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# “I Can Compete!” China in the Olympic Games, 1932 and 1936

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If a nation wants to pursue freedom and equality in today's world where the weak serve as meat on which the strong can dine, they first must train strong and fit bodies.<sup>1</sup>

So wrote Wang Zhengting, Chinese Foreign Minister and President of the China National Amateur Athletic Federation (CNAAF), in 1930 on the significance of the Olympic Games. Wang's comments came in the preface of a volume published by Shanghai's Commercial Press, and written by a young physical education expert named Song Ruhai. Two years earlier, Song had become the first Chinese official representative to the Olympic Games as an observer at the Amsterdam Games of 1928. Now, after two years of research and reflection on this journey, Song put out his volume on these and past Olympics, introducing Chinese sport fans to the customs, symbolism and history of the modern Olympic Games.

The contribution of Song's volume is not in its content, most of which seems to have been translated and pasted together from foreign sources. Rather, it is most noteworthy for the ingenious transliterative device with which he introduced the Olympics to Chinese readers. He rendered “Olympiad,” a concept that would have required extensive explanation of historical concepts foreign to many Chinese sport fans, as “*Wo neng bi ya*” (literally, “I can compete!”). Song himself was proud of this transliteration; he felt that it “carries great significance—it means that we can all participate in these events and competitions.”<sup>2</sup>

This revelation was more significant than we might imagine today, accustomed as we are to Chinese athletes' competitiveness and even dominance in many fields of contemporary sport. In the 1930s, the past century of Chinese engagement with the outside world could only be understood as a disgraceful series of humiliations at the hands of the European, American and Japanese imperialist powers. Beginning with the Opium War, concluded in 1842 by the rapacious Treaty of Nanjing, the sovereignty and territory of the Qing Dynasty (1644-1911) and of the early Republic of China (1912- 1949) had been

nibbled away by these busy and proud imperialist nations. The process by which the imperialists extracted territories, unequal treaties, indemnities, and privileges from the Chinese was so established during this century that it even merited its own proper name in Chinese—*guafen*, or “cutting up the melon.”

The “scientific” explanation by which the process of cutting up the Chinese melon, and other Asian, African and Latin American melons all around the world, was justified—Social Darwinism and its doctrines of competition and the fit race—had entered China in the mid-1890s.<sup>3</sup> However, these notions had served much more commonly to explain and reify Chinese inadequacies, political, physical, and psychological, than to inspire Chinese faith in their ability to compete with the wealthy and strong foreign powers. Song’s 1930 formulation of an Olympic significance for the Chinese people was momentous, then, as he dared the growing and vibrant Chinese sport community to dream of an Olympic future of their own.<sup>4</sup>

Thus, the official decision to send Chinese delegations to join the 1932, and later the 1936, Olympic Games represented the ultimate test of a newly emergent and ambitious (if somewhat self-doubting) Chinese sporting community. Steven Pope has described the important role of sport, and baseball in particular, in fashioning, consolidating and sustaining American ideologies of democracy, civilization and national vigor.<sup>5</sup> If no sport truly qualified to be called a Chinese national pastime—although in 1935 a national sport magazine tried to settle once and for all the question, “Which type of game or sport should our nation take as its national pastime (*guomin youxi*)?”<sup>6</sup>—modern sport represented to many Chinese an important avenue by which their nation could reach similar national values that would nourish a modern China that could survive in the world. On an Olympic stage, the stakes were clearly more than merely the reputation of China’s basketball, soccer, swimming, and track and field programs. The Chinese citizens who saw their Olympic representatives off to the West and followed their performances via the mainstream print media all knew that the very Chinese nation, its race and its people, would all be coming under close and lasting examination on the playing fields of Los Angeles and Berlin.

These 1930s Olympic Games were not the first Chinese appearances on the international sporting stage. By 1932 Chinese athletes had participated in nine Far Eastern Championship Games. The Far Eastern Games, a predecessor of today’s Asian Games originally founded by YMCA personnel in East Asia, were (usually) a biennial affair featuring Chinese, Japanese and Filipino athletes.<sup>7</sup> Unfortunately for the ambitious Chinese sport world, these Games were usually dominated by the world-class Japanese athletes. In the 1930s, as war with Japan loomed over the horizon, the decided Chinese sporting inferiority vis-à-vis the Japanese seemed a frightful portent of the Chinese nation’s weakness and inability to withstand a Japanese invasion. Not surprisingly, this Olympic moment would mean simply that much more to the Chinese public. The Olympic Games of 1932 and 1936, and the unprecedented attention Chinese athletes would receive in Los Angeles and Berlin, these most modern of modern metropolises, posed a welcome but crucial challenge to a Chinese nation desperately in need of a truly international triumph of almost any kind.

## Like a Fisherman in a Peach-Blossom Haven: The 1932 Olympic Games

By 1932, China and its urban population were no strangers to the ideologies of sport, national will and accomplishment that defined the Olympic movement, Pierre de Coubertin's "republic of muscles."<sup>8</sup> China's entry into this grand international community was made by a single pioneer venturing out West—a 22-year-old fruitpicker's son named Liu Changchun.

Liu's rise to national fame began at age 14, when he won the 100 and 400 meter sprints at a Japanese-run Kantôshû (Guandongzhou) Track Meet held in his native Dalian, a Japanese-controlled port city in the northeast province of Liaoning. As a youth, Liu was a soccer enthusiast, joining games with Japanese youngsters in his spare time from his work as an apprentice in a glass factory and as a city bus ticket-taker. The Northeastern University (Shenyang) soccer team, touring Dalian in 1927, discovered the 17-year-old talent. Liu returned with the team to the provincial capital at Shenyang, where he was enrolled in the Northeastern Prep School, and provided with free tuition and board. These were granted courtesy of University President Zhang Xueliang, son of the Manchurian warlord Zhang Zuolin, and the soon-to-be commander of China's northeastern armies after the Japanese militarist faction's assassination of his father in 1928.

Liu flourished at Northeastern, entering the university in 1929, and profiting greatly from the school's commitment to sport excellence. As a favorite of Zhang Xueliang's, Liu enjoyed a 30 *yuan* monthly stipend from the university president—a sum that would have allowed the young star to live in relative comfort. Zhang's hiring of a German ex-world champion to coach track at Northeastern, and his frequent sponsorship of meets pitting his athletes against Japanese, French and German track stars, allowed Liu to progress even further. In a stretch of six months, Liu took the Chinese sport world by storm, winning two silver medals at an October 1929 Japanese-German-Chinese meet in Shenyang, and then winning three golds in his historic performance at the 1930 National Games in Hangzhou.<sup>9</sup>

The China National Amateur Athletic Federation, the official ROC sport body, announced on May 25, 1932 that they had no plans to send a team to Los Angeles that July.<sup>10</sup> However, an official Japanese announcement made just four days later sent the Chinese sport community into a nervous rage. Only months before, Japanese armies, with the support of Manchu independence forces and former officials of the Qing Dynasty, had established a new regime called Manzhouguo, or "land of the Manchus," in what had been the Republic of China's three northeasternmost provinces. Now, it was announced that Liu Changchun and his Northeastern University teammate Yu Xiwei would be representing this new puppet Manzhouguo state in the Olympics.<sup>11</sup> One patriotic sportswriter issued a bold challenge to the Nanjing government, linking its very credibility to this issue of Olympic participation. Addressing the fact that Japan, with a population of some 70 million, was sending a delegation of more than 200 athletes to Los Angeles, while "the great Chinese nation of 400 million" could only afford to send an official observer, he commented,

Quite an interesting contrast.... The Education Department says it is because of short-ages of time and money. The CNAAF says there isn't sufficient talent. These are not real

reasons.... The people devote everything we have to the nation, but the nation sure does not do anything to give we the people any hope at all.<sup>12</sup>

The galling prospect of China's most famed sport star running for Olympic gold under the flag of the Manzhouguo puppet government was quickly resolved. Liu himself made a statement for the Tianjin daily *L'Impartial*, vowing that "I am of the Chinese race, a descendant of the Yellow Emperor. I am Chinese, and will not represent the false Manzhouguo at the Games of the Tenth Olympiad."<sup>13</sup> He also swore that he had never made any contact with sporting personnel from the puppet regime, assuring his public that "my conscience is still with me, and my hot blood still flows—how could I betray the nation and serve others like a horse or cow?"<sup>14</sup>

