

Physical Culture in China

ONE of the popular fallacies is that sports and athletics are purely Western in origin, and that the Chinese people have never placed much value upon them. The basic principle of Chinese hygiene, we are told, is the conservation, rather than the dissipation, of physical energy. For that reason, the Chinese have always considered such disciplines as the control of breathing and silent meditation as more beneficial to the human body than violent exercises of any kind. In short, the popular conception of the Chinese people regarding the culture of the body is, to use the phrase made famous by Bernard Shaw, "anything but sport."

All this is very interesting, but untrue. For the old adage *mens sana in corpore sano* was firmly believed in by the Chinese in the old days no less than by the Romans. In classic China, for instance, among the six arts generally taught to students, were archery and chariot-riding, which are listed together with ritual, music, calligraphy and mathematics. Football was a popular game as far back as the Han dynasty, for in the *Han Shu Yi Wen Chi*, (漢書藝文誌) which is the catalogue of all the books and manuscripts found in that period, a treatise on football, or as it was called, *ch'u chiu* (蹴鞠), is mentioned. In the Tang dynasty, not only such games as tug-of-war and football were played, but also polo, which was introduced to this country by way of Persia, was also a popular form of sport with the military officers as well as with others. There is an anecdote that Tang Ming Huang, an Emperor of the Tang dynasty, personally took great delight in watching tug-of-war contests. Very often he would ask his courtiers to join in this form of exercise, and on one occasion he even asked a Hanlin scholar to compose a poem about it.

In the Sung dynasty, under the influence of neo-Confucianism, sports and athletics began to be looked down upon by the literati and scholars. The neo-Confucianists, as everyone knows, are more or less inspired by the teachings of the Zen Buddhism, which sets great store by non-activity. From thenceforward, the old Confucian tradition that a scholar must be well versed in such arts as archery and chariot-riding began to lose its popularity. *Ching Tso* (silent meditation) began to take the place of tug-of-war, and *Yuan Ch'i* (control of breath) began to take the place of football. "Quietude" became the watchword of the neo-Confucianists, whose doctrine was handed down to the scholars of the later dynasties. Although there were scholars such as Yen Yuan (顏元) at the beginning of the Tsing dynasty, who rebelled against this idea of the Sung neo-Confucianists, their voice was nevertheless a feeble one and could not make itself heard by the people. Since, however, the introduction of the so-called new education into China at the beginning of this century, the Chinese people have begun to appreciate the importance of physical culture and education for the masses once more. The schools and universities have begun to incorporate athletics into their

regular curriculum and athletic meets have become a common occurrence throughout the country. In 1910, the first national athletic meet took place at Nanking. At that time only six universities in China participated. But since then, athletics have become more popular, so that at the Sixth National Athletic Meet which recently took place in Shanghai, there were nearly three thousand athletes of both sexes who joined in the various events. At this meet, many new records were set and many old ones were broken.—Mention must especially be made of Fu Pao-lu, who broke the National record in the pole vault and Tai Sū-kuo, who broke the National record in the 400-meter race. Among the girl athletes, Yüan Heng-jui who broke the National record in the javelin throw and Yeung Sau-king, who broke the Far Eastern record in the 100-meter swimming, have also been widely acclaimed. Judging by the fact that athletics in China has a history of only less than three decades, it must be admitted that the progress made in this line has by no means been negligible. And judging by the fact that the Stadium was almost daily packed to its fullest capacity, and also by the space devoted to the description of the meet in the vernacular dailies, we may truly say that the Chinese people have become very much athletic-minded.

This, of course, is a very good sign. The fine physique of the athletes and their popularity, taken together, show that the ideal young man is no longer one with a frail body and pale face, nor is a beauty likely to arouse pity nowadays with her singing about her worries and ailments all the time. Be that as it may, the question may still be asked: Is not such an unprecedented popularity also a cause for alarm? For in this popularity there always lies a danger of physical training becoming an end in itself. Moreover, there is also the danger of overemphasizing the training of a few select individuals to win matches to the neglect of the physical development of the average man. It need hardly be pointed out that, for the welfare of the country as a whole, the enhancement of the physique of the average citizen should be much more important than the cultivation of a handful of athletes. In almost all the modern countries, the need of organizing sports and exercises for the masses is deeply felt. In Soviet Russia, for instance, practically every fair-sized city boasts of a recreational park which is free to the public. In Nazi Germany, the *Kraft durch Freude* (Strength Through Joy) organization performs many of the functions of the Soviet trade-unions by organizing games and cheap and free vacation trips for workers and more poorly paid employees. It would be well, therefore, for the Chinese National Government to emulate these examples. To this end we suggest that more athletic grounds be built throughout the country and facilities be furnished, so as to enable the people to take part in organized and well-directed forms of sport and exercises.

