they would invite him back. He made it known that although he had already been invited to coach in the U.S., Soviet Union, Poland and Romania, he was interested in returning the following year (after his retirement from the Japanese team) in order to coach the Chinese team. After the Nichibo team defeated the Beijing *Tiyu* Research Institute team 5:0 in the first competition, Daimatsu noted that the main problem with the Chinese team’s study of play was that it basically mirrored that of the Soviet Union.³⁷ For example, players’ training clearly didn’t include individual, specialized development. In Shanghai he noted that the level of the Sichuan players had improved quickly in training with the Japanese players, but that they were too slow with their feet.³⁸ At a lengthy off-court discussion session held in Shanghai with 280 coaches and athletes from all over China, Daimatsu reflected that from what he had seen so far, no other

³⁵ SMA B126-1-819: *Tiyu yundong weiyuanhui guojisi waibin jiedai gongzuo jianbao*: Riben Beizhong nüzi paiqiudui qingkuang: di er qi.

³⁶ SMA B126-1-819: *Tiyu yundong weiyuanhui guojisi waibin jiedai gongzuo jianbao*: Riben Beizhong nüzi paiqiudui qingkuang: di si qi.

³⁷ SMA B126-1-819: *Tiyu yundong weiyuanhui guojisi waibin jiedai gongzuo jianbao*: Riben Beizhong nüzi paiqiudui qingkuang: di er qi.

³⁸ SMA B126-1-819: *Tiyu yundong weiyuanhui guojisi waibin jiedai gongzuo jianbao*: Riben Beizhong nüzi paiqiudui qingkuang: di jiu qi.

country could study technical skills as intensely as China.³⁹ At first he asserted that with one year of training under him, the Chinese team “could capture the world championship”⁴⁰; toward the end of the visit, he revised that to just half a year.⁴¹

Although Daimatsu’s successful training methods clearly appealed to Chinese sports leaders, leaders did not give them a blanket endorsement and specifically discouraged certain practices. During training, for example, Daimatsu had a penchant for scolding players when frustrated. At a practice held in Shanghai with Liaoning and Shandong players, he expressed his dissatisfaction at one point, stating that the athletes had a problem with their “spirit” and were not worth training. “These kinds of athletes,” he stated, “shouldn’t stay in China, [they] should go to America.”⁴² The statement probably reflected his own political distaste for the United States,⁴³ but the tone of the report indicates that in this context Chinese officials clearly felt Daimatsu had gone too far in reprimanding (if not also demotivating) their own athletes. He

³⁹ SMA B126-1-819: Tiyu yundong weiyuanhui guojisi waibin jiedai gongzuo jianbao: Riben Beizhong nüzi paiqiudui qingkuang: di jiu qi.

⁴⁰ SMA B126-1-819: Tiyu yundong weiyuanhui guojisi waibin jiedai gongzuo jianbao: Riben Beizhong nüzi paiqiudui qingkuang: di er qi.

⁴¹ SMA B126-1-819: Tiyu yundong weiyuanhui guojisi waibin jiedai gongzuo jianbao: Riben Beizhong nüzi paiqiudui qingkuang: di shiyi qi [State Sports Commission brief work report on receiving foreign guests: Japanese Kaizuka women’s volleyball team situation: number 11], Shanghai-Hangzhou, December 7-9, 1964.

⁴² SMA B126-1-819: Tiyu yundong weiyuanhui guojisi waibin jiedai gongzuo jianbao: Riben Beizhong nüzi paiqiudui qingkuang: di ba qi.

⁴³ Generally speaking, Daimatsu’s politics were connected to his wartime experience and his own conservative, rightist political stance within the larger context of Japanese politics. Furthermore, he probably fell into the rightist camp in Japan that believed the main problem facing Japanese society was that it had lost its earlier militant spirit. (Daimatsu was later elected to the Japanese parliament in 1968 as a member of the Liberal-Democratic party (Merklejn, 4).) As other comments made during the visit demonstrate, Daimatsu sometimes complained that Japanese society, and youth in particular, had adopted American cultural values. However, it is also worth noting that by 1964 anti-American sentiment had been growing across Japanese society for some time, such that even chief architects of Japan’s postwar economy like Ouchi Hyoe called Japan “a ‘protectorate’ of the United States.” Laura Hein, *Reasonable Men Powerful Words: Political Culture and Expertise in Twentieth-Century Japan* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004), 124.

also encouraged his athletes to play through injury and illness, such as when Katsumi Matsumura dislocated her shoulder in Shanghai and continued to practice while it was swollen.⁴⁴ The final official report for the team's visit noted that scolding and this "violation of science" (*weifan kexue*) of training through illness was to be criticized rather than followed.⁴⁵

A more controversial issue involved Daimatsu's personal beliefs and politics, which officials felt had negatively influenced both his training methods and his players. His emphasis on "spirit" boiled down to a personal belief that individual willpower, rooted in an individual's self-interest, could accomplish anything. This philosophy stemmed from his experience as a soldier during World War II and later as a prisoner of war in a British camp after the war, both of which heavily influenced this style of training.⁴⁶ Basically, he believed that a coach needed to be persistent and tough on players, who should sleep little and work a lot.⁴⁷ On the one hand, Chinese sports leaders agreed that Chinese volleyball athletes could learn from this kind of spirited, intense militaristic style of training, which was reminiscent of the official campaign to promote Guo Xingfu teaching methods introduced by the State Sports Commission earlier in the year.⁴⁸ Guo was a People's Liberation Army deputy

⁴⁴ SMA B126-1-819: Tiyu yundong weiyuanhui guojisi waibin jiedai gongzuo jianbao: Riben Beizhong nüzi paiqiudui qingkuang: di ba qi.

⁴⁵ SMA B126-1-819: Jiedai Riben Beizhong nüzi paiqiudui zongjie.

⁴⁶ Igarashi, *Bodies of Memory*, 156-157.

⁴⁷ SMA B126-1-819: Tiyu yundong weiyuanhui guojisi waibin jiedai gongzuo jianbao: Riben Beizhong nüzi paiqiudui qingkuang: di shier qi [State Sports Commission brief work report on receiving foreign guests: Japanese Kaizuka women's volleyball team situation: number 12], Hangzhou: December 10-12, 1964.

⁴⁸ "Zhongyang pizhuan guojia tiwei dangzu guanyu yi jiu liu si nian quanguo tiyu gongzuo huiyi de baogao (1964 nian 4 yue 24 ri)" [Central approval of the State Sports Commission Party Committee's

commander in the Nanjing Military region whose methods emphasized individual drills and small-group tactics.⁴⁹ However, Chinese leaders noted that Daimatsu placed too much emphasis on the individual at the expense of the collective, such as when he claimed that the women's volleyball team played ball for their own glory in the same way that "any person is for himself or herself" (*renhe ren dou shi weile ziji*).⁵⁰ In fact, according to Daimatsu, all things were fundamentally individual and the Chinese team didn't play well precisely because those who played for the country and the collective "have no drive."⁵¹ The summary report of the visit thus concluded that some Chinese had gone so far as to call Daimatsu's methods fascist, but even so, it was still worth studying his "arduous, solid spirit and scientific training methods" while simultaneously criticizing this "fundamentally reactionary" thought.⁵²

Chinese leaders also blamed "Daimatsu-ism" (*Dasong bowen zhuyi*) and his patriarchal coaching role for having affected his players' ability to think freely. They seemed to believe that the players themselves would be more interested in discussing political issues if Daimatsu just let them, and one player had apparently even asked in

report of the national *tiyu* work meeting (April 24, 1964)], in *Tiyu yundong wenjian xuanbian*, comp. Guojia tiwei zhengce yanjiushi (Beijing: Renmin tiyu chubanshe, 1982), 97.

⁴⁹ Li Kwok-sing, comp., *A Glossary of Political Terms of the People's Republic of China*, trans. Mary Lok (Hong Kong: The Chinese University Press, 1995), 135. The PLA's General Political Department issued the "Circular on Promoting Guo Xingfu's Teaching Method" on February 10, 1964, as noted in *Renmin ribao* on February 18, 1964.

⁵⁰ SMA B126-1-819: Tiyu yundong weiyuanhui guojisi waibin jiedai gongzuo jianbao: Riben Beizhong nüzi paiqiudui qingkuang: di qi qi.

⁵¹ SMA B126-1-819: Tiyu yundong weiyuanhui guojisi waibin jiedai gongzuo jianbao: Riben Beizhong nüzi paiqiudui qingkuang: di qi qi.

⁵² SMA B126-1-819: Jiedai Riben Beizhong nüzi paiqiudui zongjie.

private about the difference between collectivism and individualism.⁵³ The final report discouraged Chinese volleyball from going down a similar road of unconditional obedience to a patriarchal coach.⁵⁴ Daimatsu's arrogant behavior throughout the visit did not help his image. Upon viewing the *Selected Works of Mao Zedong* on display at an exhibition he apparently stated that in the future he would publish a *Selected Works of Daimatsu*, adding later that he was "also a historical figure."⁵⁵

"Men and Women are Equal": Finding Solidarity, Promoting Chinese Socialism

During the Japanese volleyball team visit, as in other delegation visits, Chinese leaders attempted to find common political ground with their guests.

Alongside the primary goals of the visit listed in the official announcement – acquisition of new and successful volleyball techniques and training methods – was strengthening Sino-Japanese "friendship" by focusing on the anti-American struggle. The official announcement claimed that "the Chinese and Japanese peoples' friendship is continuing to strengthen and improve" and that at the same time as sports world contacts were becoming increasingly frequent between the two countries, so was there "an increasing rise in the tide of the Japanese peoples'

⁵³ SMA B126-1-819: Jiedai Riben Beizhong nüzi paiqiudui zongjie and SMA B126-1-819: Tiyu yundong weiyuanhui guojisi waibin jiedai gongzuo jianbao: Riben Beizhong nüzi paiqiudui qingkuang: di shier qi.

⁵⁴ SMA B126-1-819: Jiedai Riben Beizhong nüzi paiqiudui zongjie.

⁵⁵ SMA B126-1-819: Tiyu yundong weiyuanhui guojisi waibin jiedai gongzuo jianbao: Riben Beizhong nüzi paiqiudui qingkuang: di ba qi.

struggle against American imperialism.”⁵⁶ There was some truth to this statement. American presence in Japan, and the continued existence of bases, had incited protests since the mid-1950s. In 1960, the renewal of the U.S.-Japan Security Treaty created domestic political unrest (known as the Anpo protests),⁵⁷ and as the last chapter noted, a Japanese contingent of athletes supported by political interests other than the government-backed Japanese Olympic Committee had participated in the first GANEFO. However, the Japanese government remained heavily influenced by U.S. interests. Chinese leaders thus worked hard to produce a multidimensional view of Japanese society among the Chinese public that distinguished Japanese government interests from the “Japanese people.”⁵⁸ Newspapers like *People’s Daily* published articles and political cartoons emphasizing a common Sino-Japanese struggle against American imperialism and Soviet Communism.⁵⁹ Likewise, reports from the Japanese volleyball team visit strove to separate Daimatsu’s own politics from those of his players. Chinese leaders seemed to think that individual players,

⁵⁶ SMA B126-1-819: Zhonghua renmin gongheguo tiyu yundong weiyuanhui guanyu jiedai Riben Beizhong (Nichibo) nūzi paiqiudui de tongzhi (jimi).

⁵⁷ For more on this, Igarashi, *Bodies of Memory*, 132-143. According to Igarashi, both Liberals and leftists in Japan opposed Prime Minister Kishi Nobuske’s attempt to revise the original 1951 treaty because they believed it would permanently subordinate Japan to U.S. interests. They instead wanted to “maintain a neutral stance with regard to U.S. hegemony in East Asia” (131). Additionally, Kishi wanted a military alliance with the U.S. but did not get it – nothing fundamentally changed (134). These disagreements led to mass protests once Kishi pushed to pass the new treaty, which brought up past memories of the war and occupation and more or less just confirmed “Japan’s subordinate position” (138). Although “three hundred thousand people surrounded the Diet and the prime minister’s residence in protest” the revised treaty was ratified (140).

⁵⁸ For years, Chinese leaders had similarly separated the “United States” government from the “American people.”

⁵⁹ Erik Esselstrom, “The 1960 ‘Anpo’ Struggle in *The People’s Daily*: Shaping Popular Chinese Perceptions of Japan during the Cold War,” *The Asia-Pacific Journal*, vol. 10, iss. 51, no. 1, December 17, 2012. Available online at <http://www.japanfocus.org/-Erik-Esselstrom/3869> [Last accessed November 2, 2014].

although influenced by the nature of a capitalist factory-sponsored team,⁶⁰ would be more open to notions of Chinese socialism than their coach.

There was some ambivalence among Chinese leaders over how far to push their own agenda with the Japanese guests. The emphasis on a shared struggle against American imperialism dovetailed well with Chinese goals in the ongoing GANEFO project (see Chapter 5), but the GANEFO was never a topic brought up with the guests. The internal official announcement for the Daimatsu visit asked that the Japanese team's recent Olympic win not be mentioned publicly,⁶¹ most likely because Chinese sports leaders felt it would be better to not shed any positive light on an international organization that competed with its own pet project, the GANEFO. Instead, Chinese press and publications commemorated the one-year anniversary of the first GANEFO and looked with anticipation to the next large-scale GANEFO planned for Cairo in 1967.

Striving to find common political ground with a team from Japan, run by a former POW from the Japanese army, was not so easy. The announcement for the visit discouraged beginning a dialogue on topics like China's test detonation of a nuclear bomb in October and the struggle against Soviet revisionism. However, if visitors brought up topics such as Khrushchev's stepping down, then the official instruction was for the Chinese side to make it clear that this was "a good thing,

⁶⁰ A point duly noted on the first page of the final report from the visit that highlighted this as a main characteristic of the team. SMA B126-1-819: Jiedai Riben Beizhong nüzi paiqiudui zongjie.