Weeks later, the relief that Liu would not be representing Manzhouguo turned to pure Olympic joy. In a dramatic ceremony marking the Northeastern University Physical Education Department graduation on July 1, University President Zhang Xueliang, in the school's new home in Beiping, grabbed the national sporting spotlight. He announced that he would be donating 8,000 *juan* (\$2,500 US) for Liu and Yu to run for China in the Olympics, with Northeastern instructor Song Junfu accompanying the two as coach and translator.<sup>15</sup> While national sport officials, funding now in hand, crowded about the importance of joining the sacred Olympic Games, the small Olympic team prepared to depart for California. After a quick meeting with Beiping Mayor Zhou Dawen, who presented Liu with a new suit for the great occasion,<sup>16</sup> Liu and Coach Song left Beiping for Shanghai on July 2, while sport officials tried to get in touch with Yu Xiwei in Japanese-occupied Dalian. By the 4th, Liu was in Shanghai, training in public sessions, being feted in Olympic banquets, and even making a slapdash two-day film at the Chinese Stadium there.<sup>17</sup> Yu, on the other hand, was nowhere to be found. Japanese authorities still hoped to coax Yu to represent the puppet Manzhouguo state. Their veiled threats, along with the policy of informal house arrest applied to Yu and other Northeastern stars whom they feared would join the Chinese team, convinced Yu to ignore the Chinese Olympic call and stay in Dalian to ensure his family's safety.<sup>18</sup>

After a ceremony at New Pass Pier where CNAAF President Wang Zhengting presented Liu with the Chinese national flag, the two-man delegation of Liu and Song boarded the *President Wilson* on July 8 for two weeks at sea. While on board the ship, Song wrote several letters back to Shanghai, informing the sporting public that Liu was waking up every morning at 4:00 for calisthenics, and that Liu fortunately was able to eat Chinese cuisine prepared especially for the Olympian. The handful of other Chinese passengers on board, all students, included a 13-year-old sport fanatic who impressed Liu and Song with his collection of sport pictures and clippings that he took abroad with him.<sup>19</sup> All was well until the ship made its first stop, in Kobe. There, a crowd of Japanese reporters boarded the *Wilson* to interview Liu, but asked if he was representing Manzhouguo. An infuriated Song wrote how he sent them away after "I declared strictly and firmly that the two of us represent the great Republic of China." The Japanese taunting was not over, however, as the next day Liu and Song received a telegram from the Japanese Athletic Association wishing the "Manzhouguo representatives" good luck in the Olympics.<sup>20</sup>

Liu and Song arrived in Los Angeles on July 29, just one day before the Games were scheduled to begin, and were greeted by dozens of excited Chinese Californians. A car

with police motorcycle escorts, sirens sounding, immediately took the Olympians to the Chinese Chamber of Commerce, where the two lodged. After a morning press conference the next day, Liu was taken by police escort, followed by five busloads of Chinese-American fans, to the Los Angeles Coliseum for the opening ceremonies. There, Liu and Song were joined in the Olympic procession by four Chinese sport officials already in the United States, China marching 8th of the 51 nations. Despite sparkling starts in his two races, the 100 and 200 meter sprint heats, Liu placed fifth and fourth, respectively, and was quickly eliminated from competition in both events.<sup>21</sup>

The rest of Liu's stay was devoted to taking in many of the Olympic competitions (which he described in great detail in his diary), hobnobbing with members of the Chinese community and even Hollywood stars, and reflecting on the significance of his Olympic voyage. Liu recorded in his diary how fans would approach him at the Games or on the street, asking if he was a Japanese athlete. When Liu answered that he in fact was Chinese, he seemed able to read in their reactions the curious, condescending and simply complicated feelings that Americans had for the Chinese people:

The people react by shouting out in surprise. Or they say, "Here's an athlete representing the 400 million Chinese," and then I get surrounded. It's like they have found some ditty fisherman in their peach-blossom haven—they all ask, "You're the Chinese representative?" Then they will pat me on the shoulder, saying, "Fine, fine, just great—but it's really too bad that China couldn't send more athletes."

Besides the personal encouragement that Liu gained from his many acquaintances in the City of Angels, he was also greatly impressed with the sympathy for China's plight shown by Americans and athletes from other Olympic nations:

I have paid attention to the attitudes of Americans since I got to the States, and everywhere I go they make me feel as though they really do sympathize with China. It's the same with [athletes from] the smaller nations too ... They don't say anything explicitly, but with athletes from all nations, it's in the sound of their voice when they say, "Japan . . .," with a bitter laugh. As far as I can tell, almost every nation sympathizes with us ...<sup>22</sup>

David Welky has written on the Japanese delegation to these 1932 Olympic Games, and the threat that this well-conditioned team of nearly 250 athletes posed to American notions of athletic superiority. While the American media tried to dismiss these Japanese Olympians as "little brown men" or the "brown-skinned wonders" of these Games,<sup>23</sup> the charming novelty posed by the stoic Liu Changchun's one-man Chinese squad provoked no such racial fear or insults from his American hosts.

Liu Changchun's failure to win any medals during his Olympic travels was treated with more leniency than had been earlier Chinese disappointments at the Far Eastern Championships. Sport commentators, if thrilled by the fact of Chinese participation in the Olympics, were simply more realistic about these world-class Games. One explained that Liu went to Los Angeles not with the goal of winning medals, but rather to learn from athletes of other nations so that he could spread this knowledge throughout China. Another observer was even more honest about his own low expectations, asking how anyone expected any Olympic medals to be won by Chinese competing against athletes from 50 nations, when China could not even compete among three Asian nations in the Far Eastern Games.<sup>24</sup> But Chinese Olympic participation was seen as a great step in establishing a solid foothold in the community of modern nations. Hao Gengsheng and other officials explained earlier that a Chinese Olympic appearance was necessary to main-

tain a respectable position in the world, and also to offset the effects of the Manzhouguo puppet regime possibly sending a team.<sup>25</sup> But the great American response and approval accorded Liu in Los Angeles made the trip seem even more worthwhile, as the Tianjin-based *The Sporting Weekly* observed:

The [ROC national] flag of the white sun on the blue sky fluttered over the Coliseum, alongside the flags of the world's nations for the first time. This has profound significance for our nation ... On July 31, when Liu Changchun ran his 100 meter heat, the audience responded with a shockingly intense welcome, with applause that roared like thunder... The fact that our nation's participation could leave the spectators with this kind of impression is very satisfying.<sup>26</sup>

## Training as Others Trained: The 1936 Olympic Games

With the rush that these 1932 Olympics provided the Chinese sporting community, it was certain that plans for the next Olympics would not be postponed to such a late hour again. Official planning for the 1936 Games at Berlin began in October 1934 as sporting officials attended the 18th North China Games in Tianjin.<sup>27</sup> One innovation designed to facilitate both the training and bureaucratic needs of a modern Olympic team was the two-month Qingdao Summer Training Camp, held at Shandong University in July-August 1935.<sup>28</sup> The CNAAF paid for transportation, room and board for athletes it invited or who were recommended by regional sporting bodies. The session was also open to those uninvited competitors confident and resourceful enough to pay their own way to Qingdao plus 500 *yuan* (\$200 US) to cover the costs of training. These were not trivial costs, as the CNAAF had enlisted the services of four top-notch German coaches to supplement the work of the top sport names in China, including Camp Director Song Junfu, Assistant Director and track coach Ma Yuehan, basketball coach Dong Shouyi, and martial arts coach Chu Minyi.

In 1935, Dong Hanwen, a sprinter hailing from the occupied province of Liaoning, was one of the top Northeastern track athletes who had fled to Beiping. Selected to join this Qingdao training camp, these weeks in serious Olympic training hold what seem to be Dong's dearest sporting memories. In conversations with me in Taipei in 1995-1996, Dong often reminisced about the sporting camaraderie he enjoyed with his fellow Chinese athletes at this session in Qingdao—both in training, and in outsmarting their German coaches by climbing out their dormitory windows after curfew to take in the Qingdao nightlife. For Dong, who barely missed qualifying for the Olympic track team, this training camp represented the best and worst of Chinese sport during the 1930s. He spoke at length about the “purity” and sportsmanship that existed in friendships between Chinese athletes of the day, answering with quizzical or almost disbelieving looks my questions about regional identity and sporting competition. Once, as Dong navigated the streets of downtown Taipei in his Ford Telstar, I asked if he had felt the same competing against Cantonese runners, for example, as he did running against a fellow Northeasterner. Dong answered with a stern lecture on the attitude of the “sportsman” (using the English for this term), maintaining that “athletes do not worry about politics or personal business, just victory.”

