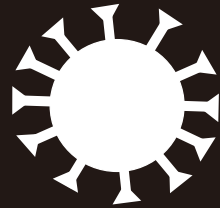
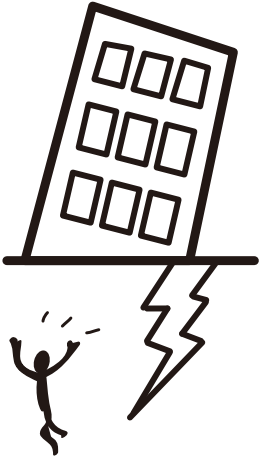
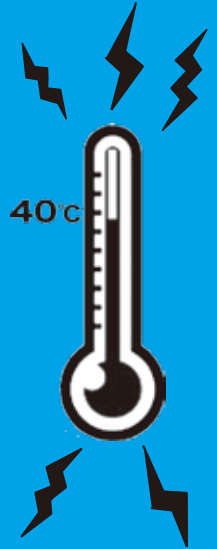
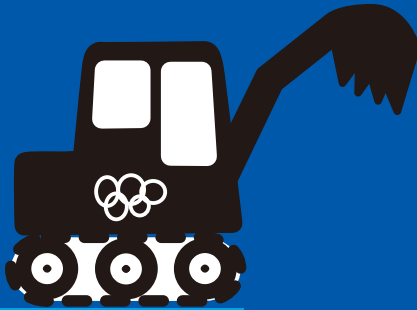


# Tokyo Olympics Guidebook



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## 20 Reasons to Oppose the Tokyo Olympics



No 2020 Olympics Disaster OkotowaLink

## **20 Reasons to Oppose the Tokyo Olympics**

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# Preface: Lives, Not Games

The 2020 Tokyo Olympic and Paralympic Games were postponed by a year due to the coronavirus pandemic. We write this as we once again arrive at the half-a-year-to-go mark. Last year, this was celebrated with a spectacular ceremony in the Odaiba bay area of Tokyo. We were there, our voices calling for the Olympics to be canceled audible during the live TV broadcast of the event. The video footage was shared widely on social media around the world. So, what about this year?

Needless to say, even the Olympics organizers would not hold a ceremony at a time like this. The coronavirus is still raging across the globe, with more than 2 million having died as of writing—over 5,000 of them in Japan. Each day brings fresh updates to the numbers of deaths, infections, and severe cases. Many cities and countries remain under lockdown or with various restrictions in place, and a second state of emergency has been declared for Tokyo and other parts of Japan. With healthcare services on the brink of collapse, anxiety growing over patient triage, and even fundamental human rights no longer guaranteed, more and more residents are calling for the Tokyo Olympics to be canceled. One recent poll by Kyodo News found that 80 percent of Japanese people want the Games to be either rescheduled or called off.

“Plans for the postponed Tokyo Olympic Games are growing more uncertain by the day,” the New York Times reported on January 15, noting that officials in Tokyo and with the International Olympic Committee are starting to acknowledge that holding a safe Olympic Games is no longer viable, given the grave situation with the coronavirus. Such media reports now appear regularly.

And yet in his policy speech on January 18 marking the opening of the Japanese parliament, Prime Minister Yoshihide Suga confidently asserted that the Tokyo Olympics would be held as proof that humankind had overcome the pandemic. But it was humankind who made the environments and social structures that allowed the virus to spread in the first place. Destroying the planet and natural ecosystems as well as the increased movement of people due to globalization are directly leading to new viruses and

infectious diseases.

What is needed are not empty claims about “overcoming” the coronavirus, but a practical way to live with the risk of such viruses and diseases. While vaccines have finally appeared, there are still concerns about their safety. Our first priority must be to bring infections down, to ensure our healthcare systems are able to deal with serious cases, and to assist the people who have suffered economically and socially from the pandemic. It is unimaginable to hold the Olympics at this time.

Long before the pandemic, though, we were already calling the Olympics a disaster and campaigning for them to be canceled. This pamphlet explains 20 reasons for opposing the Tokyo Olympic and Paralympic Games: 20 reasons they are a disaster. From here in Japan, where Fukushima and the coronavirus have both led to states of emergency, we say “No!” to what Naomi Klein calls the Pandemic Shock Doctrine, whereby the pandemic is the pretext for introducing mass digital surveillance by Big Tech. This isn’t only about Tokyo. We don’t want the Olympics in Paris, Los Angeles, or anywhere. People around the world are now starting to dream of a society without the Olympics. Let’s seize the chance to turn this dream into a reality and end the Olympics once and for all. Join us for the final push to make this happen!