⁶¹ SMA B126-1-819: Zhonghua renmin gongheguo tiyu yundong weiyuanhui guanyu jiedai Riben Beizhong (Nichibo) nüzi paiqiudui de tongzhi (jimi).

beneficial for the international struggle against American imperialism.”⁶² In fact, these topics were avoided because they created confusion or did not always elicit positive comments when they did come up. Chinese efforts to explain Soviet revisionism, for example, simply ended with Daimatsu arguing that Khrushchev was not a conspirator but rather a peacemaker.⁶³ Similarly, after viewing an anti-American demonstration in Shanghai, Daimatsu reflected that, “a parade of so many people, [lasting for] so many days really does not exist in Japan.”⁶⁴ He added that it was a waste of time because this kind of event prevented people from working and studying. If people instead used their time to study something then they could “become a bit smarter.”⁶⁵ At times, getting Daimatsu’s support for Chinese international policies probably seemed impossible.

Luckily, the acquisition of technical skills remained China’s foremost priority. As with other delegation visits, the State Sports Commission asked local committees in advance to plan sightseeing and activities that would give the foreign guests “a fundamental understanding of our socialist construction.”⁶⁶ But in this case, the Commission also asked that these be scaled back under the principle of “fewer but better,” and explicitly mandated that these activities were not to interfere with

⁶² SMA B126-1-819: Zhonghua renmin gongheguo tiyu yundong weiyuanhui guanyu jiedai Riben Beizhong (Nichibo) nüzi paiqiudui de tongzhi (jimi).

⁶³ SMA B126-1-819: Tiyu yundong weiyuanhui guojisi waibin jiedai gongzuo jianbao: Riben Beizhong nüzi paiqiudui qingkuang: di shier qi.

⁶⁴ SMA B126-1-819: Tiyu yundong weiyuanhui guojisi waibin jiedai gongzuo jianbao: Riben Beizhong nüzi paiqiudui qingkuang: di qi qi.

⁶⁵ SMA B126-1-819: Tiyu yundong weiyuanhui guojisi waibin jiedai gongzuo jianbao: Riben Beizhong nüzi paiqiudui qingkuang: di qi qi.

⁶⁶ SMA B126-1-819: Zhonghua renmin gongheguo tiyu yundong weiyuanhui guanyu jiedai Riben Beizhong (Nichibo) nüzi paiqiudui de tongzhi (jimi).

competitions and practices.⁶⁷ In fact, Daimatsu was not at all enthused about participating in non-sports-related activities, stating bluntly that these were “not as good as staying in and sleeping” (*canguan buru zaijia shuijiao*).⁶⁸ He only agreed to take part in these activities as time permitted.⁶⁹

Within these limits and taking Daimatsu’s wishes into account, however, leaders made every effort to showcase Chinese socialism as on the right track. Following a viewing of the “East is Red” ballet, Daimatsu, the only member of the delegation who had been to China prior to 1949, stated that it “tells us that we must never forget China’s past [and] causes people to see the differences between Old China and New China.”⁷⁰ Speaking to a broadcast reporter on another occasion, Daimatsu identified three overall changes he saw in China: expanded roads, no more hoodlums or petty theft, and lots of new construction (even more had been completed since his visit in 1957).⁷¹ In fact, he told another reporter, Old China did not exist anymore.⁷²

⁶⁷ SMA B126-1-819: Zhonghua renmin gongheguo tiyu yundong weiyuanhui guanyu jiedai Riben Beizhong (Nichibo) nüzi paiqiudui de tongzhi (jimi).

⁶⁸ SMA B126-1-819: Tiyu yundong weiyuanhui guojisi waibin jiedai gongzuo jianbao: Riben Beizhong nüzi paiqiudui qingkuang: di er qi.

⁶⁹ SMA B126-1-819: Tiyu yundong weiyuanhui guojisi waibin jiedai gongzuo jianbao: Riben Beizhong nüzi paiqiudui qingkuang: di qi qi.

⁷⁰ SMA B126-1-819: Tiyu yundong weiyuanhui guojisi waibin jiedai gongzuo jianbao: Riben Beizhong nüzi paiqiudui qingkuang: di yi qi.

⁷¹ SMA B126-1-819: Tiyu yundong weiyuanhui guojisi waibin jiedai gongzuo jianbao: Riben Beizhong nüzi paiqiudui qingkuang: di wu qi [State Sports Commission brief work report on receiving foreign guests: Japanese Kaizuka women’s volleyball team situation: number 5], Beijing, November 26, 1964.

⁷² SMA B126-1-819: Tiyu yundong weiyuanhui guojisi waibin jiedai gongzuo jianbao: Riben Beizhong nüzi paiqiudui qingkuang: di liu qi [State Sports Commission brief work report on receiving foreign guests: Japanese Kaizuka women’s volleyball team situation: number 6], Beijing, November 27-29, 1964.

Visits to famous sites and new buildings also served to promote a positive image of socialist China. A Beijing report claimed that the whole team was “in awe” of the Great Hall of the People, built for the 10th anniversary of the PRC. Player Emiko Miyamoto stated that the Hall was so big that she “couldn’t even find the entrance,” and another teammate observed that, “China’s construction is so fast that in just over ten months such a large building has been built!”⁷³ Visits to Beihai and Zhongshan parks also elicited comments about China’s “extremely beautiful” construction and parks that were apparently cleaner than those in Japan.⁷⁴ At the Shanghai Industrial Exhibition (*gongye zhanlan*), Daimatsu picked up textile brochures to take back to Japan with him, reportedly noting how impressed he was that China was now self-reliant in manufacturing and didn’t rely on Soviet imported equipment.⁷⁵

When the Japanese guests made general comparisons between Chinese and Japanese societies, the reports recorded these in an attempt to showcase China’s superiority. Following “The East is Red” performance, the team manager stated that he could tell China’s artistic level was very high because the performers had been “very earnest, [made a] great effort (*nuli*), [and were] moreover lively” (*hen renzhen, nuli, erqie huopo*). In contrast, she lamented, she had never seen this kind of performance in Japan, adding that she “could not imagine [Japan] having this kind of

⁷³ SMA B126-1-819: Tiyu yundong weiyuanhui guojisi waibin jiedai gongzuo jianbao: Riben Beizhong nüzi paiqiudui qingkuang: di yi qi.

⁷⁴ SMA B126-1-819: Tiyu yundong weiyuanhui guojisi waibin jiedai gongzuo jianbao: Riben Beizhong nüzi paiqiudui qingkuang: di er qi.

⁷⁵ SMA B126-1-819: Tiyu yundong weiyuanhui guojisi waibin jiedai gongzuo jianbao: Riben Beizhong nüzi paiqiudui qingkuang: di ba qi.

singing and dancing (*gewu*).”⁷⁶ The visible presence of top leaders also impressed the team. When Zhou Enlai came to the first competition in Beijing, team captain Kasai Masae acted surprised that he had shown up, while the manager explained that, “so many government leaders came to watch the competition, in Japan this is unlikely.”⁷⁷ Similarly, when the team visited Shisanling reservoir, they were told that Chairman Mao and Vice-Premier Zhou had voluntarily participated in helping build it, prompting one of the Japanese players to remark that in Japan the prime minister would simply not participate in this kind of labor.⁷⁸

At times, the comments of these foreign guests also served to highlight the moral superiority of Chinese socialist society, particularly in contrast to Japanese capitalist society. In one report, for example, a Japanese player asked whether or not China had gangsters and drunks and the Chinese side responded that China had “social order” (*shehui zhi'an*). The Japanese manager added that, “Chinese people nowadays don’t fight,” and the report noted that “team members heard this and expressed surprise.”⁷⁹ Several of the Japanese players, inquiring about spare-time activities for youth in China, lamented that in Japan one needed money to have a good time, that men’s and women’s relations were in a state of disorder, and that

⁷⁶ SMA B126-1-819: Tiyu yundong weiyuanhui guojisi waibin jiedai gongzuo jianbao: Riben Beizhong nüzi paiqiudui qingkuang: di yi qi.

⁷⁷ SMA B126-1-819: Tiyu yundong weiyuanhui guojisi waibin jiedai gongzuo jianbao: Riben Beizhong nüzi paiqiudui qingkuang: di er qi.

⁷⁸ SMA B126-1-819: Tiyu yundong weiyuanhui guojisi waibin jiedai gongzuo jianbao: Riben Beizhong nüzi paiqiudui qingkuang: di liu qi.

⁷⁹ SMA B126-819: Tiyu yundong weiyuanhui guojisi waibin jiedai gongzuo jianbao: Riben Beizhong nüzi paiqiudui qingkuang: di san qi [State Sports Commission brief work report on receiving foreign guests: Japanese Kaizuka women’s volleyball team situation: number 3], Beijing, November 24, 1964.

there were many nightclubs.⁸⁰ On a visit to the Children's Palace (*shaonian gong*) in Shanghai, after one player commented that Japan didn't have this kind of building, Daimatsu added there were no similar kinds of collective measures for children's welfare. However, he noted, every family individually placed importance on children's education and many families hired tutors or teachers for activities like painting and playing the piano. The Chinese side took the opportunity to point out that this "only served a few people who had money."⁸¹ On another occasion, a player went shopping for jade because in China it was "high quality" in contrast to Hong Kong where one could be "cheated."⁸²

The equal treatment of women under socialism also garnered the attention of these guests. Chinese leaders knew that women's position in society was important to the Japanese players, especially the relationship between athletic work and marriage.⁸³ Players told the Chinese that in Japan, once they married, they could no longer play volleyball even though wanted to (i.e., implying societal disapproval). This particular issue was a point of contention with their coach as well,⁸⁴ in part because many players had put off their retirement and marriage in order to participate

⁸⁰ SMA B126-1-819: Tiyu yundong weiyuanhui guojisi waibin jiedai gongzuo jianbao: Riben Beizhong nüzi paiqiudui qingkuang: di wu qi.

⁸¹ SMA B126-1-819: Tiyu yundong weiyuanhui guojisi waibin jiedai gongzuo jianbao: Riben Beizhong nüzi paiqiudui qingkuang: di jiu qi.

⁸² SMA B126-1-819: Tiyu yundong weiyuanhui guojisi waibin jiedai gongzuo jianbao: Riben Beizhong nüzi paiqiudui qingkuang: di shiyi qi.

⁸³ Helen Macnaughtan notes that for most Japanese women volleyball players at the time marriage and motherhood typically only came after retirement from the sport. Macnaughtan, *The Oriental Witches*, 142-144.

⁸⁴ SMA B126-1-819: Tiyu yundong weiyuanhui guojisi waibin jiedai gongzuo jianbao: Riben Beizhong nüzi paiqiudui qingkuang: di san qi.

in the Tokyo Olympics.⁸⁵ Chinese leaders liked to reiterate that in China, men and women were equal, so married women could and did work (and play volleyball) without issues. Unlike in Japan, observed one player, Chinese factories had nurseries “so both parents can work.”⁸⁶ At the visit to the Shanghai Children’s Palace, player Yoshiko Matsumura also stated that because one could not attend high school or university in Japan without money, most young women didn’t continue their education after middle school.⁸⁷ Added another player, “although in Japan we say men and women are equal, in the family, men still are higher status.”⁸⁸ Not all the Japanese players felt that everything should be equal, however, at least according to Yuriko Handa, who apparently stated that female athletes “could not accept female coaches [because they] only listen to what male coaches say.”⁸⁹ The implication of all of these comments was obvious: these players had much to learn from China regarding women’s rightful position in socialist society.

Official reports occasionally portrayed Daimatsu or Japanese society as politically immoral capitalists. Several, for example, discussed Daimatsu’s constant

⁸⁵ According to Macnaughtan, following the team’s 1962 win over the Soviet team at the World Championships, Daimatsu stated that “although he was confident that they could win the Olympics in two years time if all players continued, many players were of marriageable age” and so he would not guarantee participation. However, he also encountered enormous pressure from the Japanese Olympic Committee and the public to continue. After their eventual win and the subsequent retirement of players, Daimatsu later took time to help find potential marriage partners for many of his players. Macnaughtan, *The Oriental Witches*, 142.

⁸⁶ SMA B126-1-819: Tiyu yundong weiyuanhui guojisi waibin jiedai gongzuo jianbao: Riben Beizhong nüzi paiqiudui qingkuang: di shiyi qi.

⁸⁷ SMA B126-1-819: Shanghaishi tiyu yundong weiyuanhui: Riben “Ni ji bo” Beizhong nüzi paiqiu dui qingkuang jianbao (qi) [Shanghai sports committee: brief work report on the Japanese “Nichibo” Kaizuka women’s volleyball team situation (7)], December 6, 1964.

⁸⁸ SMA B126-1-819: Shanghaishi tiyu yundong weiyuanhui: Riben “Ni ji bo” Beizhong nüzi paiqiu dui qingkuang jianbao (ba) [Shanghai sports committee: brief work report on the Japanese “Nichibo” Kaizuka women’s volleyball team situation (8)], December 7-8 1964.

⁸⁹ SMA B126-1-819: Tiyu yundong weiyuanhui guojisi waibin jiedai gongzuo jianbao: Riben Beizhong nüzi paiqiudui qingkuang: di shiyi qi.

interest in money, such as when he asked a translator about the wages and incomes of workers. When the translator responded with the costs of food and lodging, Daimatsu commented that it was “cheaper than Japan,” but then added that China lacked the same level of freedom because unlike in Japan it was not too easy, for example, to own a private car or buy a television.⁹⁰ Similarly, when informally discussing his return to China the following year, Daimatsu let it be known that Romania had also invited him to coach at a salary of approximately 3,300 *yuan* for one month,⁹¹ quite a step up from his current 500 *yuan* per month in Japan.⁹² The visit’s summary report prominently noted that one of the primary characteristics of the team (and, implicitly, its main flaw) was its capitalist nature.⁹³

In the end, the Chinese official summary of the visit concluded that “thought work” had overall been successful, primarily because it was clear that many of the players had left with a positive image of China. At the beginning, many players had “looked down on the Chinese people,” thanks in no small part to Daimatsu telling them that, “everywhere [in China] has bedbugs.”⁹⁴ By working to “seek common ground among differences” (*qiu tong cun yi*),⁹⁵ however, the report attributed success

⁹⁰ SMA B126-1-819: Tiyu yundong weiyuanhui guojisi waibin jiedai gongzuo jianbao: Riben Beizhong nüzi paiqiudui qingkuang: di si qi.

⁹¹ SMA B126-1-819: Tiyu yundong weiyuanhui guojisi waibin jiedai gongzuo jianbao: Riben Beizhong nüzi paiqiudui qingkuang: di shier qi.