On other occasions, however, Dong talked about the regional favoritism that plagued the whole selection process. The Olympic team was selected in a way that North and

South would be evenly represented, in order to satisfy the bull-headed Olympic bureaucrats who were concerned with such unsporting matters. Dong remembers the “behind-the-scenes” (*neimu*) corruption of Southerners like Ma Yuehan, who worked to load his track team with a majority of Southern athletes. Other authors describe the dirty dealings of Northerner Dong Shouyi, who loaded his basketball team with Beiping and Tianjin players.<sup>29</sup> However, by remembering this regionalism as merely another brand of Republican-era official “corruption,” Dong is able to keep intact the memories of pure and sportsmanlike conduct among dedicated and forthright athletes working for the glory of the Chinese nation. Like early twentieth-century America, which Mark Dyreson has formulated as a “sporting republic,” many Chinese of the 1930s shared firmly developed notions of the relationship between modern physical culture and a vigorous nation. Indeed, the concepts of fair play, good sportsmanship, and the connections between vitality and liberty, all of which were perfect commonsense in the United States by the first decade of the 1900s,<sup>30</sup> had been imported wholesale to China’s urban centers via the earlier YMCA project of building a new Chinese man for a new Chinese nation. Conversations with old-time sportsmen like Dong Hanwen only make it clearer that for many residents of the 1930s Republic of China, the future of their nation also depended on whether it too could become a true “sporting republic.”

The omission of runner Li Shiming, another Liaoning native, from the 1936 Olympic team is a particularly unique and egregious example of the regional favoritism that so frustrated the Chinese sporting community. Yet it is one that goes unmentioned by this gentleman, now too a resident of Taipei, when reflecting on his sporting career today. The Qingdao training camp was designed to assemble the backbone of the Olympic delegation to Berlin without having to depend on unreliable one-time marks at the 1935 National Games. Training camp guidelines explained that athletes would be automatically selected to the Olympic track team if they broke a national record in 1935, had broken a national record at an officially-sanctioned meet since 1933, or reached official standards listed for each track and field event.<sup>31</sup> Li satisfied this final qualification, meeting standards in two events by finishing a 400 meter trial in 53.2 seconds on July 15, and running 800 meters in 2:03.3 on July 27. *The Chin Fen Sport Monthly* even listed his time in the 800 meters as the “second most valuable achievement of the training camp,” and included a picture of Li celebrating his mark with Coaches Ma and Wilhelm Ludwig.<sup>32</sup> Despite achieving these fine marks, and later lowering his time in the 800 meters to a national record 2:01.9 in May 1936 at a meet in Wuxi,<sup>33</sup> Li was never allowed to join the Olympic team.

For Li, despite his athletic prowess, was guilty of a grave crime against the Chinese nation—the unit that formed the very basis of this entire sporting enterprise. As early as 1932, Li had joined Manzhouguo “national” track teams organized in Liaoning by this new puppet regime. In 1933 and 1934, Li also had represented his hometown Fengtian in the Second and Third Manzhouguo National Games held in the new capital at Xinjing.<sup>34</sup> To those who gave little thought to the real life choices made by people living in these areas—virtually sacrificed by the Nanjing state to the Japanese—this qualified Li and his Manzhouguo teammates as *Hanjian*, or “traitors to the Han Chinese people.” Even his eventual, and more patriotic, choice to leave his Northeast home for Chinese-held terri-



The Chinese Olympic boxing and weightlifting teams, 1936. *Chuxi Di shiyi jie Shijie yundonghui Zhonghua daibiaotuan baogao (Official Report of the Chinese Delegation to the XIth Olympiad, Berlin, 1936)*

tory and to compete for his Chinese motherland in the Olympic Games was insufficient to wash away the nationalist repugnance at his Manzhouguo contamination. For these reasons, when the Olympic team left for Berlin, they would be without China's finest middle-distance runner.

Final selections were made in pressure-filled training sessions in Shanghai in May-June 1936. Besides the track and field, basketball, weightlifting, and martial arts (*guoshu*) teams, which were assembled after months of practices and competitions, other Chinese squads came about through different circumstances. The Chinese soccer team was put together solely from Hong Kong Soccer Association teams.<sup>35</sup> They came to Shanghai for an April 30 game against a Nanjing-Shanghai all-star team and a march before 20,000 fans against the Shanghai Foreign All-Stars, and then immediately left for Southeast Asia. There they played an Olympic fund-raiser exhibition schedule of 27 games in 62 days before largely Chinese crowds in Vietnam, Singapore, Indonesia, Burma, Malaya and Thailand, before meeting the rest of the Olympic team in Bangkok in July.<sup>36</sup> China's four-member boxing team came from the ranks of Henan Provincial Chairman Shang Qiyu's 32nd Army. Shang paid for the boxers' Olympic trip and also five months of intensive training in Shanghai beforehand.<sup>37</sup> Chinese Olympic officials were also ecstatic to hear that Howard Wing, a Dutch cyclist of Chinese ancestry, shunned the requests of the Dutch Olympic Committee in order to be able to ride for his Chinese motherland.<sup>38</sup>

The teams Olympic voyage began on the morning of June 23, when all 55 athletes (not including the soccer team or Dutch-Chinese cyclist Wing) and 29 sport officials met at the Shanghai North Station in their official dress uniforms—dark suits and ties for the men and Qing Dynasty-styled white *qipao* dresses for the women. They boarded a 6:55 AM train for Nanjing, arriving in the capital at 2:00 that afternoon. A bus took them first to the Sun Yat-sen Memorial, where a quick ceremony was performed, to the headquarters of the militarist Officers' Moral Endeavor Association for tea, and then to Generalissimo Chiang Kai-shek's home in the Purple Mountains for a short lecture by Chiang and a flag presentation ceremony. After returning to Shanghai that night, there were two more days of banquets, the largest held by the German Consul in Shanghai at the Great Brightness Theater. The athletes and officials, joined by a large "Olympic inspection group," several reporters, and a group of diehard sport fans paying their own way to cheer on their team in Berlin, boarded the Italian steamship *Conte Verde* at noon on June 26. They were sent off with a musical farewell performed by bands from the Shanghai Municipal Government and Shanghai Garrison Command, and a flyover by two aircraft sent by the Chinese Aviation Association.<sup>39</sup>

The Olympians were on board the *Conte Verde* for 25 days, making stops in Hong Kong, Singapore, Kuala Lumpur, Bangkok, Bombay, Massawa, and Suez before reaching Venice on July 20. Each stop in Southeast Asia brought fabulous welcomes from the Chinese populations there. In Singapore, more than 1,000 local Chinese residents greeted the team, taking the Olympians in ten cars on a tour of Singapore, and then to a banquet hosted by Consul Diao Zuoqian. Huge crowds also attended a basketball scrimmage between the Chinese Olympians and the Singapore All-Stars, which was followed by a demonstration by the nine-person national martial arts team.<sup>40</sup> Many of these Singaporean, Malayan and Thai Chinese felt great connections to and loyalties toward the Chinese Republic and its attempts to bring the land of their forefathers into a new modern future. Others who may have felt more loyal to their Southeast Asian homelands could still root for these Chinese athletic teams, with the knowledge that a China known around the world for its vigor and strength could promise better treatment from the European colonial masters. For these diverse reasons, then, the Chinese residents of these colonies could all find much for which to cheer in these Chinese exhibitions of modern sport and ancient martial arts.<sup>41</sup>

Yet despite these rousing welcomes at each port of call, the long trip at sea was not meant to be a pleasure cruise for the Chinese Olympians. Rather, a detailed regimen was designed to prepare the team physically, mentally, and linguistically for their important tasks. Beginning Monday, June 29, the athletes' day began with mandatory morning calisthenics from 7:00 to 7:30, and then specific training exercises from 8:00 to 9:00 on deck, which often gathered gawking crowds of foreign tourists. After lunch, lectures were scheduled every day from 1:00 to 2:00, followed by one hour of German class and one more hour of physical training.<sup>42</sup> After-dinner free time for many members was occupied by singing and dancing practice, as they prepared for a "China Night" program to be held later in the trip.<sup>43</sup> Unfortunately, these plans did not last long. By the first week of the trip, athletes and coaches alike became violently seasick almost daily. Hurdler and sprinter Cheng Jinguan, now living in Suzhou, remembers the waves getting even worse on the



The Chinese Olympic delegation leaving the Berlin train station after arrival on July 23, 1936. *Chuxi Di shiyi Shijie yundonghui Zhonghua daibiaotuan baogao (Official Report of the Chinese Delegation to the XIth Olympiad, Berlin, 1936)*

10-day leg of the trip from Bombay to Italy—so bad that few of the Olympians could even hold food down, let alone train or study German, by the end of the trip.<sup>44</sup>