Through the lack of physical training since the days of the Sung dynasty, the Chinese people have become known to the world as "the sick man of the East," but with

government encouragement of popular athletics, it is hoped that in time, this appellation would no longer be applicable to them.

The Sixth National Athletic Meet

BY K. LOCK (曙光)

WITH fifty or sixty thousand others I attended the opening of the Sixth National Athletic Meet held on Thursday, October 10, 1935, at the imposing new Stadium at the Shanghai Civic Centre, and individually and collectively, as the opening ceremony proceeded we were alternately thrilled and awe-struck. Before that vast concourse, with banners waving and the drone of airplane motors overhead, nearly three thousand of the pick of the country's young man and womanhood marched into the Stadium and took their places before the official stand. There were contingents from far Malaya, Mongolia and Thibet, who were received by the spectators with as great a welcome as they accorded the units from the home provinces. One unit, that from Hongkong, perhaps received the lion's share of attention, containing as it did two outstanding public favorites, Miss Yeung Sau-king, swimming star, and Lee Wai-tong, football star.

For ten days following the opening day the Meet proceeded, with public interest unflagging. Attendance on the four or five days immediately succeeding the opening day dropped, but when the semi-finals of various events, especially the football games and swimming events, were held, the Stadium again was besieged by eager spectators. On the five different days I was present I had no quarrel to find with anything. The Stadium, built as it is in accordance with the most modern plans, affords every spectator a full, unobstructed view of the track and field, and except in one or two isolated cases good humor among the huge crowds was the order of the day.

The final attendance figures and the prominence given the Meet by the vernacular and foreign-language local press indicated to what extent Shanghai has become "athletic-minded," and presumably the country as a whole must have displayed just as much interest in what was transpiring at Shanghai's Civic Centre.

Public interest in the Meet has not yet died away, as witness the photographs of various phases of the Meet still being printed in the local press, and the ever-present crowds before the windows of those photographer's shops which display pictures of the Meet. I cannot help but feel that such public interest in athletics, whether that interest centers on an individual, a team, or generally, can have other than a wholesome effect. As a recent editorial in these columns said, National Athletic Meets are an incentive for the youth of China to build by clean living and training strong, healthy bodies. A nation which has strong, healthy youth can look to the future with confidence. As I watched those finely-trained young men and women march into the Stadium and later saw them in action on the track, in the field and in the

swimming pool, it occurred to me that here is a great lesson for the sabre rattlers. What right, I thought, has any man to do or say anything to send those splendid bodies to be torn and mangled or suffocated with some noxious gas in war. Next year in Berlin we shall see not the pick of one nation's athletes but the athletes of thirty or forty nations. If the thought which came to me should come to those in power who witness in 1936 World Olympic Games, perhaps that next World War of which we have heard and read so much as being near at hand will never come to pass.

At the National Meet I am reviewing, new national records were created and when those new records are compared with those created at, say, the First National Athletic Meet, or the Second, or the Third, it is amply demonstrated that if progress is continued at the same rate, it will not be many years before Chinese athletes will be able to compete with the world's best on equal terms. At the last Olympic Games held in Los Angeles in 1932, China had one lone representative, who, by the way, competed at the Sixth Meet in the 100 and 200-meter dashes the first of which he won. At the next Olympic Games which, as herein mentioned, will be held at Berlin in 1936, China will be represented by a really large unit. It is too much to hope that they or any of them will place first or even second or third in any of the events they participate in at Berlin but the experience they will gain will be invaluable. Not only that but in the meantime thousands of young men and women all over the country will, with the hope of being chosen to be included in China's Olympic team, keep themselves in good physical condition. When the Olympic unit is finally chosen and is participating in the Games, athletics will receive another wholesome fillip.

As I watched various events at the Stadium, I was again and again struck by the eye-satisfying picture a finely-built and beautifully-striding young man represents. True, we do not have as yet the equivalent of a Eulace Peacock, a Jack Lovelock or a Bill Graber, but from what I saw of our athletes we most certainly do have material for potential world's record holders. To judge from progress we have achieved since the First National Athletic Meet was held in Nanking in 1910, it is not beyond the bounds of possibility that when the 1940 Olympic Games are held we shall have young men who will have run 100 meters in ten and a half seconds, 1,500 meters in four minutes and ten seconds and pole-vaulted fourteen feet or more. If it so happens that we do have such young men, then the flag of China will wave at the top of the staff at least once during the 1940 Games. Then again, what a delight it is to watch a football, basketball or volleyball team in co-ordinate action, and what a