⁹² SMA B126-1-819: Tiyu yundong weiyuanhui guojisi waibin jiedai gongzuo jianbao: Riben Beizhong nüzi paiqiudui qingkuang: di shi qi. This report lists the background and factory salary information of Daimatsu and the Japanese players.

⁹³ SMA B126-1-819: Jiedai Riben Beizhong nüzi paiqiudui zongjie. The Nichibo factory team, like many other sports teams in Japan at the time, did not receive state funding. Macnaughtan, *The Oriental Witches*, 145-146. This also explains why Daimatsu complained on occasion that the team had not received anything monetarily from the state.

⁹⁴ SMA B126-1-819: Jiedai Riben Beizhong nüzi paiqiudui zongjie.

⁹⁵ SMA B126-1-819: Jiedai Riben Beizhong nüzi paiqiudui zongjie.

to its careful attention to the team's needs and side discussions on topics like gender equality. Many of the athletes had since changed their original thinking about China after seeing for themselves the energy and societal order, and understanding the societal position of Chinese women.

At first glance, it appears that the elephant in the room was the Sino-Japanese relationship during World War II. However, the topic was ignored in official reports.⁹⁶ The plan for the team's visit to Shanghai asked that audiences be educated to "respect order" and that security work be strengthened to "prevent bad people from doing damage,"⁹⁷ but reports from the visit itself do not highlight security as having been an issue at any point. Officials dutifully recorded controversial comments when the past came up unexpectedly. At one point when Daimatsu stated that there was a difference in opinion regarding individualism and collectivism, one of the Japanese players disagreed because Chinese people's regard for Mao was "just like in the earlier militaristic period [when] we were all for worshipping the Emperor."⁹⁸ When a player asked about China's first test detonation of a nuclear bomb in October, only about six weeks before the visit, the report quoted her as positively stating that this was "the first time Asian people have a nuclear bomb [and] this is a good thing."⁹⁹

⁹⁶ During the 1960s, the official Chinese line was that it was more important to work on reconciling the relationship with the Japanese in order to focus on the main enemy: the United States. For more on this, Esselstrom, "The 1960 'Anpo' Struggle in *The People's Daily*: Shaping Popular Chinese Perceptions of Japan during the Cold War."

⁹⁷ SMA B126-1-819: Shanghai shi tiyu yundong weiyuanhui: jiedai Riben Beizhong nüzi paiqiudui gongzuo jihua [Shanghai municipal sports committee: work plan for receiving the Japanese Kaizuka women's volleyball team], November 22, 1964.

⁹⁸ SMA B126-1-819: Tiyu yundong weiyuanhui guojisi waibin jiedai gongzuo jianbao: Riben Beizhong nüzi paiqiudui qingkuang: di ba qi.

⁹⁹ SMA B126-1-819: Tiyu yundong weiyuanhui guojisi waibin jiedai gongzuo jianbao: Riben Beizhong nüzi paiqiudui qingkuang: di san qi.

Instead of being a sensitive subject, the bomb became yet another demonstration of China's superiority.

Overall, the Daimatsu visit aimed to simultaneously raise the skill level of an elite cadre of volleyball athletes in China, while trying to improve Sino-Japanese "friendship" and attempting to impress upon their Japanese visitors propaganda that highlighted some of the less tangible achievements of Chinese socialism (e.g., equality between men and women). One scholar has recently argued that this kind of propaganda in the archival sources on official delegation visits in the mid-1960s actually tell us more about how officials wanted these visits recorded than anything else.¹⁰⁰ Indeed, the visit did serve as a way to calculate and shore up international support for larger Chinese political projects, then deliver that information to higher officials. The choice to invite Japan despite its role in World War II at first seems odd. However, the internal records from this visit indicate that Chinese leaders at the time were more interested in promoting China's position vis-à-vis the Soviet Union, as well as establishing a common sentiment with their Japanese visitors through anti-Americanism. The visit also had a practical purpose in sport that extended beyond politics. Chinese leaders wanted to improve its national volleyball programs and Zhou Enlai, who had observed some of the competitions and practice sessions himself, decided to invite Daimatsu back to China in the spring of 1965.

¹⁰⁰ Zachary Scarlett argues in his recent dissertation that these kinds of reports specifically supported government political project to make "global narratives" with particular worldviews accessible to the public, including confirming "irrefutable evidence of China's importance around the world." Scarlett, "China After the Sino-Soviet Split," 245.

“Three Requirements, One Heavy Load”: Elite Sport in 1965

Daimatsu and the Japanese team’s visit marked the height of elite sports training programs in the mid-1960s, which came with the anniversary of the first GANEFO but also took place within a rapidly changing political environment. The February 1964 call in *People’s Daily*, inspired by Mao’s loyal follower Lin Biao, for the nation to “learn from” the People’s Liberation Army model of impartiality and selflessness, and to sacrifice “valuable time and life for the sake of socialism,” influenced sports policy throughout 1964.¹⁰¹ The State Sports Commission pushed athletes, coaches, and other sports workers to learn from the PLA’s political thought work. This mostly resulted in an increased politicization of elite sports programs along the lines of PLA campaigns and slogans, such as advocating more political and ideological work under the “four firsts”¹⁰² slogan and calling on athletes to become “four goods”¹⁰³ and “five goods”¹⁰⁴ model athletes. The Guo Xingfu teaching methods previously mentioned also advocated more intense, militaristic styles of training. In fact, Daimatsu’s training methods seemed to give Chinese sports leaders exactly what they wanted: a concrete example of “bitter training” that could be

¹⁰¹ MacFarquhar, *The Origins of the Cultural Revolution*, Vol. 3, 436-437.

¹⁰² The “four firsts” was a slogan created by Lin Biao in the early 1960s that placed “human factors” (*ren de yinsu*), political work, ideological work, and lively thinking (*huo de sixiang*) above all else. Li, *A Glossary of Political Terms in the People’s Republic of China*, 420.

¹⁰³ The “Four Goods” referred to “four-good” PLA company units that were “good in political thoughts, good in the three-eight working style (the PLA’s primary slogan and objective that had politics at its core), good in military training, and good in the management of livelihood.” Li, *A Glossary of Political Terms in the People’s Republic of China*, 349, 424.

¹⁰⁴ The “Five Goods” referred to the PLA’s “five-good soldiers” who were “good in political ideology, good in the ‘three-eight’ working style, good in military techniques, good in carrying out assignments, and good in physical training.” Li, *A Glossary of Political Terms in the People’s Republic of China*, 480.

reappropriated and used for existing but relatively new Chinese sports policies emphasizing militaristic training methods with political thought at their core.

The visit also dovetailed with underlying tensions in high politics that, shortly thereafter, began to promote far more radicalized politics in elite sport. A major power struggle had been brewing for the previous year between Mao Zedong and Liu Shaoqi. As a number of scholars have pointed out, disagreements related to class struggle and contradictions in the Socialist Education Movement essentially boiled down to Mao's belief that his power was eroding in the face of other top Party leaders, especially Liu and Deng Xiaoping.¹⁰⁵ In mid-1964, Mao publicly stated that youth were the future guardians of the revolution, and that they needed to be trained not only as successors for the revolutionary cause of the proletariat, but also to "prevent successfully the emergence of Khrushchevite revisionism in China."¹⁰⁶ Mao's language expressed his own dissatisfaction with the current leadership and the direction they were taking, and, as Roderick MacFarquhar notes, his fear over losing his position in the Party only increased in October 1964 following Khrushchev's downfall. Soviet leaders purged Khrushchev not because of his policies, but because they found him difficult to work with.¹⁰⁷ Mao's paranoia and private sentiment grew when Deng Xiaoping suggested he not attend the Central Politburo meeting in December 1964,¹⁰⁸ and they erupted in January 1965 at the same meeting when Liu

¹⁰⁵ Yan, Jiaqi, Gao Gao, *Turbulent Decade: A History of the Cultural Revolution*, trans. D. W. Y Kwok (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 1996), 6-7.

¹⁰⁶ Lorenz Lüthi, *The Sino-Soviet Split: Cold War in the Communist World* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2008), 283.

¹⁰⁷ MacFarquhar, *The Origins of the Cultural Revolution*, Vol. 3, 416.

¹⁰⁸ MacFarquhar, *The Origins of the Cultural Revolution*, Vol. 3, 419.

spoke against Mao's views. Mao accused Liu and Deng of attempting to suppress his right to speak at the meeting, and he argued that problems within the Socialist Education Movement could be traced to those at the highest levels of the Party who took a capitalist path.¹⁰⁹ The meeting and the resulting Twenty-three Articles, which clearly spelled out that Central Committee leaders were the problem, firmly reasserted Mao's authority and set the stage for his campaign to replace Liu (and other leaders) with loyal leftists like Lin Biao.¹¹⁰

This confluence of more militant sports policies alongside the rapid rise of more leftist politics influenced discussions in elite sport related to the Daimatsu and the Japanese volleyball team's visit. Volleyball coaches from the nation's top teams – Beijing's *tiyu* research institute, Sichuan, Liaoning, Tianjin, and Ba-yi – reflected on what they had learned from the visit by carrying out a discussion of existing problems in training and how to resolve them. They concluded that the main problems in training stemmed primarily from a low degree of revolutionary spirit, a lack of ambition, the existence of three “fears” (bitterness, tiredness, and injury), and a general lack of “bitter training” (*kulian*).¹¹¹ Sichuan's Wang Desu argued that if everyone in volleyball employed a “spirit of self-sacrifice” (*xisheng de jingshen*) in

¹⁰⁹ MacFarquhar, *The Origins of the Cultural Revolution*, Vol. 3, 425, 428, 431.

¹¹⁰ MacFarquhar, *The Origins of the Cultural Revolution*, Vol. 3, 427-428, 431-432, 438-439.

¹¹¹ Shuang ming jilü zhengli, “Fan jiaotiao, po kuangkaung, dadan chuangxin” [Anti-dogmatism, break conventions, boldly bring forth new ideas], *Xin tiyu*, December 1964, 1. My copy of this issue was published January 26, 1965, following the State Sports Commission meeting and Xu Yinsheng's speech discussed below. Although I have no concrete proof, it does seem possible that given major political changes that began to occur at the central level and in elite sport in January, the later publication date was intentional and allowed for excising or modifying language that conflicted with decisions made in January. I cannot otherwise explain the later date, since I also have no proof that my issue was a reissue or a reprint.

their training, then there would be no fears, and the mastery of thought, skills, and competition would all be possible.¹¹² On top of this, existing dogmatism and formalism had created an environment in which rules and measure were so rigid that they discouraged flexibility and innovation. Finally, Chinese coaches also generally did not participate in practices and had created too many useless rules.¹¹³ In short, despite whatever changes had been made in the past year, results still paled in comparison to what these coaches had seen from the Japanese team and its coach.

These coaches also highlighted the need for learning from the Japanese team in order to better incorporate a new training principle called the “three requirements and one heavy load” (*cong san yi da*). This principle argued for training that started out as difficult, serious, and combative; the inability to follow through with this principle, however, was blamed for the lack of success. In fact, argued Beijing team’s Wang Zuhong, the Japanese women’s team already trained according to this principle. Sun Zhian from the Beijing *Tiyu* Research Institute reasoned that to carry out this new concept, they needed to make several important changes that mirrored the Japanese team’s training. First, there needed to be more physical exercise and an increase in actual training time. Additionally, because of “too many rules” in China, training had rarely taken place in unfavorable circumstances (such as when windy or

¹¹² Two common and relatively new campaign slogans in the world of sport at the time were the “three no fears” and the “be tough in five respects” (*wu guoying*). The five were: thought, body, skills, training, and competition. “Zhongyang pizhuan guojia tiwei dangwei guanyu quanguo tiyu gongzuo huiyi de jiyao: yi jiu liu wu nian quanguo tiyu gongzuo huiyi jiyao (zhailu) (1965 nian 5 yue 14 ri)” [Central approval of the State Sports Commission Party Committee’s summary of the national *tiyu* work meeting: 1965 national tiyu work meeting summary (excerpts) (May 14, 1965)], in *Tiyu yundong wenjian xuanbian*, comp. Guojia tiwei zhengce yanjiushi (Beijing: Renmin tiyu chubanshe, 1982), 104.

¹¹³ Shuang ming jilü zhengli, “Fan jiaotiao, po kuangkaung, dadan chuangxin,” 5.

the court was in bad condition), or when players were fatigued.¹¹⁴ This, he claimed, could also be blamed on coaches having cultivated arrogant athletes, and it needed to change right away. The Japanese women's team also embodied five qualities that the Chinese team did not yet have: bitterness, ferocity, seriousness, attention to detail, and the ability to study intensively. Beijing *Tiyu* Research Institute's Li Ange agreed that the Japanese team gave prominence to a "bitter training spirit," while Ba-yi's Jiang Zhenhong contended that the Chinese could learn from the combat methods present in the team's training regimen.¹¹⁵ All of these factors, in sum, prompted several coaches to remark that there needed to be stricter and more coherent training.

At the same time, in order to thoroughly implement this principle, the coaches argued for a looser set of rules and more flexibility in developing their own style of training methods. In line with the overall leftist turn in society that emphasized learning from the PLA, what they effectively meant was putting the "bitter training spirit" (i.e., a rationale that saw no physical limits to training intensity) above cautionary, scientific training. Ba-yi's Hou Weiyi argued that science had been studied excessively just because it was science and that it hadn't resolved any "actual problems."¹¹⁶ For example, although there were regulations about overworking athletes, in his opinion athletes had never really been tired to the point of "excessive fatigue."¹¹⁷ Other coaches likewise argued that there were too many safety measures,

¹¹⁴ Shuang ming jilü zhengli, "Fan jiaotiao, po kuangkaung, dadan chuangxin," 2.

¹¹⁵ Shuang ming jilü zhengli, "Fan jiaotiao, po kuangkaung, dadan chuangxin," 2.

¹¹⁶ Shuang ming jilü zhengli, "Fan jiaotiao, po kuangkaung, dadan chuangxin," 3.

¹¹⁷ Shuang ming jilü zhengli, "Fan jiaotiao, po kuangkaung, dadan chuangxin," 3.

and that some injuries should “not count as injuries.”¹¹⁸ A general consensus also surrounded the development of new techniques that made the Japanese team’s style of play unique in volleyball. Several coaches argued that, instead of following Europe or other countries, the team had followed their own path by flexibly adapting their style, and that China needed to do the same in order to reach world levels.