After their ship finally docked in the middle of the night on July 20-21, the weary athletes were greeted in the *Conte Verde's* concert hall by the German Consul to Italy, a representative of the Chinese Consul to Italy, and representatives of Chinese student associations in Germany and Italy. Finally, at 3:00 AM, they were allowed to get off the boat and leave for the warm and anchored beds of Venice's Continental Hotel. After a day's rest, the team left on the morning of the 22nd for Munich. After arriving in the "Cradle of the German Revolution" at 7:00 PM, the team was welcomed by Chinese and German representatives, and whisked off by the mayor to see the sacred site of Hitler's revolution and the Memorial to the Martyrs of the Revolution, all in the four hour interval before their 11:00 train left for Berlin that same night.<sup>45</sup>

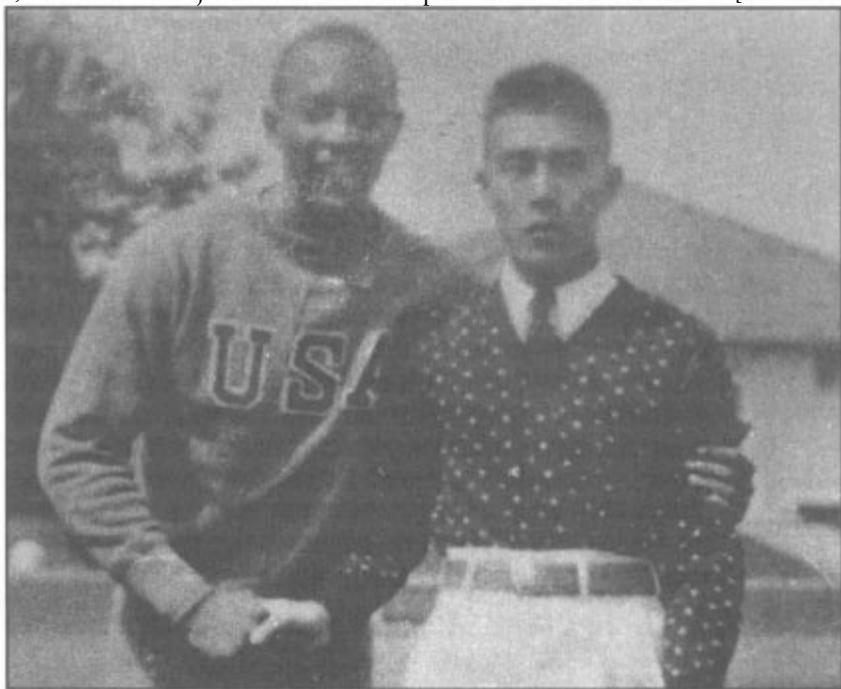
The team's arrival in Berlin was a memorable one for all involved. Arriving in the Olympic host city at 9:00 AM on July 23, the team was greeted by 300 exuberant Overseas Chinese and Chinese students, all chanting "Long live the Republic of China," and waving Chinese flags that Berlin restaurants had been selling in the days before the team arrived. The celebratory ceremony inside the train station included speeches by Cheng Tianfang, Chinese ambassador to Germany; German IOC member Dr. Ritter V. Hart; and Chinese Olympic delegation leader Shen Siliang, who concluded his speech with a ringing call (repeated three times), "Long live the Republic of China! Long live Ger-

many!” Li Huitang, soccer team captain, carried the Chinese flag as the team marched smartly out of the station—so smartly that one Berlin paper noted the Chinese team as “these Olympics’ most orderly delegation.”<sup>46</sup> This was also the proudest moment of the whole Olympics for Cheng Jinguan, who remembers clearly the crowds of Berliners who came to the Berlin train station out of great curiosity. The march out of the train station was a great victory for Cheng, as the Olympians were finally able to convince these “foreigners” of the truth about the Chinese people. As Cheng recalls it, “They thought that Chinese men wore little hats and Chinese women had little bound feet, but we came out wearing Western suits!”<sup>47</sup>

This sense of Chinese ascendancy to a new level of international recognition runs thick in Chinese historical sources and memories of the 1936 Olympics. Shen Siliang remarked after the Games were over,

during the Olympics, the Chinese flag was on all the stands, and on the streets it was plainly seen, with those of other nations. The sight of our delegation, marching in orderly array, training as others trained, participating in games, was all good propaganda. At least other people are now aware we are a nation to be counted....

Some Chinese observers were critical of this approach, calling the government simply vain to spend 170,000 *yuan* (\$51,300 US)<sup>48</sup> to send “some athletes who will suffice ... just so that the flag of the white sun on the blue sky can flap above the Berlin Olympic Stadium.”<sup>49</sup> But Shen rebuffed this utilitarian critique, asking the Chinese sport world to abandon pure economics for the grandeur of the Olympics and its world-recognized symbols: “The achievement of international recognition alone is worth millions to us as a nation, and more than justifies the amount spent on the tour.... I believe [the athletes]



Jesse Owens and Cheng Jinguan *Photo courtesy of Cheng Jinguan*

have accomplished more for China than several ambassadors could have achieved in years.<sup>50</sup> For those who stressed these international symbols, the Olympians' arrival in Berlin itself represented a *de facto* Chinese triumph.

The particular circumstances of these Olympic Games also contributed to this sense of victory. The Chinese athletes were well aware of recent political events in Hitler's Germany, and even if envying in many ways the military strength of the revitalized German *Völker*, many felt "great discomfort" at the racial policies of their Nazi hosts. Indeed, a photo taken as the team marched out of the Berlin train station on July 23 shows the athletes looking coolly straight ahead, perhaps having mixed emotions about the smart *Sieg Heil* salutes accorded them by the workers, sailors and officials who crowded along the walkway.<sup>51</sup> In the opening ceremonies held days later, the Chinese were one of the few teams not to salute Germany's number one sport fan, Adolf Hitler, with the *Sieg Heil*; a photo shows the team passing in front of Hitler's viewing stand holding their Olympic hats over their hearts with their right hands.<sup>52</sup> Cheng Jinguan remembers the "totally fascist" atmosphere of these ceremonies—the *Luftwaffe* airplanes and Zeppelin soaring over the stadium, and the roar of the German audience for Hitler as he took his seat. Cheng told me proudly that he and his teammates never stood for the Nazi flag, although they did stand for the German national flag, as "respect for other country's flag is just part of the Olympic spirit."<sup>53</sup>

The quadruple-gold accomplishments of American track hero Jesse Owens at these Berlin Olympics also provided the Chinese team with the inspiration that even in the fierce modern world, the racial underdog could indeed triumph. Painfully aware of the racist policies and worldviews of the globe's imperialist powers, many Chinese saw these Olympics as an opportunity to present the New Chinese Man and Woman, and to prove the strength of the modernized Chinese race, to the world. If no medals were captured by Chinese athletes, Owens' victories were still very meaningful in that the Chinese could feel solidarity with other races oppressed in this vicious twentieth century. After the Games, one Chinese progressive praised Owens' record-shattering efforts, proclaiming that his performance had "destroyed the poisonous myth of white supremacy."<sup>54</sup> Another asked defiantly, "Now who says the colored races (*youse renzhong*) are inferior to the white race?"<sup>55</sup>

Owens's presence at these Games was also personally significant for Cheng Jinguan, who became friends with the American champion during training sessions. Cheng's smooth Soochow University English was more than sufficient to allow him to chat with Owens and ask for technical training and running tips. This Olympic friendship was captured for posterity on film, in a snapshot of Owens, the very picture of the relaxed and confident sportsman, clad in his USA sweat suit, with one arm around and the other clasping the hand of a stiff Cheng in sweater, tie and slacks. This photo, determinedly preserved by Cheng through the xenophobic chaos and brutality of the Cultural Revolution,<sup>56</sup> has become a treasured artifact of Chinese Olympic history. In October 1996, Suzhou municipal postal authorities released a limited edition commemorative envelope featuring a reproduction of this picture to mark the 100th anniversary of the modern Olympic movement and the 60th anniversary of China's participation in the Berlin Games.<sup>57</sup> The political context of these 1936 Olympics has been largely forgotten in the PRC today, and Chinese participation in these Games is now commemorated to reflect more on Chinese

nationalism than on any dated notions of racial solidarity. Yet 60 years ago, Owens's Olympic conquest was an event of great significance for the Chinese sport community, providing the sorely needed proof that there was hope for oppressed peoples around the world, African-Americans and Han Chinese alike.

It was fortunate that Chinese athletes were able to take home with them this type of victory, as there were few others. The results of these Games confirmed the fears of Chinese who felt that their nation was still unable, as one critic put it, "to produce men like Jesse Owens."<sup>58</sup> The long trip aboard the *Conte Verde* simply had sapped the Chinese athletes of their strength. Longshots for Olympic honors to begin with, they turned in yet another disappointing performance. Of the 19 track athletes in Berlin, only pole vaulter Fu Baolu managed to advance past the initial trials and into actual medal competition. But even Fu, ill the day of his event, was quickly eliminated with a top mark of 3.80 meters, a full 25 centimeters off his personal best of 4.05 meters.

