

BUILDING PHYSICAL FITNESS FOR THE MOTHERLAND

February 21, 1954

Thanks to the efforts of the State Physical Culture and Sports Commission since its founding a little more than a year ago, much has changed in sports throughout the nation. Both to implement the general line for the transition period and to build socialism, it is necessary to improve the health of our people. They have weak constitutions because of the long years of repression and oppression under feudalism and imperialism. Comrade Mao Zedong places particular emphasis on promoting health. As we advance towards a socialist and communist society, everyone should strive for balanced development — moral, intellectual, physical and aesthetic. Lopsided development will result in defects, preventing people from making full use of their abilities and harming the state as well. All-round development means being sound in body and sound in mind; the two are interrelated and interact with each other.

The tasks at present are to increase production and to strengthen national defence, and these tasks require good health. Experience shows that the more developed an industry is, the more sophisticated its technology must be. And the more sophisticated the technology, and the faster the pace of production, the greater the workers' speed and stamina must be. Our people are agile, but they lack endurance. Likewise, to wield such modern weapons as planes and tanks, it is essential to be physically fit. So the "Training Programme to Prepare for Work and Defence"⁸⁴ has political significance: its purpose is not just to ensure the good health of individuals but also to safeguard the motherland and build socialism.

Speech at the 205th meeting on government affairs held by the Government Administration Council.

It will not be easy to improve the physical condition of our people, but it can be done in time — within five, ten or fifteen years, so long as we continue to expand sports activities. Experts have told me that about five to ten years will be enough. Congenitally weak physiques can be strengthened through physical training. My activities being restricted by my feudal family, I myself was in poor health until I entered school and became a different person. Young people's constitutions can be transformed. We pin our hopes on young people under 30, for they are an important force in national defence and production. We are counting on them to master sophisticated science and technology and modern weapons. Sports should be encouraged in factories, schools and in the countryside. If we do a good job, in five years we can bring about changes in people's physical fitness. In advocating the "three goods" for young people, Comrade Mao Zedong gave first place to having good health, because that is the only thing that makes it possible to achieve good results in study and work — an all-round development. We must link sports to our country's future, and the expansion of sports will bring about a tremendous transformation. Elderly persons should go in for physical exercise too, although naturally it is more difficult for them than for younger people. Good health will help them enjoy longer lives. It will be wonderful if they can live and see socialism for themselves. Once the Chinese people become strong and vigorous, they will be able to handle modern weapons. Facing our national defence then, will imperialists dare to invade us? They will certainly think twice before they try. Good health, therefore, is a prerequisite for building and protecting our country. If we keep this in mind, it will help us to promote physical culture.

Our policy today is to popularize physical training and to make it regular. To improve athletic skills we must popularize sports, and outstanding athletes will not appear until we have a regular sports programme. Ours is a big country with a huge population, and it will be difficult to popularize sports everywhere. But when tens of millions of people are involved in physical exercise, a large number of talented people will surely emerge. People's fitness is bound to improve dramatically if sports are played everywhere on a regular basis and with proper coaching. Because of the lack of regular training, China cannot expect to win many championships in international competitions two or three years from now. Wu Chuanyu,⁸⁵ a returned Chinese, has made his reputation by training over a long time. Without

this protracted training, he could never have won a title. We can't expect to participate in many events in the next Olympic Games in 1956. But by 1960, six years from now, many top athletes will emerge if our sports programme is carried out correctly. Physical culture in China, unlike that in capitalist countries, boasts mass participation and is very promising.

The key to achieving these goals lies in the leading bodies — not only the Physical Culture and Sports Commission and the two ministries of education [the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Higher Education — *Tr.*], but all administrative bodies. The Government Administration Council may wish to issue a circular recommending exercise in the morning and during work-breaks, starting with the central organs in Beijing. A summary of today's meeting should be communicated to the two ministries of education and to the mass organizations — the All-China Federation of Trade Unions, the Youth League and the Women's Federation. A good job of promoting physical culture should be done from the higher to the lower levels, and vice versa. At this meeting we are promoting it at the top level. The masses will provide supervision from the bottom. We should grant the Physical Culture and Sports Commission power to make inspections. Institutions that discourage sports activities should be called to account. In addition to exposing shortcomings in physical training, the Commission should work with public health departments in conducting physical examinations to monitor progress. Administrative leaders — heads of general offices at least — should be responsible for the health of the cadres in their departments. Spare-time contests can be held to encourage sports among the people. It's fine to watch ball games, but the essential thing is to take part in physical training personally. And because propaganda also plays an important role, we should give wide publicity to sports, explaining their political significance and helping people to master specific skills.