Finally, the coaches resolved that they also had to be more like Daimatsu by getting more involved in training sessions, a concept that followed the Maoist belief that leaders needed to be educated through participation in the same work as that of the masses. Tianjin’s Hou Xiju emphasized that the hands-on involvement of the coach was a huge difference between the Japanese team and those in China. Ba-yi’s Hou Weiyi added that Daimatsu himself had noted that his “bitter training” with the athletes is what had earned him their utmost respect. Li Ange of the Beijing *Tiyu* Research Institute impressively noted the number times Daimatsu had thrown or handled volleyballs in a practice, an indication that his fitness level was on par with or “even greater” than those of his athletes. Furthermore, “[If] the coach doesn’t hit the ball himself,” Li concluded, it would be “very difficult to ask athletes [to do so].”¹¹⁹ The heart of the coaching problem, according to Wang Desu, was that coaches didn’t really bother to get involved because they were happy just to follow the status quo and avoid running into any mishaps. Only when coaches realized that

¹¹⁸ Shuang ming jilü zhengli, “Fan jiaotiao, po kuangkaung, dadan chuangxin,” 4.

¹¹⁹ Shuang ming jilü zhengli, “Fan jiaotiao, po kuangkaung, dadan chuangxin,” 5.

“the amount of labor spent would be the amount they reap” and then themselves “bitterly train” would achievement be possible.¹²⁰

The Japanese team visit thus prompted volleyball coaches to consider implementing far more intense training that saw no physical limits. In early 1965, *Xin tiyu* published articles on specific volleyball techniques introduced by the Japanese team, such as the famous and brutal “rolling dive” invented by Daimatsu. The method, which involved throwing one’s shoulders on the ground, was explained in detail in an article that included fourteen still frames of Yoshiko Matsumura demonstrating the sequence of the move [Figures 48-49].¹²¹ Year later, Daimatsu’s training methods still loom large in the memories of former volleyball athletes as the exact point at which their training intensity suddenly increased. Dong Tianshu, a player from the time who participated in the visit, remembers Daimatsu’s methods as “cruel,” even giving her goose bumps many decades later.¹²² Former volleyball coach Wang Zhiqiang claimed that the visit pushed the “three requirements one heavy load” principle and resulted in “a very big leap” in volleyball and competitive sports skills as a whole in China.¹²³ In elite basketball programs in Shanghai, for example, former athletes remember daily practices of six hours increasing to as much as eight or ten hours per day following Daimatsu’s visit, as well as voluntarily continuing to play (or

¹²⁰ Shuang ming jilü zhengli, “Fan jiaotiao, po kuangkaung, dadan chuangxin,” 5.

¹²¹ Liu Weiqin, “Ribei nüpai de fangshou dongzuo” [Japanese women’s defensive moves], *Xin tiyu*, January 1965, 24-25.

¹²² Interview with Dong Tianshu in *Gongheguo tiyu*, 84-85.

¹²³ Interview with Wang Zhiqiang in *Gongheguo tiyu*, 79.



Figures 48-49. The famous “rolling dive.” *Xin tiyu*, January 1965.

coaches forcing them to play) through exhaustion, injuries, and illness.¹²⁴

Not long after these discussions, a speech by a ping-pong player set the tone for major political changes both in elite sport and more broadly. On January 17, 1965, Mao, Liu, Zhou, Deng, and numerous other top leaders all attended the State Sports Commission’s annual work meeting held in Beijing. That same day, *People’s Daily* printed a speech on its front page by the famous ping-pong player Xu Yinsheng. Xu’s speech, initially delivered in 1964 to the Chinese women’s ping-pong team, basically emphasized that elite athletes needed to play with politics in command. With this in

¹²⁴ Larmer, *Operation Yao Ming*, 22-23. Larmer interviewed a former basketball forward from the Shanghai women’s team, Lin Meizheng, who stated that training was very intense and players “always felt that showing spirit was the top priority,” adding that, “You may not be able to improve your technique, but you can always improve your spirit” (23).

mind, he further argued that players needed to challenge their leaders and coaches, rather than accept *a priori* their teachings and methods. Mao stated that in so many years he had not read such a good speech. In fact, he urged everyone in society to read it, too. Although Xu spoke about “playing ball (*da qiu*),” Mao noted, the speech should be used to study theory, politics, economics, culture, and the military.¹²⁵ He further added, “If we do not learn from the young generals (*xiaojiangmen*), [then] we will be doomed (*women jiu yao wangdan le*).”¹²⁶ In other words, Xu’s speech perfectly complemented Mao’s own agenda to overturn the current leadership by encouraging youth to challenge their elders.

Over the next few months, Xu’s speech became required reading for everyone involved in the world of sport.¹²⁷ Learning from the famous ping-pong team was not a new national project in 1965,¹²⁸ but this speech suddenly connected elite sport and

¹²⁵ Mao Zedong, “Guanyu ruhe da pingpangqiu” [How to play ping-pong], in *Zhongguo tiyu nianjian 1965*, ed. Zhongguo tiyu nianjian bianji weiyuanhui (Beijing: Renmin tiyu chubanshe, 1982), 47. The date on Mao’s commentary is January 12, 1965.

¹²⁶ Mao, “Guanyu ruhe da pingpangqiu,” 47.

¹²⁷ Nicholas Griffin, *Ping-Pong Diplomacy: The Secret History Behind the Game that Changed the World* (New York: Scribner, 2014), 138.

¹²⁸ Unsurprisingly, ping-pong had become increasingly more popular after Rong Guotuan took home China’s first world championship in 1959 and Beijing hosted the world championships in 1961 (see Chapters 4 and 5 of this dissertation). Other sports, such as basketball and soccer, may have been popular, but the Chinese were not nearly as successful in these internationally. Domestically, ping-pong players became household names, and youth ping-pong programs developed rapidly after the end of the Great Leap Forward (for more on this, Griffin, *Ping-Pong Diplomacy*, 129). As previous chapters showed, ping-pong players were also some of the first athletes sent abroad to African countries for the primary purpose of establishing goodwill and promoting Chinese socialist achievements (which included encouraging other athletes to learn from China). Along with stories of other model athletes, *Xin tiyu* often promoted the ping-pong team and its players as upstanding models for national sports campaigns. For example, the May 1964 issue included an article written by the editorial board called “Learn from the Chinese Ping-pong Team” that emphasized, among other things, how Mao Zedong Thought commanded the team (e.g., they had revolutionary spirit and worked collectively together) and they had successfully combined political study with gained new technical skills. “Xiang Zhongguo pingpangqiu dui xuexi” [Learn from the Chinese ping-pong team], *Xin tiyu*, May 1964, 6-9.

elite athletes more explicitly to emerging policies brought forth under Mao's direction. National and local committee work plans set forth in early 1965 continued familiar demands to raise elite athletic skill levels, increase mass national defense sports activities for the masses, build facilities and improve equipment, and use international *tiyu* activities to "expand our nation's political influence."¹²⁹ Elite sport policy emphasized eliminating conservatism, dogmatism, and formalism, and following the principle of "three requirements one heavy load," as well as the "three no fears," and the "be tough in five respects" (*wu guoying* – of thought, body, skills, training, and competition) campaigns.¹³⁰

As compared to previous years, the demands on sports leaders to carry out political thought work became much more explicit and intense in 1965. The State Sports Commission's call in 1964 to study Chairman Mao's selected works and produce "red and expert" sports teams had, according to the Beijing sports committee's leaders, helped foster a "new mental outlook," but the understanding of Mao Zedong Thought was "not deep."¹³¹ They urged leaders and athletes to hold high the "red flag of Mao Zedong Thought" in order to overcome weaknesses in sports work and gain new victories.¹³² The primary recommendations included reading 10 of Mao's essays¹³³ and following Xu's speech in order to cultivate models for studying

¹²⁹ BMA 185-001-00065: *yi jiu liu wu nian Beijingshi tiyu gongzuo yaodian* [1965 Beijing *tiyu* work main points], March 15, 1965.

¹³⁰ "Zhongyang pizhuan guojia tiwei dangwei guanyu quanguo tiyu gongzuo huiyi de jiyao: *yi jiu liu wu nian quanguo tiyu gongzuo huiyi jiyao (zhailu)* (1965 nian 5 yue 14 ri)," 104.

¹³¹ BMA 185-001-00065: *yi jiu liu wu nian Beijingshi tiyu gongzuo yaodian*.

¹³² BMA 185-001-00065: *yi jiu liu wu nian Beijingshi tiyu gongzuo yaodian*.

¹³³ The ten essays were: "Analysis of the Classes in Chinese Society," "Report on an Investigation of the Peasant Movement in Hunan," "Serve the People," "In Memory of Norman Bethune," "The

and applying Mao Zedong Thought flexibly and imaginatively (*huo xue huo yong*) in sport. The Beijing committee mandated that every coach and athlete spend at least six hours per week studying the essays, with small study groups set up to help ensure this took place.¹³⁴ In Shanghai elite athletes, including Yao Ming's mother Fang Fengdi, also participated in regular political thought meetings to study Mao Zedong Thought and criticize others.¹³⁵

Beijing officials also laid out several measures to carry out “socialist education” and replace capitalist thought with proletarian thought. For example, cadres and coaches had to be organized to take part in the “Four Cleanups” movement,¹³⁶ and athletes and coaches had to do at least one month of either army service or labor in a village each year.¹³⁷ In this context of intense political thought work, it was not surprising that by the time Daimatsu returned to China in spring 1965, his visit focused almost exclusively on technical aspects of training rather than the philosophy undergirding these methods.¹³⁸ Daimatsu's militaristic training

Foolish Old Man Who Removed the Mountains,” “On Practice,” “On Contradiction,” “On the Correct Handling of Contradictions Among the People,” “Where Do Correct Ideas Come From?” and “Oppose Book Worship.” “Zhongyang pizhuan guojia tiwei dangwei guanyu quanguo tiyu gongzuo huiyi de jiyao: yi jiu liu wu nian quanguo tiyu gongzuo huiyi jiyao (zhailu) (1965 nian 5 yue 14 ri),” 101, and BMA 185-001-00065: yi jiu liu wu nian Beijingshi tiyu gongzuo yaodian.

¹³⁴ BMA 185-001-00065: yi jiu liu wu nian Beijingshi tiyu gongzuo yaodian.

¹³⁵ Larmer, *Operation Yao Ming*, 21-22.

¹³⁶ By this time, the Twenty-Three Articles document produced by the December 1964 CPC work conference had renamed the Socialist Education movement to just the “Four Cleanups” movement – cleaning up politics, economy, organization and ideology. Li, *A Glossary of Political Terms in the People's Republic of China*, 429-430.

¹³⁷ BMA 185-001-00065: yi jiu liu wu nian Beijingshi tiyu gongzuo yaodian.

¹³⁸ SMA B126-1-819: Shanghaishi tiyu yundong weiyuanhui: jiedai Riben zhuming paiqiu jiaolian Dasongbowen deng san ren gongzuo xiaojie [Shanghai sports committee: short work summary of welcoming famous Japanese volleyball coach Daimatsu Hirobumi and 3 other people], June 29, 1965. The work summary sheds light on what seems to have been a visit that ended up focusing on close training with athletes and a technical discussion forum. The report lamented that Daimatsu stated upfront he was not discussing politics and the Chinese side had found “many errors in [his] political

methods, emphasizing “bitter training,” individual willpower and spirit, fell perfectly in line with a progressively more militant society. However, his emphasis on individualism (that is, training for oneself first and foremost) and views on capitalism had become more problematic with the leftist turn in society. Additionally, his dominant and paternalistic coaching style clearly contradicted the call made in Xu’s speech to challenge authority figures. Chinese sports leaders thus made few attempts during this return visit to engage in any kind of serious political debate with Daimatsu and the visit produced few internal reports or press.¹³⁹

In the lead-up to the Second National Games, scheduled for September 1965, these political changes began to influence elite athletic training. In August the Beijing municipal sports committee, which was sending a 263-member delegation to the Games that included 201 professional athletes, duly emphasized progress that had been made in thought work and training. The basketball team had, for example, recently carried out self-criticisms, and some athletes served as model athletes for others. These included Zhuang Zedong (the famous ping-pong player) and Wu Fushan (a female high jumper), who had “good thought [and] trained hard,” and whose sports levels were “fairly stable.”¹⁴⁰ Zhang Lihua, a cyclist who had set four national records, a Party member and a student in the engineering department at

viewpoints.” Despite the best efforts on the Chinese side to introduce “some of our concepts” (which included trying to influence him to see that war in Vietnam was necessary because of U.S. imperialism, and that China’s second nuclear detonation test was a good thing), this summary report concluded that there had been “no big change.”

¹³⁹ Only short announcements of his visit and departure were published in *Renmin ribao* on April 19, 1965 and May 3, 1965.

¹⁴⁰ BMA 185-001-00069: Beijingshi canjia di er jie quanyunhui choubei weiyuanhui de gongzuo baogao [Report from the preparation committee for Beijing’s participation in the second national games], August 22, 1965.

Qinghua University, was another good model. In addition to being sound in thought and an excellent student who trained well, it was said, he even helped train other athletes. Over the previous year, the report noted, 12 athletes had become Party members and 31 had entered the youth league. Nonetheless, Beijing sports committee leaders still complained that they did not yet have a sufficient number of model athletes. Political requests had increased the study of Mao's *Selected Works*, but committee leaders cited individualism and the inability of many athletes to overcome the "three fears" – along with mounting pressure to fulfill their athletic responsibilities – as continued problems related to training.¹⁴¹ The primary solution they proposed was more political thought work. In addition to improving criticism and self-criticism, sports leaders were urged to use blackboards and other methods to promote "good people and good deeds" (*haoren haoshi*).¹⁴²

With political tensions mounting, the Second National Games took place in Beijing from September 11 to 28. Seven major calisthenics performances heavily emphasized Mao Zedong Thought [Figures 50-51], with themes mirroring common slogans from the time, such as "hold high the torch of revolution," "self-reliance and working hard for the prosperity of the country," and "the people's communes are

¹⁴¹ BMA 185-001-00069: Beijingshi canjia di er jie quanyunhui choubei weiyuanhui de gongzuo baogao.

¹⁴² BMA 185-001-00069: Beijingshi canjia di er jie quanyunhui choubei weiyuanhui de gongzuo baogao.