Cheng Jinguan's Olympic hopes were dimmed for different reasons. Cheng's best event was the 400 meter hurdles. He was well-known in China for his unorthodox hurdling style, in which he folded his trailing leg inside, close to his groin, rather than to the outside. But when the team arrived in Berlin, team leader and CNAAF Secretary Shen Siliang pulled Cheng aside to inform him that he would not run the hurdles in Berlin. When a confused Cheng asked why, Shen answered, "Not only does no one else in China use your hurdling style, but no one else in the world does. When the winners cross the finish line, you will still have 30-40 meters left to go, and you will lose face for China [with your strange style and poor time]." A disheartened Cheng joined several of the sprinting competitions instead, but was quickly eliminated from all of them with disappointing times that he now attributes to the rough month at sea.<sup>59</sup>

China's other entries provided little to cheer about either. The soccer team, even more spent after their whirlwind trip of South Asia, lost to Britain 2-0 after a gutsy performance before a crowd which included Ambassador Cheng and 600 Chinese fans. The basketball team managed to win one game in the consolation bracket against the French, but lost decisively to Japan, Peru and Brazil.<sup>60</sup> China's best Olympic hope, Dutch cyclist Howard Wing, crashed on his fifth lap around the Berlin velodrome, ending his medal hopes.<sup>61</sup>

One of the few bright spots of these Berlin Olympics came with the demonstrations performed by the nine-member (six men, three women) martial arts (*quoshu*) team, selected after extensive tryouts at Shanghai like the other squads. In a significant gesture of self-Orientalization, the martial arts team was sent with the official Olympic team in order to share the wonders of China's "ancient sport" and Chinese culture in general with the modern sporting fans of Europe and the world. During the trip to Germany, martial arts demonstrations were a large part of the exhibitions held for the Singapore Chinese, and "Olympic Evening" and "China Night" variety shows performed aboard the *Conte Verde*. In Germany before the Games began, the group performed before Hamburg audiences at an International Concert, an International Boxing Exhibition and an International Sport Carnival, and then before Berlin crowds at a military camp and an International Sport Research Camp.<sup>62</sup> As another way of promoting the Chinese native martial arts, the CNAAF made a German-language film of national team coach (and Secretary of the Executive Department of the Republic of China) Chu Minyi demonstrating *taijiquan*

as well as his own brand of “taiji-calisthenics,” shuttlecock and archery, especially for entry in the Olympic Sport & Physical Education Film contest held in Berlin during the Games.<sup>63</sup>

The biggest moment came on August 9, when the martial arts squad put on a one-hour demonstration in the Olympic stadium before some 30,000 fans. Chu’s own “taiji-calisthenics,” a six-segment, three-minute routine he designed in order to synthesize the most useful elements of the ancient *taijiquan* and modern calisthenics,<sup>64</sup> served as an appropriate opening to this performance. These martial artists, and the state that sponsored them, hoped to give the sport fans of Berlin and the world an understanding of the glories of traditional Chinese culture—but more specifically the fact that this Chinese culture could be modified, modernized, and fitted into the twentieth-century world. Their *taiji-calisthenics*, and the other modernized and synthesized martial arts sets they performed, were meant to represent a China, perhaps even a Chinese modernity, that was truly fit for the modern world. It is doubtful that these nuances of the exotic Chinese movements they watched were apparent to the Berlin crowd, but it was an impressive spectacle nonetheless, for which the fans’ “applause reverberated up to the heavens.”<sup>65</sup> This sign of approval from the German people must have come as a great relief for the entire Chinese Olympic team, although many likely wished the crowd might have afforded the same welcome to Chinese athletes participating in actual Olympic medal events.

Of all the indignities that the team did suffer in Berlin, the defeat of Chinese boxing standout Jin Guidi was particularly galling for the Chinese sporting community, as it captured in perfect microcosm the weakness of China’s position in the 1930s world order. Middleweight Jin, fighting British Dick Shrimpton on August 11, got off to a good start, especially punishing Shrimpton’s jaw. After Jin delivered a quick left-right combination, the Briton got Jin into a clinch. As the referee separated the two boxers, Shrimpton, with a “terrifying charge,” delivered a left upper-arm blow to Jin’s head that put him down for the 10-count. A side judge quickly intervened, ruling that Shrimpton’s charge had come before the referee had separated the fighters, disqualifying Shrimpton, and awarding Jin the victory. The British manager protested the ruling. The next day, an Olympic boxing rules committee decided that Shrimpton’s infraction was not serious enough to warrant disqualification, and named the Briton the winner on the basis of his knockout. The Chinese delegation argued the point, but did not issue an official protest, instead electing to have Jin carry the Chinese flag during the Olympic closing ceremonies as a more understated and symbolic show of objection.<sup>66</sup>

Commenting days later, the Western sporting press in Shanghai, perhaps even relieved by the decision which kept Olympic gold in white fists, praised Jin and the Chinese Olympians for accepting

without murmur the judges’ reversal of their own earlier decision against the Briton.... Pettiness and a lack of spirit would have prompted the Chinese to protest the second decision and demand that the bout be refought.... But [Jin Guidi] and the entire Chinese delegation chose the course of honor.

This sportswriter was so impressed that he declared, “This one incident has covered China’s athletic representatives with glory. They are bringing back intact the laurel they wore with them to the Olympic Games—the spirit of genuine sportsmanship.”<sup>67</sup>

Chinese observers, on the other hand, were hardly as delighted by the capricious discarding of one of their very few Olympic triumphs. Many compared the Chinese acceptance of this wrongful defeat with the actions of the Peruvian soccer team, who charged onto the field to argue with referees, and then withdrew from their game against Austria after a bad call went against them. One writer lamented,

Just like our territory is always being invaded, this is not anything new or curious. China is always being bullied, and our tolerance is even greater than that of the Peruvians! Some have said, in exaggeration, that this event illustrates the Chinese penchant for generosity—"Oh, it doesn't matter, it's all right!"

Citing the pathetic self-defeating protagonist of Lu Xun's novella critiquing China's 1911 Revolution, he continued, "Ah Q-style Chinese are really too plentiful to count."<sup>68</sup>

This theme of failure dominated the post-Olympics evaluations delivered by members of the Chinese sport community. To the reader of today, it seems odd that supporters of the Chinese team could turn on the team so viciously as to write, "How badly they have failed, all the world knows."<sup>69</sup> Conditioned by ideologies of fair play and "it's how you play the game," it is easy for us today to pretend to ignore that other strain of sporting ideology which ridicules those nice guys who finish last. Few Chinese fans, desperate for any sign of success on the world stage, seem to have suffered from this sportsmanlike cognitive dissonance. They wanted to win. Any victory would have done—any true victory, that is. The Chinese soccer team's pride at their strong showing in their 2-0 loss to Britain, was again derisively dismissed as mere "Ah Q-style self-consolation."<sup>70</sup>

Hurdler-sprinter Cheng Jinguan remembers well the humiliation of representing a population of 400 million but not being able to garner any Olympic laurels at all. He remembers Shanghai newspapers mocking the team's "goose egg" in the points column, or as another wrote, their failure "to salvage even half a bronze medal!"<sup>71</sup> China's Olympic athletes were raked over the coals for their failure. An author in *The Sino-Foreign Monthly* opined that not only were their techniques "lacking in scientific quality," but that they were "too corrupt and truly in need of reform. Some say that among students, the athletes and ballplayers mostly do not study, but enjoy making girlfriends and other bad habits. And the women [athletes], since they worship the sporting crowd, enjoy being in these same circles."<sup>72</sup> One educator suggested that the Chinese athletes' failure was due to their "lack of spiritual discipline."<sup>73</sup> An author in *The China Critic* pointed out that Chinese athletes "have not yet realized that the skillfulness or tactics of a sportsman and his 'spirit' ... few of the Chinese athletes have the guts or that determination to win."<sup>74</sup> Another simply dismissed them as "bad winners," "cajoled into thinking themselves tin gods by an indulgent public."<sup>75</sup>

One point on which almost all seemed to be in agreement was the idea that the Chinese body, diagnosed to be still too weak and sickly even after 25 years of Republican rule, was truly to blame. Head Olympic delegate Shen Siliang, upon returning to Shanghai, simply remarked that "[Chinese] physiques are underdeveloped (*luohou*), and just not fit enough to compete with others." An educator from remote Shanxi Province found several factors that contributed to the Olympic "failure"—Chinese high death rates and short lifespans, a supposedly "traditional" Chinese ideology that subordinated the physical to the cultural and literary, and even the legacy of the weak Qing state.<sup>76</sup> Another

observer explained simply that good marks in the Olympics would only be achieved when they accurately represented “the physiques of a healthy citizenry.”<sup>77</sup>