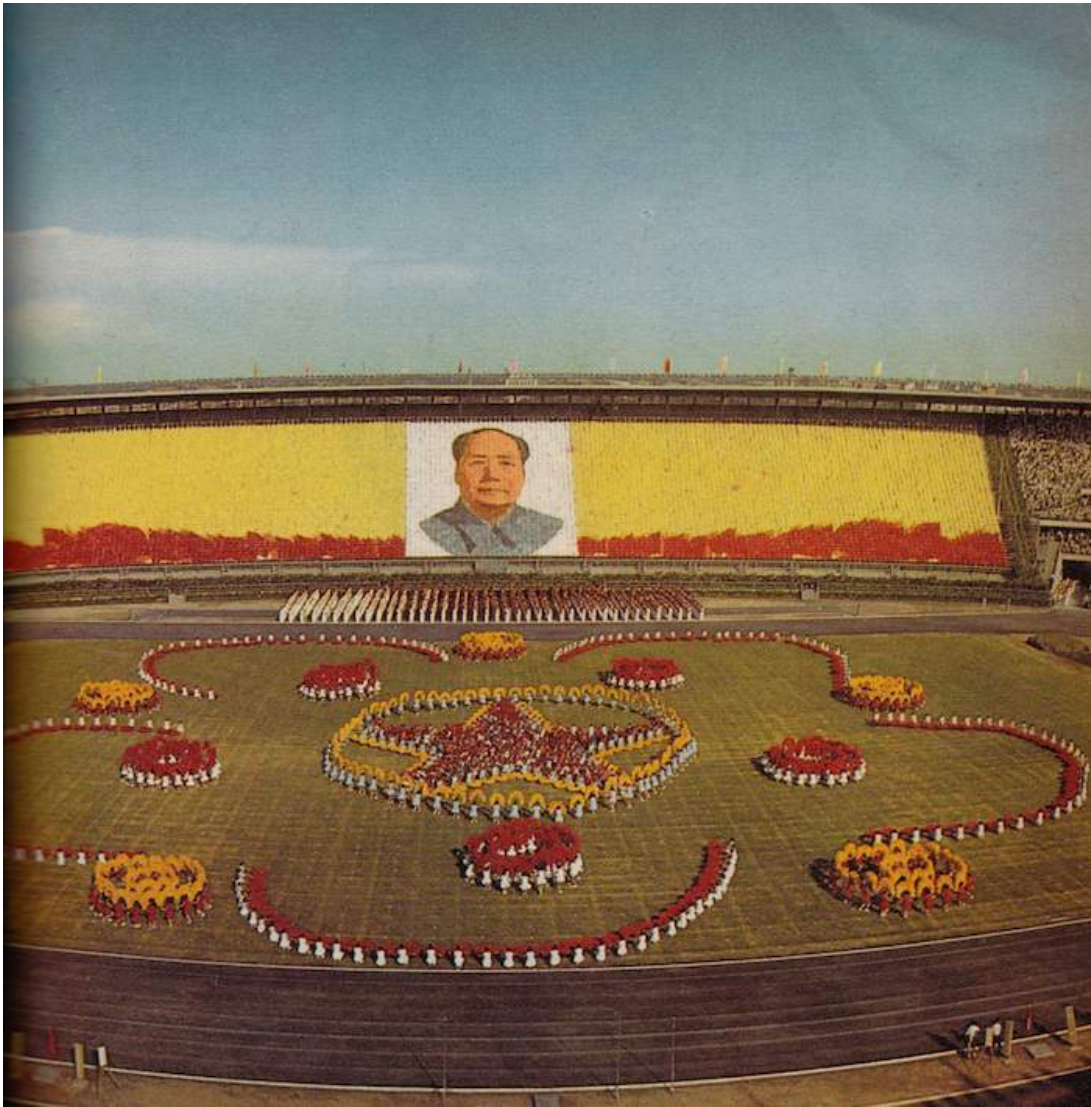


Figure 50. Opening ceremony of the Second National Games: first calisthenics movement. *Xin tiyu*, October 20, 1965.



Figure 51. Opening ceremony of the Second National Games: “carry the revolution through to the end.” Aerial view of Beijing’s Worker’s stadium. *Xin tiyu*, October 20, 1965.

good.”¹⁴³ Some, like “hold shotguns firmly in our hands” and “carry the revolution through to the end,” also reflected a militant turn in society as a whole. Furthermore, reflecting changes in sports policies over the previous three years that focused on the development of “fewer but better” elite athletes (see Chapter 5), athletic participation in these Games shrank considerably but produced better results. Fewer than 6,000

¹⁴³ “Geming zange: zhonghua renmin gongheguo di er jie yundonghui tuan ticao jieshao” [Revolutionary songs of praise: PRC second national games group calisthenics introduction], *Xin tiyu*, September 1965, 13-17.

athletes, or about half the number that had taken part in the earlier 1959 Games, participated in 22 sports¹⁴⁴ and 10 world records were broken.¹⁴⁵ The October issue of *Xin tiyu* included a chart that listed who had achieved each of the new records, which were in archery, weightlifting, rifle shooting, and parachute jumping, along with information on who had held the previous world record and their nationality.¹⁴⁶ Chinese athletes had set three of the records previously, but athletes from Japan, the United States, Sweden and the Soviet Union had held the others. From this perspective, although fewer athletes participated, the quality of Chinese elite sport seemed to be generally improving overall and reaching world levels in numerous sports despite non-participation in most international sports federations.

In fall 1965, however, within the context of an increasingly radicalized domestic political situation,¹⁴⁷ Chinese elite international sport sustained a huge blow. Indonesian president and GANEFO founder Sukarno was overthrown on September 30 and the new government under Suharto did not support the GANEFO movement.

¹⁴⁴ Zhongguo tiyu nianjian bianji weiyuanhui ed., *Zhongguo tiyu nianjian 1965* [China Sports Yearbook 1965] (Beijing: Renmin tiyu chubanshe, 1982), 82.

¹⁴⁵ *Zhongguo tiyu nianjian 1965*, 42.

¹⁴⁶ “Ziliao: Wo guo yundongyuan zai di er jie quanyunhui qijian chuangzao de shijie jilu” [Information: our nation’s athletes new world records created during the second national games], *Xin tiyu*, October 1965, 28.

¹⁴⁷ Internally, tensions in high politics had been building over the course of the year as Mao grew closer to his ultimate goal getting rid of Liu Shaoqi and replacing him with Lin Biao, the more leftist, loyal PLA leader and Mao follower, who was also responsible for the *Little Red Book*. For more on the events that transpired in 1965, MacFarquhar, *The Origins of the Cultural Revolution, Vol. 3*, 431-460. Lin’s more militant influence can also be seen in the August 1965 speech “Long Live the Victory of the People’s War!” which commemorated the twentieth anniversary of Chinese victory in the war against Japan and which resulted in a mass-produced booklet. The speech, among other things, called for returning to a more Yan’an guerilla strategy and a “People’s War.” Lin Biao, “Love Live the Victory of the People’s War!” (Beijing: Foreign Languages Press, 1965) and available online at https://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/lin-biao/1965/09/peoples_war/index.htm (Last accessed November 15, 2014). As Lin’s position in high politics grew, so too did his leftist ideas gain prominence in society.

Although, as the previous chapter showed, GANEFO planning had suffered from some internal disagreements from the start, the September 30 incident sealed its fate. GANEFO continued to exist and the Asian GANEFO was still on schedule for 1966, but without its founder and one of the two primary supporting countries, the movement never regained the momentum it had lost. With international support in the world of sport dwindling, “friendly” sports delegation visits became one of the few places in which elite athletes could still compete against foreign teams.

“Friendly” Sport and Mao Zedong Thought: African Delegations Visit China

By the time the Tanzanian soccer team arrived in China for a short visit in late June 1966, the Cultural Revolution had already officially started. The official announcement for the visit sent to local sports committees called for maintaining a “friendly, cordial spirit” and carrying out “friendly” work by giving “prominence to politics” (*tuchu zhengzhi*) with Mao Zedong Thought in command.¹⁴⁸ Numerous African countries had established political relations with the PRC in the early to mid-1960s and sports delegations were one method of cultivating or strengthening these new Sino-African ties. Official reports from this and other African sports delegation visits held between late spring and fall 1966 show, however, that more politically radical language associated with the Cultural Revolution began to appear and influence elite sports activities. The Chinese side was intently focused during

¹⁴⁸ SMA B126-1-956: Zhonghua renmin gongheguo tiyu yundong weiyuanwei: guanyu jiedai Tansangniya zuqiudui de tongzhi [PRC State Sports Commission: announcement concerning receiving the Tanzanian soccer team], June 10, 1966. In fact, the short announcement mentioned giving “prominence to politics” no less than three times in the list of work to be done.

delegation visits on trying to shore up foreign support for Chinese policies. In addition to promoting aspects of Chinese socialism, such as the principle of national self-reliance, these delegation visits highlight the rise of the cult of Mao and Mao Zedong Thought. In fact, in contrast to visits held in prior years, these in 1966 suggest that in many cases sports competition itself was increasingly becoming an afterthought to political goals.

Maintaining friendly relations with foreign guests remained a primary official goal of these visits, and this continued to include friendly matches, exhibitions, and practices. However, as far as the Chinese side was concerned, politics became paramount and overrode any sports goals. Slightly adjusted depending on each country, “friendly” political relations could be relatively easy or rather difficult to maintain during a visit. In the case of the Tanzanian soccer team’s visit in June 1966, the official announcement noted prominently that even though this was the first sports delegation from the newly independent country, relations had become increasingly cordial with “our friend [Tanzania] in the struggle against imperialism.”¹⁴⁹ Thus the official announcement sent by the State Sports Commission encouraged local officials to freely discuss Chinese political positions on Vietnam, the Soviet Union, and the United States with their guests. Instructions in the announcement for the Mali soccer team’s visit in August were more ambivalent, noting Mali’s continued GANEFO participation and recent Chinese sports delegation visits to that country, while also pointing to an increasingly tense situation in the country blamed on American

¹⁴⁹ SMA B126-1-956: Zhonghua renmin gongheguo tiyu yundong weiyuanwei: guanyu jiedai Tansangniya zuqiudui de tongzhi.

imperialism and Soviet Revisionism. Mali's policies on cultural activities had been wavering for several years because internal authorities did not have "a lot of resolve to eradicate imperialist power."¹⁵⁰ Meanwhile, the visit in August from the nine-person Egyptian gymnastics team required more caution because Egypt had already stopped preparations for the second GANEFO. Delegation leader A.D. Touny, the GANEFO vice president for Africa and an International Olympic Committee member, was accused of "colluding with the Soviet revisionists [and] destroying the GANEFO's anti-imperialist struggle."¹⁵¹ Given the situation, certain political topics would be avoided while still following the official protocol to promote Mao Zedong Thought, the Chinese position on Vietnam, self-reliance in socialist construction, and Chinese sports achievements under the GANEFO spirit of "furthering friendship, mutual advancement, developing together, united against imperialism."¹⁵² These boilerplate political statements were not unique; nearly every delegation visit announcement in 1966 repeated them.

As they had done for several years, local officials worked hard to educate and impress their visitors with the achievements of Chinese socialism primarily through cultural activities and visits to local institutions. The coach for the Egyptian gymnastics team commented on visits to Beijing sports facilities in August 1966 that

¹⁵⁰ SMA B126-1-956: Zhongguo renmin gongheguo tiyu yundong weiyuanhui: guanyu jiedai Mali zuqiudui de tongzhi [PRC State Sports Commission: announcement concerning receiving the Mali soccer team], August 16, 1966.

¹⁵¹ SMA B126-1-956: Zhongguo renmin gongheguo tiyu yundong weiyuanhui: guanyu jiedai Alian nanzi ticaodui de tongzhi [PRC State Sports Commission: announcement concerning receiving the Egyptian gymnastics team], August 3, 1966.

¹⁵² SMA B126-1-956: Zhongguo renmin gongheguo tiyu yundong weiyuanhui: guanyu jiedai Alian nanzi ticaodui de tongzhi.

he had been to many countries but never seen such a good sports institute for gymnastics.¹⁵³ After seeing the Shanghai Industrial Exhibition, the team's delegation leader wanted to know how an "opium-smoking, indolent people" could make such great achievements in just 16 years.¹⁵⁴ The Chinese guide then explained that "under the leadership of Mao and the Party, the Chinese people overthrew the three big mountains [of imperialism, feudalism, and bureaucratic capitalism¹⁵⁵] [and] liberated the People's unlimited creative ability."¹⁵⁶ The coach felt that the Chinese people should be "proud" of such an impressive change in becoming an industrial country that produced so many things. The Mali delegation leader stated when visiting the Shanghai Industrial Exhibition that in ten years "China will certainly produce all the things it needs."¹⁵⁷ The twenty-two-person Tanzanian soccer delegation was described in the report as a friendly group that, despite "not understanding [China]" was eager and willing to learn.¹⁵⁸ Their visit to Beijing's museum of revolution

¹⁵³ SMA B126-1-956: Tiyu yundong weiyuanhui guojisi waibin jiedai gongzuo jianbao: Alian nanzi ticaodui qingkuang: di er qi [State Sports Commission brief work report on receiving foreign guests: Egypt men's gymnastics team situation: number 2], Beijing, August 16, 1966.

¹⁵⁴ SMA B126-1-956: Tiyu yundong weiyuanhui guojisi waibin jiedai gongzuo jianbao: Alian nanzi ticaodui qingkuang: di san qi [State Sports Commission brief work report on receiving foreign guests: Egypt men's gymnastics team situation: number 3], Shanghai, August 22, 1966.

¹⁵⁵ The "three big mountains" was a phrase occasionally used by Mao in the past. For example: Mao Zedong, "Beat Back the Attacks of the Bourgeois Rightists," in *Selected Works of Mao Tse-tung Vol. 5* (India: Kranti Publications, 1990) and available online at https://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/mao/selected-works/volume-5/mswv5_65.htm (Last accessed: November 14, 2014).

¹⁵⁶ SMA B126-1-956: Tiyu yundong weiyuanhui guojisi waibin jiedai gongzuo jianbao: Alian nanzi ticaodui qingkuang: di san qi.

¹⁵⁷ SMA B126-1-956: Tiyu yundong weiyuanhui guojisi waibin jiedai gongzuo jianbao: jiedai Mali guojia zuqiudui qingkuang: di qi qi [State Sports Commission brief work report on receiving foreign guests: Mail national soccer team situation: number 7], Shanghai, September 6, 1966.

¹⁵⁸ SMA B126-1-956: Tiyu yundong weiyuanhui guojisi waibin jiedai gongzuo jianbao: Tansangniya zuqiudui qingkuang (yi) [State Sports Commission brief work report on receiving foreign guests: Tanzania soccer team situation (1)], Beijing, June 29, 1966.

became an opportunity to discuss the Taiwan issue and revolutionary martyrs,¹⁵⁹ while in Shanghai the whole team watched the film “Tunnel Warfare.”¹⁶⁰ A visit to the People’s Hall in Beijing prompted one player to comment that prior to coming to China, he had only heard about the building and had not believed it was real; now having seen it with his own eyes he was also convinced that the Chinese were “hardworking people.”¹⁶¹ During a car factory tour in Shanghai, the Tanzanian delegation leader asked three times whether or not European engineers had helped out and “he seemed not to totally believe” that everything was made by Chinese people.¹⁶² But following the visit, he stated that Chinese cars were better than those made in England, Italy, and the United States, and that he wanted to import them to his country.¹⁶³

Nearly every report recorded positive comments made by visitors that highlighted China as a successful, socialist model that others wanted to emulate in sport and across society. The Egyptian gymnastics coach expressed his disappointment that China couldn’t participate in the world gymnastics championships because its team was “undoubtedly” one of the three strongest in

¹⁵⁹ SMA B126-1-956: Tiyu yundong weiyuanhui guojisi waibin jiedai gongzuo jianbao: Tansangniya zuqiudui qingkuang (yi).

¹⁶⁰ SMA B126-1-956: Shanghaishi tiyu yundong weiyuanhui: jiedai Tansangniya zuqiudui qingkuang jianbao (er) [Shanghai sports committee: brief work report receiving the Tanzanian soccer team situation (2)], July 5-6, 1966. The report claimed the group like the film, despite the fact that their accompanying delegation reporter had now apparently seen it three times.

¹⁶¹ SMA B126-1-956: Tiyu yundong weiyuanhui guojisi waibin jiedai gongzuo jianbao: Tansangniya zuqiudui qingkuang (yi).

¹⁶² SMA B126-1-956: Shanghaishi tiyu yundong weiyuanhui: jiedai Tansangniyaa guojia zuqiudui jianbao (yi) [Shanghai sports committee: brief work report receiving the Tanzanian soccer team situation (1)], July 3-4 1966.

¹⁶³ SMA B126-1-956: Shanghaishi tiyu yundong weiyuanhui: jiedai Tansangniyaa guojia zuqiudui jianbao (yi).

world along with the Soviet Union and Japan.¹⁶⁴ He also wanted to know how China had so rapidly raised its gymnastics level in a short period of time.¹⁶⁵ After the Chinese team beat the visiting Mali soccer team 4:0 in Beijing, the delegation leaders praised and wanted to learn more from the Chinese team about speed, cooperation, and the ability to pass the ball accurately.¹⁶⁶ Unfavorable comments made by guests about their home country were recorded in an effort to make Chinese socialism look even better. Some of the gymnastics athletes, for example, complained that their own coach didn't take part in practice, while others complained that their training wasn't "scientific."¹⁶⁷

Comments made by foreign guests and recorded in reports, both positive or negative, also extended beyond sport. When visiting Shanghai, the leader of the Tanzanian delegation was so excited by what he saw that he wanted to send Tanzanian children to China to study Chinese. According to the report, he was also impressed that in just sixteen years China had changed so much that it no longer had petty thieves, beggars or problems with unemployment, all of which he noted were still serious problems in Tanzania.¹⁶⁸ When touring a Shanghai factory for the blind, deaf and mute, he was so impressed by the visit – which included, among other

¹⁶⁴ SMA B126-1-956: Tiyu yundong weiyuanhui guojisi waibin jiedai gongzuo jianbao: Alian nanzi ticaodui qingkuang: di yi qi [State Sports Commission brief work report on receiving foreign guests: Egypt men's gymnastics team situation: number 1], Beijing, August 14, 1966.

¹⁶⁵ SMA B126-1-956: Tiyu yundong weiyuanhui guojisi waibin jiedai gongzuo jianbao: Alian nanzi ticaodui qingkuang: di er qi.

¹⁶⁶ SMA B126-1-956: Tiyu yundong weiyuanhui guojisi waibin jiedai gongzuo jianbao: jiedai Mali guojia zuqiudui qingkuang: di san qi [State Sports Commission brief work report on receiving foreign guests: Mail national soccer team situation: number 3], Beijing, August 25-28, 1966.

¹⁶⁷ SMA B126-1-956: Tiyu yundong weiyuanhui guojisi waibin jiedai gongzuo jianbao: Alian nanzi ticaodui qingkuang: di er qi.

¹⁶⁸ SMA B126-1-956: Shanghaishi tiyu yundong weiyuanhui: jiedai Tansangniyaa guojia zuqiudui jianbao (yi).

things, a blind person reading from a braille version of Mao's *Selected Works* – that he claimed he wanted to “learn from” China and also send others from his country to come see China's blind and deaf factories.¹⁶⁹ The Mali soccer delegation leader commented after a visit to Beijing No. 3 Cotton Factory that with Mao Zedong Thought's policy of self-reliance, “China will certainly prosper,”¹⁷⁰ while the secretary noted that Chinese experts had already helped Mali “construct our factories, [and they] also taught us how to do it ourselves.”¹⁷¹ The delegation also visited a ping-pong factory in Guangzhou and the delegation leader commented that of all the factories he had seen in China, this one really demonstrated the principle of self-reliance under Mao Zedong Thought. He added that it also gave Mali a model path for industry.¹⁷²

Chinese local leaders also fulfilled special requests from delegation leaders, such as when the Tanzanian leader inquired about visiting a church. During the tour of a church in Shanghai, the leader asked to know more about Chinese policies on freedom of faith. He was told that China had freedom of faith, and that every religion received mutual respect, to which he responded that in his country religion caused lots of conflict and was “a big headache.”¹⁷³ After the visit he noted his impressions

¹⁶⁹ SMA B126-1-956: Shanghaishi tiyu yundong weiyuanhui: jiedai Tansangniya zuqiudui qingkuang jianbao (er).

¹⁷⁰ SMA B126-1-956: Tiyu yundong weiyuanhui guojisi waibin jiedai gongzuo jianbao: jiedai Mali guojia zuqiudui qingkuang: di san qi.

¹⁷¹ SMA B126-1-956: Tiyu yundong weiyuanhui guojisi waibin jiedai gongzuo jianbao: jiedai Mali guojia zuqiudui qingkuang: di san qi.

¹⁷² SMA B126-1-956: Tiyu yundong weiyuanhui guojisi waibin jiedai gongzuo jianbao: jiedai Mali guojia zuqiudui qingkuang: di jiu qi [State Sports Commission brief work report on receiving foreign guests: Mail national soccer team situation: number 9], Guangzhou, September 10, 1966.

¹⁷³ SMA B126-1-956: Shanghaishi tiyu yundong weiyuanhui: jiedai Tansangniya zuqiudui qingkuang jianbao (er).

by stating that “in our country, foreign missionaries tell us that not many people believe in Chinese communism” but that from the religious discussion that day he could “see that this is their [the missionaries’] propaganda.”¹⁷⁴ In this case, the voluntary church visit became yet another opportunity to further impress a visitor with Chinese socialism and record his positive assessment of China, as well as record negative comments made about missionaries and religion in his less-than-satisfactory home country. In another case, the Egyptian gymnastics team delegation leaders expressed interest in communes and got a visit to the Malu People’s Commune in Shanghai.¹⁷⁵ Impressed by what they saw, the delegation leader said he “really believed in the commune system” and stated that in his country the economy was going instead in the direction of capitalism. He hoped that in the future Egypt could send some rural youth to China to work and live for a while. The Mali delegation leader visited the same commune a few days later and concluded that Mali needed to learn from the successful experience of China and especially “how to organize and educate small farmers.”¹⁷⁶

In contrast to sports delegation visit reports of previous years, these also emphasized foreign guest interest in Mao and Mao Zedong thought. After visiting the revolutionary museum in Beijing, one Tanzanian soccer player requested Mao badges

¹⁷⁴ SMA B126-1-956: Shanghaishi tiyu yundong weiyuanhui: jiedai Tansangniya zuqiudui qingkuang jianbao (er).

¹⁷⁵ SMA B126-1-956: Tiyu yundong weiyuanhui guojisi waibin jiedai gongzuo jianbao: Alian nanzi ticaodui qingkuang: di si qi [State Sports Commission brief work report on receiving foreign guests: Egypt men’s gymnastics team situation: number 4], Hangzhou, August 24, 1966.

¹⁷⁶ SMA B126-1-956: Tiyu yundong weiyuanhui guojisi waibin jiedai gongzuo jianbao: jiedai Mali guojia zuqiudui qingkuang: di liu qi [State Sports Commission brief work report on receiving foreign guests: receiving Mali national soccer team situation: number 6], Shanghai, September 2, 1966.

so he could express his “love of Chairman Mao.”¹⁷⁷ Chinese leaders during the Egyptian gymnastic team’s visit tried to also convince guests of the importance of politics in command and the role of Mao Zedong Thought in sport. According to the report, the Egyptian manager did not believe politics mattered in sport, but some of the Egyptian athletes thought that Chinese athletes were successful because they read Chairman Mao’s book.¹⁷⁸ The same report also noted that the delegation leader commented that the quality of sports facilities and teaching methods could be attributed to the influence of Mao Zedong Thought on students. Upon leaving Shanghai, where the team had visited the Children’s Palace and youth amateur sports schools,¹⁷⁹ one player felt that it was a “good thing” that “Chinese children learned from Mao Zedong Thought,” and he requested several copies of Mao’s *Selected Works* to take with him.¹⁸⁰ The whole Mali soccer team bought images of Mao and also wanted copies of the book to take with them.¹⁸¹

Despite these superficially positive comments, “friendly” relations were not always so smooth. As predicted in the official announcement mentioned earlier, the visit in August by the Egyptian men’s gymnastics delegation highlighted problems between the countries, such as the GANEFO. Touny, head of the delegation,

¹⁷⁷ SMA B126-1-956: Tiyu yundong weiyuanhui guojisi waibin jiedai gongzuo jianbao: Tansangniya zuqiudui qingkuang (yi).

¹⁷⁸ SMA B126-1-956: Tiyu yundong weiyuanhui guojisi waibin jiedai gongzuo jianbao: Alian nanzi ticaodui qingkuang: di er qi.

¹⁷⁹ SMA B126-1-956: Shanghaishi tiyu yundong weiyuanhui: jiedai Alabo lianhe gongheguo nanzi ticaodui qingkuang jianbao (san) [Shanghai sports committee: brief work report on receiving the Egyptian men’s gymnastics team situation (3)], August 19-21, 1966.

¹⁸⁰ SMA B126-1-956: Tiyu yundong weiyuanhui guojisi waibin jiedai gongzuo jianbao: Alian nanzi ticaodui qingkuang: di san qi.

¹⁸¹ SMA B126-1-956: Tiyu yundong weiyuanhui guojisi waibin jiedai gongzuo jianbao: jiedai Mali guojia zuqiudui qingkuang: di wu qi [State Sports Commission brief work report on receiving foreign guests: Mail national soccer team situation: number 5], Beijing, September 1, 1966.

continually refused to discuss the economic problems that had led to Cairo's withdrawal from hosting the second GANEFO, although he suspiciously wanted to know whether or not the Asian GANEFO was still planned for later in the year in Cambodia.¹⁸² Touny later stated that the Soviets had suggested Egypt "postpone" holding the second GANEFO, and that Egypt would continue to participate in International Federations, the Olympics, and the GANEFO.¹⁸³ More likely to support the GANEFO was Mali, a country that had participated in the first Games and was highlighted in the first report of its soccer team's visit to China in August (which happened to overlap by a few days with the Egyptian gymnastics delegation). Mali still had hopes for a successful second GANEFO, the report stated, and was working "to get even more African countries to participate" in it.¹⁸⁴ Nevertheless, even Mali's reliability seemed dubious when a few days later the delegation leader acted "not too warm," his discussion was described as "empty talk," and he "avoided discussion of the GANEFO."¹⁸⁵

Problems with the Egyptian delegation extended beyond sports and into other international political views. Egyptian players and coaches wanted to know why

¹⁸² SMA B126-1-956: Tiyu yundong weiyuanhui guojisi waibin jiedai gongzuo jianbao: Alian nanzi ticaodui qingkuang: di yi qi. Touny likely only wanted to know more about the Asian GANEFO in order to provide the IOC with an update on it.

¹⁸³ SMA B126-1-956: Tiyu yundong weiyuanhui guojisi waibin jiedai gongzuo jianbao: Alian nanzi ticaodui qingkuang: di si qi. The Chinese person accompanying Touny told him that there was no problem in "carrying out the struggle" in the international federations, but reemphasized that the "GANEFO must develop independently."

¹⁸⁴ SMA B126-1-956: Tiyu yundong weiyuanhui guojisi waibin jiedai gongzuo jianbao: jiedai Mali guojia zuqiudui qingkuang: di yi qi [State Sports Commission brief work report on receiving foreign guests: Mail national soccer team situation: number 1], Beijing, August 24, 1966.

¹⁸⁵ SMA B126-1-956: Tiyu yundong weiyuanhui guojisi waibin jiedai gongzuo jianbao: jiedai Mali guojia zuqiudui qingkuang: di er qi [State Sports Commission brief work report on receiving foreign guests: Mail national soccer team situation: number 2], Beijing, August 25-26, 1966.

China and the United States could not have friendly contact, and they stated that a (nuclear) bomb was no good no matter who had it.¹⁸⁶ Another report listed comments from the coach and manager reflecting the Egyptian-Soviet relationship – the Soviet Union, they told the Chinese, provided aid to their country and also a lot of aid to Vietnam.¹⁸⁷ Finally, at the banquet in Shanghai, the report noted the ambiguity in Touny’s thank you speech when he refused to cite “U.S. imperialism” as the enemy in Vietnam and “when speaking of revisionism, [he] only brought up Khrushchev [and] did not mention the new Soviet communist leadership.”¹⁸⁸ The act of recording these comments clearly demonstrates the weight Chinese leaders attached to divergent political views, including which nations they felt were trustworthy or untrustworthy, and shows the increasing political sensitivity on issues related to the Soviet Union and Vietnam.