The standard for comparison was clearly the hated Japanese—this race, formerly scorned by Chinese as “hairy dwarves,” which now ranked among the world’s economic, military and athletic powers. Even before the Olympics began, one author had warned the sporting public, “There are no Chinese among the heroes atop the international athletic stage! The success of our eastern neighbors’ [i.e., Japan’s] heroes on the international athletic stage is a fine example of endurance of hardship and self-motivation for our Chinese athletes!”<sup>78</sup> After 18 Japanese medal triumphs at Berlin—eighth place overall—Chinese sport enthusiasts were in even greater awe of Japanese progress. One author wondered, “Their physique is no better than ours; they are usually shorter in height. There are one hundred and one things that can be said to be similar between these two nationalities. Why are they so far ahead of us?”<sup>79</sup> Nationally-known track and field expert Xie Siyan proclaimed the Japanese example the most suitable for Chinese reference, citing in particular the Japanese self-discipline, deep understanding of physical education and the body, and even the pride taken by Japan’s everyday physical education instructors in their work.<sup>80</sup>

The outstanding performance by Japanese athletes before the eyes of the sporting world clearly made the Chinese “failure” in Berlin that much more unpalatable and portentous. As a result, China’s sporting community saw no choice but to get back to the basics of building a strong Chinese body, and thus looked to the “mass sport” programs imported into China from Germany, Italy and Japan in the early 1930s. Many of those who had devoted their careers to promoting these “mass” forms of physical culture were radically authoritarian—even fascist—intellectuals and physical education experts who saw mass sport as the absolute antithesis of the “individualist” sport of the Olympic Games. They also understood a concentration on mass exercise and physical fitness to be a quick and effective solution to the disunity and selfish excesses brought on by China’s emphasis on these competitive sporting forms.<sup>81</sup> Clearly, the goals of many of these “mass sport” diehards were quite different from those who looked to a “mass-ized” (*minzhongha*) emphasis on sport that would create a deeper pool of potential Olympic talent for the Chinese nation. Yet the faith in the “mass-izing” of physical education as a cure-all was the same. For those who immediately began working towards a stronger Chinese delegation for the 1940 Olympic Games to be held in Tokyo,<sup>82</sup> “mass sport” would be the key to transforming and creating Chinese bodies that could win honors for their motherland on the most international of international stages.

It is interesting to examine the post-Berlin diagnoses of Western observers in China, who clearly had no understanding of the national significance that the Chinese sporting public placed in this Olympic entry. In a remarkable move that erased the Western role in introducing the sport cult of victory to China, the foreign media in China made warm and fuzzy feelings of sportmanship and graciousness the only allowable reactions to the outcomes of the recent Games. They saw the criticism of the medal-less Chinese delegation as “ignorant,” explaining to Chinese fans, still unschooled in the ways of the sportsman, that the goals of the Chinese Olympic team merely were “to display the utmost sportmanship under all circumstances, and thus impress the civilized world with the fact that in China the athletes are taught and understand what sportmanship really is.”<sup>83</sup>

Unsurprisingly, few Chinese observers bought this defeatist line of reasoning, instead choosing to be honest about the simple failure of these pampered Olympians to give the Chinese nation a return on the considerable resources invested in their sport. Two delegations had traveled abroad to join in the Olympic Games, in 1932 and 1936, in front of the eyes of the world, and at no small expense to national coffers. And the “goose egg” next to China’s name in the official medal tally was not acceptable to a sporting community who, for years now, had been chanting, “We can compete!”

## Conclusion

The medals won and records set by PRC athletes in Olympic and other international competitions today are understood, inside and outside of China, as unquestionable proof of China’s superpower status in the world, and of the ruling Chinese Communist Party’s hegemony within the PRC. The Republican-era goose eggs earned by the Chinese delegations to the 1932 and 1936 (and later, 1948) Olympic Games have become a dead-on caricature of the inadequacies and weakness of “Old China.” These failures serve as a perfect metonym for China’s pre-Liberation agonies and defeats suffered at the hands of the powerful imperialist nations of the world, who, not coincidentally, no longer dare to perpetrate these aggressions on the citizens of the Communists’ China.

These pre- 1949 Olympic misfortunes are now scorned by a late 1990s China, fiercely nationalistic and proudly materialistic, where might is as right as weakness and defeat are laughable and pathetic. Such a front-running and teleological view of these early Chinese Olympic experiences surely is not a becoming one. Yet neither is one that sees these Chinese entries—their one-man team in 1932, their “authentically Chinese” martial arts exhibition of 1936—as merely diverse or colorful footnotes to the “real” record-setting athletic action of these Los Angeles and Berlin Games. These Chinese experiences at the 1932 and 1936 Olympic Games must be understood as much more than this, capturing as they do the sincere hopes and dreams of an oppressed nation to make its stand, to compete on the international stage, and truly to become “a nation to be counted.”

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1. Song Ruhai, *Wo neng bi ya: Shijie yundonghui conglu (Records of Olympic Meetings)* (Shanghai: Shangwu yinshuguan, 1930), preface 1.
  2. Song Ruhai, *Wo neng bi ya*.
  3. Benjamin Schwartz, *In Search of Wealth and Power: Yen Fu and the West* (New York: Harper & Row, Publishers, 1964); James Reeve Pusey, *China and Charles Darwin* (Cambridge: Council on East Asian Studies, Harvard University, 1983).
  4. Song was not the first to write of his Olympic dreams for China. C. H. Robertson of the Tianjin YMCA and Zhang Boling of the Nankai Middle School both wrote in 1907–08 on their plans for China to enter and eventually host the Olympics. *Annual Reports of the Foreign Secretaries of the International Committee*, October 1, 1907 to September 30, 1908 (New York: International Committee YMCA, 1908), 163; Chih-Kang Wu, “The Influence of the YMCA on the Development of Physical Education in China” (University of Michigan Ph.D. Dissertation, 1956), 106.
  5. S. W. Pope, *Patriotic Games: Sporting Traditions in the American Imagination, 1876–1926* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), 69–78.
  6. Five months later, the results—based on essays written by thousands of readers—were announced, with soccer and basketball both named as Chinese national co-pastimes. “Er zhounian zhengqiu da yundong” [The great second anniversary subscription drive], *Qinfen tiyu yuebao (The Chin Fen Sport Monthly)* 2 (12) (September 1935); “Guomin youxi’ xuanshang da’an jiaoxiao” [Announcing

the prizes and results of the “National pastime” contest], *Qinfen tiyu yuebao* 3 (5) (February 1936).