Actual sports play also turned out to be less friendly on some occasions. During the Tanzanian soccer team’s game with the Shanghai team, the report noted that there had been a “rough style of play [with] lots of dangerous moves” that had apparently made the referees “uncomfortable.”¹⁸⁹ The team leader took partial responsibility and promised to chat with his players, but along with the team captain

¹⁸⁶ SMA B126-1-956: Tiyu yundong weiyuanhui guojisi waibin jiedai gongzuo jianbao: Alian nanzi ticaodui qingkuang: di yi qi.

¹⁸⁷ SMA B126-1-956: Tiyu yundong weiyuanhui guojisi waibin jiedai gongzuo jianbao: Alian nanzi ticaodui qingkuang: di er qi.

¹⁸⁸ SMA B126-1-956: Tiyu yundong weiyuanhui guojisi waibin jiedai gongzuo jianbao: Alian nanzi ticaodui qingkuang: di si qi.

¹⁸⁹ SMA B126-1-956: Shanghaishi tiyu yundong weiyuanhui: jiedai Tansangniya zuqiudui qingkuang jianbao (er).

also complained about “unfair” referees.¹⁹⁰ The Mali soccer team, following a loss to the national team and a tie with the national youth team, beat the Shanghai team 4:1. In contrast to the Chinese wins, which elicited positive comments from the Mali team and leaders, this loss merited the shortest sports commentary of the whole visit: “the Mali team played relatively well; the Shanghai team’s play was not ideal.”¹⁹¹

In news reports for public consumption the Chinese leadership ignored any potentially deleterious comments. Positive comments made by foreign guests served to support domestic politics. An article in *Tiyu bao* from July 8, 1966, for example, stated that the Tanzanian delegation leader had visited the Shanghai Industrial Exhibition and enthusiastically praised China’s “great achievements in construction.” These were said to be a result of Chairman Mao Zedong’s leadership and “complete dependence on the Chinese people’s own strength” (i.e. self-reliance).¹⁹²

By late 1966, however, the opportunity to use these visits for cultivating friendly relations or guests’ comments to support policies began to dwindle. The Congo soccer team’s visit in October and November clearly indicates in China a more chaotic environment on the ground and the increasing influence of Red Guards. The State Sports Commission’s official announcement for the visit on October 5, sent to sports committees in Beijing, Shanghai, Hebei, Tianjin, Guangdong and Guangzhou, reflected the fact that the Cultural Revolution had changed the “subjective and

¹⁹⁰ SMA B126-1-956: Shanghaishi tiyu yundong weiyuanhui: jiedai Tansangniya zuqiudui qingkuang jianbao (er). The team captain further complained that Chinese cleats were “weapons” because they easily hurt people when falling down.

¹⁹¹ SMA B126-1-956: Tiyu yundong weiyuanhui guojisi waibin jiedai gongzuo jianbao: jiedai Mali guojia zuqiudui qingkuang: di qi qi.

¹⁹² SMA B126-1-956: Gaodu gesong Mao zhuxi de yingming lingdao: Tansangniya guojia zuqiudui li shanghai hui guo (article from *Tiyu bao*), July 8, 1966.

objective conditions” of the work done for receiving foreign guests.¹⁹³ The Congolese visitors, it noted, upheld the struggle against U.S. imperialism in Vietnam and political, economic, and cultural relations with China were rapidly developing, although their own country was politically unstable. However, this visit, in contrast to those just a few months before, had an “extremely important political responsibility” to “broadcast to the whole world the far-reaching significance of Mao Zedong Thought and the Cultural Revolution.”¹⁹⁴

Every subsequent report from the Congolese visit began with a quotation from Chairman Mao and lavished praise for Mao Zedong Thought. As with the Tanzanian soccer delegation, the Congolese team was described in reports as a team that willingly wanted to learn from Chinese successes – in this case, they were most interested sport, medicine, and self-reliance.¹⁹⁵ The delegation leader attributed these Chinese achievements to Mao Zedong Thought and added that the significance of Mao’s works and quotations “goes beyond China [and] will enable the whole world to be liberated.”¹⁹⁶ In fact, the delegation leader nearly always had praise for Mao, and he hoped that Mao Zedong Thought would also help his country.¹⁹⁷ Of course,

¹⁹³ SMA B126-1-956: Zhonghua renmin gongheguo tiyu yundong weiyuanhui: guanyu jiedai Gangguo (bu) zuqiudui de tongzhi [PRC State Sports Commission: announcement concerning receiving the Congo (Brazzaville) soccer team], October 5, 1966.

¹⁹⁴ SMA B126-1-956: Zhonghua renmin gongheguo tiyu yundong weiyuanhui: guanyu jiedai Gangguo (bu) zuqiudui de tongzhi.

¹⁹⁵ SMA B126-1-956: Tiyu yundong weiyuanhui guojisi waibin jiedai gongzuo jianbao: jiedai Gangguo (bu) zuqiudui jianbao: di yi qi [State Sports Commission brief work report on receiving foreign guests: receiving the Congo (Brazzaville) soccer team: number 1], Beijing, October 19-22, 1966.

¹⁹⁶ SMA B126-1-956: Tiyu yundong weiyuanhui guojisi waibin jiedai gongzuo jianbao: jiedai Gangguo (bu) zuqiudui jianbao: di yi qi.

¹⁹⁷ It is impossible to reconstruct how individual athletes or the coach felt; however, the leader decided his athletes were to discuss only sports issues and not talk politics with the Chinese side. SMA B126-1-

help was also financial. In Shanghai, the leader asked for assistance and sports equipment, such as soccer balls and uniforms.¹⁹⁸

Reports from this visit also suggest a rapidly changing and chaotic situation on the ground. The announcement had initially noted that the class struggle had become “extremely intense and complicated,” prompting the need to place great importance on security for the foreign guests.¹⁹⁹ In Shanghai, the stadium was decorated with large images and banners bearing Mao’s quotations.²⁰⁰ In full view of the Congolese delegation, Red Guards criticized the Shanghai workers’ team for having stated that they “allowed the visitors to win 3 to 1.”²⁰¹ The Red Guards told the workers team that it had not properly studied Chairman Mao’s book and followed Mao Zedong Thought because a more appropriate thing to say was that the Congolese team “played well [and with] indomitable courage.”²⁰² The Congolese team, the report added, was just happy for the unexpected victory.

By this point, however, militant, radical politics had taken hold and led to an unstable domestic situation in which numerous leaders, including prominent ping-

956: Tiyu yundong weiyuanhui guojisi waibin jiedai gongzuo jianbao: jiedai Gangguo (bu) zuqiudui jianbao: di san qi [State Sports Commission brief work report on receiving foreign guests: receiving the Congo (Brazzaville) soccer team: number 3], Tianjin, October 29-November 2, 1966.

¹⁹⁸ SMA B126-1-956: Tiyu yundong weiyuanhui guojisi waibin jiedai gongzuo jianbao: jiedai Gangguo (bu) zuqiudui jianbao: di si qi [State Sports Commission brief work report on receiving foreign guests: receiving the Congo (Brazzaville) soccer team: number 4], Shanghai, November 9, 1966.

¹⁹⁹ SMA B126-1-956: Zhonghua renmin gongheguo tiyu yundong weiyuanhui: guanyu jiedai Gangguo (bu) zuqiudui de tongzhi.

²⁰⁰ SMA B126-1-956: Shanghai tiyundonghui weiyuanhui: jiedai Gangguo (bu) qingnian geming zuzhi zuqiudui gongzuo jihua [Shanghai sports committee: work plan for receiving the Congo (Brazzaville) youth revolutionary organization’s soccer team], October 31, 1966.

²⁰¹ SMA B126-1-956: Tiyu yundong weiyuanhui guojisi waibin jiedai gongzuo jianbao: jiedai Gangguo (bu) zuqiudui jianbao: di si qi.

²⁰² SMA B126-1-956: Tiyu yundong weiyuanhui guojisi waibin jiedai gongzuo jianbao: jiedai Gangguo (bu) zuqiudui jianbao: di si qi.

pong players like Xu Yinsheng, were arrested.²⁰³ The inability of sports leaders and elite athletes to change the political situation on the ground meant that China faced increasing political isolation in the world of sport. North Korea, Albania, North Vietnam, and Cambodia, as in foreign relations more generally,²⁰⁴ became the primary, if not sole, sports “friends.”²⁰⁵ With this political isolation, the primary purpose of elite athletes – to participate in international competition and sports exchanges – largely disappeared.

From spring to fall 1966, sport itself had also begun to disappear as a topic from *Xin tiyu*. The magazine’s content was reduced primarily to articles in support of Mao and the Cultural Revolution written by sportsmen and women, common revolutionary songs, political tracts or speeches,²⁰⁶ photographs of athletes or foreign guests reading Chairman Mao’s *Selected Works*, and occasionally criticism of a sports film.²⁰⁷ The magazine ceased publication altogether in October 1966.

²⁰³ Griffin, *Ping-Pong Diplomacy*, 142. The arrest happened following the team’s return from a trip to Sweden in November 1966. Xu was arrested at the airport terminal in Beijing but he does not indicate why; the rest of the team found their dorm rooms in Beijing emptied of all items and the kitchen closed. My best guess is that it had to do with some kind of general criticism of elite athletes as bourgeois, given more general criticism of this nature across society at the time.

²⁰⁴ And as Lorenz Lüthi points out, even Albanian and North Korean leaders became somewhat critical of Chinese policies by this point. Albanian leader Hoxha even stated in his later reflections on China that the Cultural Revolution had effectively led the country into “self-isolation.” Lüthi, *The Sino-Soviet Split*, 299.

²⁰⁵ This can be generally observed by looking at the records of sports delegation visits between 1966-1972, which were generally far and few between. For example, only one visit was officially recorded in 1967 (a general sports delegation from Vietnam visited China), none in 1968, and in 1969 only a few visits of leaders from Vietnam, Albania, Cambodia, and Congo (Brazzaville) to Beijing’s sports gymnasium took place. It is worth noting, however, that a few Chinese ping-pong and volleyball coaches were sent to these countries to work during these same years. Zhongguo tiyu nianjian weiyuanhui, ed., *Zhongguo tiyu nianjian 1966-1972* (Beijing: Renmin tiyu chubanshe, 1983), 9-10.

²⁰⁶ This included Mao’s Yan’an talks, which took up nearly the entire June issue, and reprints of speeches from *Renmin ribao* and Red Guards dominating the September issue.

²⁰⁷ For example, the June 1966 issue of *Xin tiyu* included an article authored by several printing plant workers from the railway ministry’s publishing house print shop that criticized Xie Jin’s comedy “Big

The Chinese sent a delegation to the Asian GANEFO held in Phnom Penh, Cambodia in November 1966, but this became the last participation in the world of elite sport before the three most radical years of the Cultural Revolution. The fact that the event took place at all was largely the result of Chinese support to continue the GANEFO and close relations between Cambodian and Chinese leaders at the time.²⁰⁸ Chinese athletes and Chinese political interests dominated the event: the main theme was the struggle against U.S. imperialism²⁰⁹ and Chinese athletes set world, national, and GANEFO records.²¹⁰ However, the domestic political situation had changed so

Li, Small Li and Old Li.” The 1962 film by Xie Jin, which is about meat processing plant workers involved in various kinds of *tiyu* activities, was called a “poisonous weed” because, among other things, “from start to finish [it] does not mention the Party’s leadership.” Tiedaobu renmin tiedao chubanshe yinshuachang gongren, “Chedi piping huai dianying: jianjue chandiao zhe zhu fan dang fan shehui zhuyi de ducao – piping huai pian ‘da li, xiao li he lao li’ [Thorough criticism of bad films: Resolutely shovel out the anti-Party anti-Socialist poisonous weeds – criticize the bad film ‘Big Li, Little Li and Old Li’], *Xin tiyu*, June 1966, 77.

²⁰⁸ Some have suggested that the PRC also helped finance the event, such as in building the stadium where it was held. (For example: Ian Pereira, “Sporting change for Cambodia,” *New Straits Times (Malaysia)*, April 4, 1995, 27.) I have yet to find any original archival sources to concretely back up this financial claim, but it seems plausible that the PRC provided assistance of some sort given the long and cordial relationship between Zhou Enlai and Cambodian leader Prince Sihanouk. For more on this relationship, see Julio A. Jeldres, “A Personal Reflection on Norodom Sihanouk and Zhou Enlai: An Extraordinary Friendship on the Fringe of the Cold War,” *Cross-Currents: East Asian History and Culture Review*, E-Journal no. 4 (September 2012), <http://cross-currents.berkeley.edu/e-journal/issue-4> [Last accessed February 8, 2014].

²⁰⁹ For example: “Ya Fei La renmin yao tuanjie qilai fandui Meidi” [Asian, African, and Latin American People will unite against American imperialism], *Renmin ribao*, November 26, 1966.

²¹⁰ For example: “Zhe shi Mao Zedong sixiang de shengli! Ji Zhongguo juzhong yundongyuan Chen Manlin dapo zuiqingliangji tuiju shijie jilu” [This is the victory of Mao Zedong Thought! China’s weightlifter Chen Manli breaks the world record in the bantamweight press], *Renmin ribao*, November 27, 1966; “Yazhou tiyu jianer buduan chuangzao hao chengji: Yaxinhui di san tian you dapo shiyi xing xinyunhui jilu: laizi fan Mei qianxian de Yuenan yundongyuan ronghuo nanzi shouqiang manshe tuanti he geren guanjun” [Asia’s valiant athletes continue to make good achievements: 11 GANEFO records broken on the Asian GANEFO’s third day: Vietnamese athlete from the anti-American frontline wins honor as men’s pistol shooting group and individual champion], *Renmin ribao*, November 29, 1966; and “Mao Zedong sixiang de juda weili – ji wo guo tiaogao yundongyuan Ni Zhiqin chuangzao jin san nian lai shijie zuihao chengji” [Mao Zedong Thought’s tremendous power – our nation’s high jump athlete Ni Zhiqin sets the best world record in the last three years], *Renmin ribao*, December 2, 1966.

dramatically in China that elite sport soon came to a halt entirely.²¹¹ Over the next several years, some elite athletes became faction members or leaders, several former top ping-pong players committed suicide in 1968,²¹² and many central-level sports leaders and elite athletes associated with the State Sports Commission were sent down to the May 7th cadre school in a remote area of Shanxi.²¹³

Conclusion

Officials used elite sport in the mid-1960s primarily to accomplish goals directly related to international and domestic politics. The visit from the Japanese volleyball team offered an opportunity for exchange of skills and training methods that would help build much stronger elite programs in China, so that Chinese athletes could then win international glory and showcase to the rest of the world the superiority of Chinese socialism. Increasingly in 1965 and 1966, however, elite sport became less about sport itself and increasingly a way to negotiate foreign relations, while propagating a worldview in which China was the exemplar of socialist modernity under the tutelage of Mao Zedong Thought.