7. In 1930 the Ninth Far Eastern Championship Games were joined by Indian athletes, and in 1934 the Tenth Games by Indonesian athletes.
8. John J. MacAloon, *This Great Symbol: Pierre de Coubertin and the Origins of the Modern Olympic Games* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1981), 137.
9. Li Sheng, “Di yi ge daibiao Zhongguo canjia Aoyunhui bisai de Liu Changchun” [Liu Changchun, the first to represent China in Olympic competition], *Tiyu wenshi [Sport History]* 5 (February 1984): 34; Liu Changchun, “Wo daibiao Zhongguo canjia Di shi jie Aoyunhui shimo” [The whole story of my representing China at the Tenth Olympic Games], in Ji Hongmin, Yu Xingmao and Lü Changfu, eds., *Aoyunhui yu Zhongguo* [The Olympics and China] (Beijing: Wenshi ziliao chubanshe, 1985), 57–88; Interview with Dong Hanwen, June 4, 1996, Taipei, Taiwan.
10. Jizhe, “Liu Changchun chuxi Shijiehui zhi yunniang” [The story of how Liu Changchun’s participation in the Olympics came about], *Tiyu zhoubao (The Sporting Weekly)* 23 (July 9, 1932): 18.
11. The Manchurian Athletic Association cabled the Los Angeles Olympic Organizing Committee on May 24 with their plans to enter “a sprinter and a middle-distance star of high calibre” in the Games. “Seeks to Enter Olympics: Manchuria Expresses Desire to Send Two Athletes to Games,” *The New York Times*, May 25, 1932, 26.  
The International Olympic Committee saw no problem with the participation of this puppet government, merely stating that Manzhouguo would have to wait, along with Afghanistan, for official IOC recognition of their nation. The IOC also reportedly asked Manzhouguo officials to submit their national flag and anthem for use in Los Angeles. *The New York Times*, May 26, 1932, 32; “Wei xuanshou chuxi Shijiehui” [Bogus athletes to participate in Olympics], *Tiyu zhoubao* 20 (June 18, 1932): 1; “Weiguo xuanshou chuchang wenti” [The problem of the athletes representing the bogus government in competition], *Tiyu zhoubao* 20 (June 18, 1932): 19.
12. Wang Guan, “Guanyu weiguo de qianpai Yu Liu ji qita” [On the bogus government’s sending Yu and Liu, among other things], *Tiyu zhoubao* 20 (June 18, 1932): 18–19.
13. Liu Changchun, “Wo daibiao Zhongguo canjia Di shi jie Aoyunhui shimo,” 64.
14. A rejoicing Sporting Weekly published a file photo of Liu over the caption, “Liu Changchun, who will not be a puppet.” “Liu Changchun zishu” [Liu Changchun tells his own story], *Tiyu zhoubao* 20 (June 18, 1932): 20.
15. Shi Ji, “Zhongguo canjia Di shi jie Aoyunhui jingguo” [The story of China’s participation in the Tenth Olympic Games], *Tiyu wenshi* 5 (February 1984): 16.
16. Zhou was a former secretary to Zhang Xueliang, and his son Zhou Changxing was also a standout athlete who participated in the Berlin Olympics of 1936. Interview with Dong Hanwen, November 1995, Taipei, Taiwan.
17. Liu Changchun, “Wo daibiao Zhongguo canjia Di shi jie Aoyunhui shimo,” 66.
18. Interview with Li Shiming, May 17, 1996, Taipei, Taiwan; Hu Shiliu, “Di shi jie Shijie yundong dahui ji” [Record of the Tenth Olympic Games], *Shenbao yuekan [Shanghai Times Monthly Magazine]* 1 (3) (September 15, 1932): 121.
19. “Ben jie Ou-lin-pi-ke yundong dahui zhi qianzhan (xu ba)” [Preview of these Olympic Games (Part 8)], *Tiyu zhoubao* 26 (July 30, 1932): 22.
20. Song told the ship telegraph operator to return the message to the sender, as there were no Manzhouguo representatives aboard their ship. *Ibid.*, 22.
21. Liu led after the first 50 meters in his 100 meter heat on July 31, and led after 150 meters in his 200 meter heat on August 2, before tiring and coming up short at the end of both races. “Liu Changchun de rijì” [Liu Changchun’s diary], *Tiyu zhoubao* 32 (September 10, 1932): 21–22; Hu Shiliu, “Di shi jie Shijie yundong dahui ji,” 122.
22. “Liu Changchun de rijì,” 23.
23. David B. Welky, “Viking Girls, Mermaids, and Little Brown Men: U.S. Journalism and the 1932 Olympics,” *Journal of Sport History* 24 (1) (Spring 1997): 39–41.
24. Hu Shiliu, “Di shi jie Shijie yundong dahui ji,” 117; “Liu Changchun bei shou huanying” [Liu Changchun’s welcome], *Tiyu zhoubao* 27 (August 6, 1932): 1.

25. Jizhe, "Liu Changchun chuxi Shijiehui zhi yunniang," 18–19.
26. "Liu Changchun bei shou huanying," 1.
27. "Quanguo tixiehui jihua canjia Shijie yundonghui gexiang banfa" [Chinese National Amateur Athletic Federation plans to send athletes to join all Olympic events], *Shishi xinbao* [New Current Affairs] (November 5, 1934), reprinted in *Jiaoyu zazhi* (The Educational Review) 25 (1): 423 (January 10, 1935).
28. A five-week Summer Physical Education Lecture Series and a five-day Summer Physical Education Conference were also scheduled in conjunction with the Olympic Training Camp. Sport experts in residence for the training camp taught courses and presented papers in these other programs, which were both open to physical education teachers and bureaucrats. Information was sent to provincial educational bodies that spring inviting local organizations to nominate participants. "Shuqi tiyu taolunhui guicheng" [Summer Sport Conference regulations], *Qinfen tiyu yuebao* 2 (9) (June 1935): 624–27; "Shuqi tiyu jiangxihui guicheng" [Summer Sport Lecture Series regulations], *Qinfen tiyu yuebao* 2(9) (June 1935): 627–29; File No. 53–1–2216, Zhejiang Provincial Archives, 2–26.
29. Interviews with Dong Hanwen, November 1995, May 10 and 17, 1996, Taipei, Taiwan; Qu Ziqing, *Zhongguo lanqiu shihua* [Stories from the history of basketball in China] (Taipei: Weihua tiyu xunkanshe, 1961), 17.
30. Mark Dyreson, *Making the American Team: Sport, Culture and the Olympic Experience* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1998), 8–11, and especially the chapter "The Idea of a Sporting Republic," 180–198.
31. "Shuqi tiyu xunlianhui guicheng" [Summer Sport Training Camp regulations], *Qinfen tiyu yuebao* 2 (9) (June 1935): 633–35.
32. Li broke the 2:05 standard in the 800 meters again on August 3. However, he failed to qualify for the 200 meter dash and the javelin after several trials in each event. "Yi yue lai zhi yundong bisai," *Qinfen tiyu yuebao* 2 (12) (September 1935): 839–40.  
Li qualified again for the Olympics at a training camp held for Northern athletes at Beijing's Qinghua University in April–May 1936, running the 400 meters in 52.2 seconds. *Chuxi Di shiyi jie Shijie yundonghui Zhonghua daibiaotuan baogao* (Official Report of The Chinese Delegation to the XIth Olympiad, Berlin, 1936) (Shanghai: Zhonghua quanguo tiyu xiejinhui, 1937), § 1, 5.
33. "Yi yue lai zhi yundong bisai," *Qinfen tiyu yuebao* 3 (10) (July 1936): 948.
34. Li, running the 400 and 800 meters, won two gold medals in 1933 and two silvers in 1934, finishing second in both events to lifelong friend and almost-Olympian Yu Xiwei. One author described these athletes, and the Xinjing crowds as "slaves of a conquered nation" (wangguo nu). Interview with Li Shiming, May 17, 1996, Taipei, Taiwan; Qiao Ji, "Weiguo tiyu jinkuang yi shu" [A look at sport in the bogus "nation"], *Tiyu zhoubao* 2 (20) (June 24, 1933): 7; "Li ci wei Man yundonghui chengji" [Records from each bogus "Manzhouguo" National Games], *Jilin tiyu shiliao* [Jilin Province Sport History] 1983 (2) (October 1983): 32.
35. Many in the Shanghai sporting establishment were less than thrilled about the Hong Kong carpet-baggers' complete appropriation of the soccer entry. Several Shanghai papers published items from the European press questioning the amateur status of the Hong Kong team, whose members allegedly "were receiving 'retainers' from undisclosed sources to enable them to play football." Interestingly, the foreign press in Shanghai defended Olympic soccer team captain Li Huitang, "number one soccer player in China and idol of all football fans in this part of the world," from these charges, and criticized the Shanghai Chinese press for trying to force the CNAAF to disqualify Li and his teammates from amateur competition. "What Is An Amateur?" *The Illustrated Week-End Sporting World* (Jingle huabao) 10 (43) (May 9, 1936): 5; "Frankly Speaking," *Jingle huabao* 10 (47) (June 6, 1936): 6.
36. The team won 23 of the matches, tying four and losing none, and outscoring their opponents 113–27. *Chuxi Di shiyi jie*, § 1, 8–9.
37. The boxers trained with a British coach and Chen Hanqiang, an Austrian Chinese who returned to his ancestral homeland after reigning as European light middleweight champion. Their training program included fighting bouts on an "American Club smoker program" in Shanghai, and "eat-