Meanwhile, the rift between mass *tiyu* and elite sport that began after the Great Leap Forward grew during these years. Central level sports policies continued

²¹¹ When He Zhenliang, one of the Chinese delegation leaders to the Asian GANEFO, returned from Phnom Penh in December 1966, the “circumstances had greatly changed.” Liang Lijuan, *He Zhenliang and China’s Olympic Dream*, trans. Susan Brownell (Beijing: Foreign Languages Press, 2007), 90.

²¹² Griffin, *Ping-Pong Diplomacy*, 155-156. There were Fu Qifang, Jiang Yongning, who had come from Hong Kong in 1953, and the well-known champion, Rong Guotuan. All three had been interrogated heavily for suspicious backgrounds and accused as spies because they had been “returned Chinese” from Hong Kong in the 1950s.

²¹³ For example, He Zhenliang, chief of the International Organizations Division in the State Sports Commission and Secretary-General of the Asian GANEFO, was sent down for a year and half beginning in November 1969. Liang, *He Zhenliang and China’s Olympic Dream*, 89-90.

to emphasize siphoning state resources to an elite cadre of athletic superstars with the hope that Chinese athletes would reach and compete at world levels, break world records, and win glory for China by beating Soviet and American athletes. Former coaches and athletes reminiscing about these years highlight the leadership's political interest in developing an elite cadre of athletes in the mid-1960s. According to Wang Zhiqiang, a former volleyball coach, He Long was so obsessed with raising the nation's status in the "three big ball sports" that he once said "[If we] don't stand up in the three big ball sports I will die with everlasting regret (*san daqiu bu fan shen wo si bu mangmu*)."²¹⁴

The height of development in elite training programs came in 1964, around the first anniversary of the first GANEFO, when the Japanese volleyball team and their coach Daimatsu Hirobumi visited China. Zhou Enlai's direct involvement in this visit is testament to the importance placed on developing elite sports programs.²¹⁵ The visit helped strengthen the call for more intense training methods under the "three

²¹⁴ Interview with Wang Zhiqiang in *Gongheguo tiyu*, 78.

²¹⁵ In fact, elite volleyball athletes specifically remember that Zhou Enlai directly orchestrated and participated in activities during the Daimatsu visit. In hindsight they seem to view Zhou as a kind of friend among the leadership, always looking out for their best interests. Completely absent from later published interviews and accounts, however, is any mention of forging a political relationship with the Japanese guests that found common ground in a struggle against American imperialism, as is any discussion of the attempt to showcase Chinese socialism as morally superior. There is also little discussion of the work done to create "friendship" with the "Japanese people." In part this is because of the changing political discourse in 1972 following Nixon's visit to China and the thawing of Sino-American relations. However, it also seems likely that the PRC leadership's reinvigoration of the anti-Japanese thread in Chinese nationalism during the Reform period is a reason. In more recent secondary accounts, in fact, Daimatsu is almost always singled out when referring to the visit, suggesting that his international successes as a volleyball coach constituted the only reason why Chinese officials invited him to China. Other players, including those who appear repeatedly in the official reports produced at the time, do not merit a mention in many of these accounts. For example, the previously mentioned "Zhou Enlai qing xi xin Zhongguo paiqiu shiye" as well as Han Lizhong, "Zhou Enlai qingqing Zhongguo nüzi paiqiu" [Portrait of Zhou Enlai and Chinese women's volleyball], *Dangshi bocai (jishi)*, August 2008, 48.

requirements one heavy load” principle, which has since been cited as the basis for all subsequent state-sponsored elite training programs in China.²¹⁶ The culmination of elite sports policy and training in these years was the Second National Games in September 1965. However, the increasingly radicalized domestic political situation leading up to and following these Games, combined with the blows suffered by the GANEFO movement that isolated Chinese participation in international sport, heavily influenced the ability of elite training to progress any further.

In this context, by 1966 the importance of elite sport in promoting general domestic politics, such as those of the cult of Mao and Mao Zedong Thought, clearly had surpassed previous goals of sports improvement. Whereas the previous chapter demonstrated how sports exchanges served as a centerpiece in showcasing friendship with Afro-Asian nations, all united in a common anti-imperialist, anti-colonialist struggle, this chapter shows how Chinese leaders used sports exchanges instead to promote Chinese socialism as morally and politically superior, primarily because it was guided Mao Zedong Thought (rather than because it produced any specific athletic advantage). The promotion of this solidarity could also be contradictory: Chinese leaders emphasized, on the one hand, a shared struggle; on the other hand, they exclusively promoted China’s brand of socialism as the model for other nations to follow.

Delegation visits in 1966 were entirely political and rarely discussed actual sport. These visits served instead as opportunities to record foreign support for

²¹⁶ Xiong Xiaozheng and Zhong Bingshu, *Xin Zhongguo tiyu 60 nian* [60 Years of New China’s Tiyu] (Beijing Shi: Beijing tiyu daxue chubanshe, 2010), 116.

Chinese socialism and promote that vision at home and abroad. As this chapter showed, during the Japanese volleyball team's visit in 1964, Chinese leaders had tried to promote Chinese socialist society as morally superior to that found in capitalist Japan. They recorded both positive and negative comments made by their guests, but that was clearly not the only or even main purpose of the visit. In 1966, by contrast, delegation visits and competitions of any sort only served as ways to record foreign support for larger political goals, with no possibility to use these as opportunities to develop Chinese elite sport. These visits also shed light on how the rapidly changing political situation that came with Mao's support of the Red Guards influenced sports delegation visits. Soon thereafter, organized elite sports programs ceased for the remainder of the decade.

Conclusion

In the early 1970s, ping-pong helped usher in the adoption of a sports policy known as “friendship first, competition second.”¹ The policy and accompanying slogan instructed Chinese athletes and leaders to put “friendship” above all else at international sports competitions and during delegation visits, and this was especially true with African and Asian nations. The press often portrayed this approach as a new attempt on the part of the Chinese Party-state to broaden the scope of its amicable foreign relations. As I have demonstrated in this dissertation, however, the seeds for this official “soft power”² sports policy to create “friendly” foreign relations were planted in the first decade and a half after the establishment of the People’s Republic.

This was not the only continuity between the 1970s sports environment and that of the early 1960s. The divide between mass *tiyu* and elite sport that had become clear in the aftermath of the Great Leap Forward persisted. In the context of mass *tiyu*, sports leaders introduced new sets of broadcast calisthenics in 1973 for children, and exercise standards have continued into the present as a component of school physical education programs. State resources, however, went primarily to elite sport and the development of an elite cadre of athletes. Renewed official calls in the 1970s

¹ Wei Jingyu, “Youyi di yi, bisai di er” [Friendship first, competition second], *Renmin ribao*, April 2, 1971.

² Here I am referring to Joseph Nye’s notion that “soft power” entails a state using “cultural attraction, ideology, and international institutions” to “make its power seem legitimate in the eyes of others.” Joseph S. Nye, Jr., “Soft Power,” *Foreign Policy*, No. 80, Twentieth Anniversary (Autumn, 1990), pp. 153-171: 167.

to “strengthen the peoples’ physiques, promote sport”³ through mass *tiyu* programs for ordinary citizens must have rung hollow for local sports officials who received comparatively little funding to implement them.

These continuities from the 1960s to 1970s, however, represent a significant scaling back from what *tiyu* leaders envisioned in the first decade of the PRC. In the early 1950s, a diverse group of *tiyu* experts – some trained in the Republican period and abroad – helped usher in a new organizational and institutional structure for *tiyu*. Under the official policy of “learning from the Soviet Union,” this new structure was based on the Soviet model and included introducing the Soviet “Ready for Labor and Defense” system in China (known in Chinese as the *laoweizhi*). First implemented in schools and later across all of society, the *laoweizhi* also served as one way to identify those with athletic potential, by becoming a criterion for those entering spare-time sports schools. Chinese leaders, through most of the 1950s, recognized the Soviet Union as leader of the international socialist movement. By adopting Soviet models like the *laoweizhi* and participating in socialist bloc delegation visits, China signaled its deference for Soviet leadership.

Sports associations, sports schools, and the *laoweizhi* effectively blurred the lines of mass and elite sport because in theory anyone could take part in them. Indeed, ordinary citizens needed to participate in *tiyu* at some level because it was considered patriotic and would help transform them in the eyes of the state into an upright

³ “Guowuyuan pizhuan yi jiu qi san nian quanguo tiyu gongzuo huiyi jiyao” [State Council approves the 1973 National *tiyu* work meeting minutes] (February 20, 1973), *Tiyu yundong wenjian xuanbian 1949-1981* (Beijing: Beijing renmin tiyu chubanshe, 1982), 112.

socialist citizen. As the Sino-Soviet relationship deteriorated in the latter half of the 1950s, Mao and other top leaders began to make efforts to distinguish Chinese *tiyu* from Soviet programs, as part of larger domestic efforts to build a superior Chinese brand of socialism. This included a massive increase in sports schools and *tiyu* programs during the Great Leap Forward, all of which encouraged the average citizen to participate in competitive activities and an emerging popular culture around *tiyu*, and which reached an apex with the grandiose First National Games. *Tiyu* during the Great Leap Forward was, in many ways, the most inclusive of the masses that it ever has been in China.

However, *tiyu* and the First National Games could not save the country from the economic disaster that resulted from the failure of non-sports Great Leap Forward policies. Beginning in 1961, recovery from this disaster required tightening the belt in *tiyu*, a phenomenon that mirrored broader societal efforts to stabilize the economy. Not all *tiyu* programs were treated equally. Mass *tiyu* and elite sport became separate, increasingly distinct entities, with most of the funding going to the latter. Under the leadership of Liu Shaoqi and Zhou Enlai, elite sport and athletes became strategically more important for conducting foreign relations while competitive mass *tiyu* programs lost ground; some sports schools disappeared altogether. Beginning in 1962, renewed state efforts in mass *tiyu* consisted primarily of promoting paramilitary activities (because the leadership envisioned the masses as a lay militia), no-frills exercise like workplace calisthenics, and inexpensive sports like ping-pong, basketball, and swimming. Elite sport prospered in the mid-1960s, with nearly all

state-level funding for *tiyu* going to the training of an elite cadre of internationally competitive athletes in a variety of sports.

In the years between the Great Leap Forward and the Cultural Revolution, elite sport helped open up new transnational networks and establish foreign relations that reconfigured China's place in the world following the Sino-Soviet split. Interactions in elite sport also served as a way to showcase and promote Chinese socialism and China as the exemplary socialist model for others to follow, particularly those in recently decolonized African and Asian nations of the Third World. The turn in high politics during the early Cultural Revolution isolated China in most of its foreign relationships, and subsequently, put a temporary halt to these efforts in elite sport.

Post-Mao narratives of sport in China have buried much of Mao-era *tiyu*, especially those political goals related to mass *tiyu* programs and the role of elite athletics in promoting Chinese socialism, as well as the unspoken tension between the two. Scholars of Chinese sports history have appropriately highlighted *tiyu*'s connections to the "sick man" national humiliation narrative. They have also shed light on how elite athletes represent the nation in the international arena and have thoroughly discussed China's interactions with the International Olympic Committee. Some scholars of Chinese sports histories even begin or end their books with the 2008 Beijing Olympics.⁴ These kinds of narratives implicitly suggest a linear progression

⁴ For example: Gao Yunxiang, *Sporting Gender: Women Athletes and Celebrity-Making During China's National Crisis, 1931-1945* (Vancouver, Toronto: UBC Press, 2013), 1 and Xu Guoqi,

of Chinese efforts towards hosting the Olympics, assuming that *tiyu* in the Mao years was built strictly on eventual Olympic goals for the nation. Although future participation in the Olympics was on the minds of certain leaders, I have shown in this dissertation that *tiyu* – its purpose, programs, who it was for, and what it could do – often had little to do with the Olympics. Instead, it fluctuated according to domestic politics, for example when competitive training programs increased during the Great Leap Forward in preparation for the first National Games, as well as with China’s geopolitical position, such as its important role in foreign policy after the Sino-Soviet split. Elite sport explicitly served as a domain in which Chinese leaders could solidify the nation’s membership in the socialist bloc in the 1950s (and participate in non-Olympic socialist bloc competitions), challenge the western dominance of international sport, promote their own brand of socialism, and even conduct foreign policy.

Tiyu programs and policies in these years varied according to domestic politics and campaigns, as well as China’s geopolitical position. By tracking the ways in which official policies and high politics were carried out in and through the world of *tiyu*, this dissertation has also opened up a new window into the connections between individual socialist citizenship, nation-building, and the reconfiguration of China’s place in the world. Mao-era leaders recognized *tiyu* as significant in transforming the average individual into the ideal socialist citizen in China, but even more crucial than this was *tiyu*’s role in helping transform China into a socialist

Olympic Dreams: China and Sports, 1895-2008 (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2008), 272.

nation in the world. This dissertation has argued that the Chinese leadership built new kinds of transnational networks in and through the world of elite sport, networks that extended beyond and looked different from the Sino-Soviet alliance. The case of Mao-era *tiyu* also provides a better understanding of how high politics and large-scale political campaigns entered people's everyday lives – particularly those in urban cities like Beijing and Shanghai – in an effort to provide them with state-approved activities in their leisure time, while also influencing their understandings of socialist China and themselves within a larger world. Finally, the various tensions in *tiyu* show how disagreements within the Party leadership over what path China should take to socialist modernity manifested itself on the ground.

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