- ing foreign food in order to get the full benefit out of the calories.” *Chuxi Di shiyi jie*, § 1, 10; “Boxing,” *Illustrated Week-End Sporting World* 10 (41) (April 25, 1936): 9.
38. *Chuxi Di shiyi jie*, § 1, 16.
  39. Ibid. 17–18; Interview with Cheng Jinguan, Suzhou, China, March 2, 1997.
  40. *Chuxi Di shiyi jie*, § 1, 18–19.
  41. Andrew Morris, “Southeast Asia in a Greater Chinese Sporting Community, 1920–1948,” paper presented at the Association of Asian Studies Annual Meeting, Boston, March 11–14, 1999.
  42. *Chuxi Di shiyi jie*, § 1, 21.
  43. Chen Yongsheng, *Ouzhou tiyu kaocha riji* [Diary of the Olympic inspection tour of European physical culture] (Shanghai: Nansheng chubanshe, 1938), 7.
  44. Interview with Cheng Jinguan, Suzhou, China, March 2, 1997.
  45. Chen Yongsheng, *Ouzhou tiyu kaocha riji*, 31–34.
  46. Chen Yongsheng, *Ouzhou tiyu kaocha riji*, 36; *Chuxi Di shiyi jie*, § 1, 24.
  47. Interview with Cheng Jinguan, Suzhou, China, March 2, 1997.
  48. The whole Olympic trip was funded by a 170,000 yuan grant from the central government, and 30,568.88 yuan (\$9,230 US) from 28 donors including political figures Chen Jitang, Wu Tiecheng, Bai Chongxi, Li Zongren, Yang Sen, Yan Xishan, He Yingqin, Dai Jitao, and Chen Yi, as well as several patriotic Overseas Chinese in Southeast Asia and Europe. *Chuxi Di shiyi jie*, § 1, 2–3.
  49. Jiang Huaiqing, “Bo-lin mian qu ba!” [Don’t just go to Berlin!], *Guomin tiyu huikan (Olympic Physical Review)* 1 (January 1, 1936): 19.
  50. Lin Yin-feng, “Weekly Interviews—Mr. William Z. L. Sung,” *The China Critic* 15 (.1) (October 1, 1936): 18–19.
  51. Ambassador Cheng Tianfang seems to be returning the gesture in another photo taken at the station. *Chuxi Di shiyi jie*, § 1, 25; Interview with Cheng Jinguan, Suzhou, China, March 2, 1997.
  52. *Chuxi Di shiyi jie*, § 1, 33.
  53. Interview with Cheng Jinguan, Suzhou, China, March 2, 1997.
  54. This article also expressed solidarity with the Jewish members of the American Olympic Committee who quit the body as a protest against Germany’s ban on German Jews’ participation in the Games. He also pointed out sardonically that the hurdles and other iron sport equipment used in these Olympic Games was all manufactured by the Krupp Corporation, who also produced the German tanks that had terrorized so many all over Europe. Suizhi, “Di shiyi jie Shijie yundonghui de jingguo jiqi tezhi” [Events and special qualities of the Eleventh Olympic Games], *Zhongxuesheng [Middle School Student]* 67 (September 1936): 65.
  55. Ma Chonggan, “Di shiyi jie Shijie yundonghui gaishu” [A brief narrative of the Eleventh Olympic Games], *Shenbao zhoukan [Shanghai Times Weekly Magazine]* 1 (33) (August 23, 1926): 792.
  56. Unfortunately for the former Olympian, a substantial anti-Cheng campaign was begun in Suzhou, persecuting him for having served as a “foreign spy,” the proof of course being that he had been to Japan, the Philippines, and Germany, and had seen Hitler, Goebbels, Japanese fascist and Philippine collaborationist officials with his own eyes! Before the campaign got too far, in 1969 Cheng and his wife were sent to Xiangshui County in northeast Jiangsu for two years. Cheng “regretfully” had to render incomplete his commemorative set of Olympic photo cards by burning one Hitler card, but was able to stash other photos and clippings in friends’ homes. He was also able to keep his Olympic necktie—no one noticed that his son wore it for years as a belt. Interview with Cheng Jinguan, Suzhou, China, March 2, 1997.
  57. Cheng presented me with one of these collector’s items. When they were released, he sat in the Suzhou October rain autographing the 900 envelopes that were sold to Olympic collectors. Suzhou shi jiyou gongsi [Suzhou Municipal Stamp Collecting Company] and Suzhou shi tiyu jiyou xiehui [Suzhou Municipal sport Stamp Collecting Association], joint issue, “Jinian Ao-lin-pi-ke yundong yibai zhounian” [Commemorating 100 years of the Olympic movement], Commemorative envelope (Suzhou: 1996).

58. "Editorial Commentary," *T'ien Hsia Monthly* 3 (2) (September 1936): 86. This frustrating and painful self-critique echoed similar questions raised by intellectuals like Liang Qichao, who asked his countrymen in the last years of the Qing Dynasty why Chinese could not lay claim to any hero comparable to Luther, Lincoln, or Columbus. John Fitzgerald, *Awakening China: Politics, Culture, and Class in the Nationalist Revolution* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1996), 119.
59. Interview with Cheng Jinguan, Suzhou, China, March 2, 1997.
60. China's greatest basketball-related honor at Berlin was that Shu Hong, an assistant coach for the Chinese Olympic team (and a graduate of Springfield College), was selected to officiate the basketball gold medal contest (in which the United States defeated Canada, 12–8). Qu Ziqing, *Zhongguo lanqiu shibua*, 19.
61. *Chuxi Di shiyi jie*, § 1, 34–40.
62. *Ibid.*, § 1, 19, 23, 29–30.
63. "Yi yue lai zhi tiyu xingzheng" [Sport administration this past month], *Qinfen tiyu yuebao* 2 (12) (September 1935): 837.
64. Chu explained that this innovation promised to solve the problems of standard calisthenics being too straight and rigid and not physiologically beneficial, and of traditional taijiquan being simply too difficult for any but the most dedicated martial artist to master. Chu Minyi, *Taijicao zhi shuoming ji kouting* [Taiji-calisthenics instructions and commands] (Shanghai: Dadong shuju, 1933), 1.
65. *Chuxi Di shiyi jie*, § 1, 42.
66. *Ibid.*, § 1, 37–38, 44.
67. "Echo of Olympic Sportsmanship," *The Illustrated Week-End Sporting World* 10 (58) (August 22, 1936): 4.
68. Suizhi, "Di shiyi jie Shijie yundonghui de jingguo jiqi tezhi," 65–66.
69. "Editorial Commentary," *T'ien Hsia Monthly* 3 (2) (September 1936): 85.
70. Suizhi, "Di shiyi jie Shijie yundonghui de jingguo jiqi tezhi," 66.
71. Interview with Cheng Jinguan, Suzhou, China, March 2, 1997; Suizhi, "Di shiyi jie Shijie yundonghui de jingguo jiqi tezhi," 62.
72. Fengshen, "Di shiyi jie Shijie" yundonghui de niaokan" [A bird's-eye view of the Eleventh Olympic Games], *Zhongwai yuekan* (*The Sino-Foreign Monthly*) 1 (9) (October 1, 1936): 127–30.
73. Tong Zhixuan, "Shiyunhui Zhongguodui shibai hou guoren duiyu tiyu yingyou zhi renshi yu null" [On the physical culture understanding and efforts our people should have and make after the Chinese team's Olympic failure], *Jiao yu xue* [*Education and Learning*] 2 (3) (September 1, 1936): 13.
74. "The Life For An Athlete," *The China Critic* 14 (12) (September 17, 1936): 274.
75. "Editorial Commentary," 85–86.
76. This author's critique of "traditional" anti-physical Chinese ideologies referred to popular but terribly cliched condemnations cast during the Republican era at China's imperial dynasties, especially the Manchu Qing, for their reputed attempts to subdue the martial and physical instincts so native to the Chinese character, in the interests of unchallenged autocratic rule. Zhao Baozhong, "Jiji de jiankang jiaoyu" [An activist health education], *Shanxi minzhong jiaoyu* [Shanxi Province Mass Education] 3 (5–6) (October 15, 1936): 1–3.
77. Suizhi, "Di shiyi jie Shijie yundonghui de jingguo jiqi tezhi," 68.
78. "Shijie yundongchang shang zhi yingjie" [Heroes atop the international athletic stage], *Zhonghua yuebao* (*The Central China Monthly*) 4 (7) (July 1, 1936): 6–8.
79. "The Life For An Athlete," 275.
80. Xie Siyan, "Woguo canjia ben jie Shiyunhui shibai hou de jiaoxun" [Lessons learned after our nations failure in these Olympic Games], *Tiyu* [*Sport*] 4 (11) (November 30, 1936): 4.
81. The details of these Chinese models of mass sport bear close resemblance to aspects of Nazi sport theory as seen in John Hoberman's work—namely, fascist models of the "sportive temperament," "sportive manhood," racial superiority and "physiological patriotism," the need for a politically

- “committed” sport, and the preoccupation with the vital, dynamic and aggressive male body. John M. Hoberman, *Sport and Political Ideology* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1984), 83–109, 162–169.
82. For an account of the fate of these Tokyo Olympics, see Junko Tahara, “Count Michimasa Soyeshima and the Cancellation of the XII Olympiad in Tokyo: A Footnote to Olympic History,” *The International Journal of the History of Sport* 9 (3) (December 1992): 467–70.
83. “China and the Next Olympiad,” *The Illustrated Week-End Sporting World* 10 (61) (September 12, 1936): 3.