No 2020 Olympics Disaster OkotowaLink  
January 25, 2021



# 1

## The Ever-Rising Costs of Hosting the Olympics

Though she ridiculed the ballooning costs of the Tokyo Olympics during her election campaign in July 2016, the costs have continued to rise even after Yuriko Koike became governor of Tokyo.

The estimated budget for hosting the Olympics at the time of the bid in 2013 was \$6 billion. By the end of 2016, this had increased to \$16 billion, which then fell to an estimated \$12.6 billion in a belated response to public calls for the expenditure to be reined in. This, however, is only the direct costs of the Games, while there are also the costs of some \$7.5 billion for related projects covered by the national government and Tokyo Metropolitan Government, which likely brings the real costs of the Olympics overall to more than \$27 billion. In late 2020, it was reported that postponing the Olympics by a year was adding another \$2.4 billion due to operational costs and coronavirus countermeasures.

Naoki Inose, the governor of Tokyo at the time of the bid for the 2020 Olympics, claimed: “Though the National Stadium in Jingu will be remodeled, the Tokyo 2020 Olympics will almost entirely reuse the venues from 40 years ago, making it the world’s cheapest Olympics.” Far from being “remodeled,” the New National Stadium was entirely rebuilt, costing a total \$1.4 billion, roughly 1.5 times the originally projected costs. The newly constructed permanent venues have been built at a cost of \$1.7 billion, even just for the main structures, making this more likely the world’s most expensive Olympics that have served only to boost the profits of the big construction firms involved. And the International Olympic Committee is relying on Japanese money to ensure the continuation of the Olympics project.

The ballooning costs of the Olympics dates back to the 1976 Games held in Montreal, Canada. Jean Drapeau, the mayor at the time, said that the Games would not go into the red, but there was already a deficit of millions 18 months before the Olympics were scheduled to start. Drapeau claimed that this was not a deficit but merely a shortfall. In the end, though, the

Games costs a then-record C\$1.61 billion, 12 times the original budget and taking the city 30 years to pay back.

Following the 1984 Los Angeles Olympics that featured large amounts of private corporate funding, the scale of budget required to host the Olympics has continued to rise and rise. The costs of the Athens Olympics in 2004 soared to \$16 billion, 10 times the initial budget, and was ultimately one of the causes of the Greek financial crisis.

The scholar Jules Boykoff, who is known for his critical stance on the Olympics, notes that the investment of public money in hosting the Games offer a golden opportunity for private capital to make profit from urban development. This lies at the core of what he calls “celebration capitalism.”

According to the budget officially announced by the organizing committee, revenue of \$5.6 billion is anticipated, deriving from \$3.8 billion from domestic and international sponsors, \$800 million from ticket sales, and \$800 million from funds provided by the IOC. Of course, the private sector cannot make money with just this \$5.6 billion. No, celebration capitalism comes into effect when we factor in the \$7 billion of expenditure covered by the national and metropolitan governments. The \$6.7 billion spent on constructing the competition venues and facilities goes to the construction firms. The \$1.2 billion spent on marketing goes to the IOC and the advertising agency Dentsu. Another \$600 million spent on management and publicity goes to other advertising agencies and related corporations. The \$1.3 billion spent on operating costs goes to the recruitment and outsourcing giant Pasona. The \$1 billion spent on technology goes to the electronics and communications industry. The \$800 million spent on security goes to the various related corporations in that sector. With these huge windfalls in the offing, it is easy to see why corporations are willing to pay high sponsorship fees.

The expenditure costs of \$7 billion covered by the TMG and national government are only projections and the real costs may very well surge even higher. Moreover, what cannot be measured in monetary terms is the scale of environment damage and compensation for those people paid to put their lives on the line for the Games, not least the construction workers forced to do their jobs under dangerous conditions in order to meet the demands of unreasonable schedules. The spiraling costs, both financial, human, and more, are paid to guarantee the profits of private corporations,



which flock to the lie that is the Olympics, and the Olympics mafia whose ranks are filled by the members of the IOC.

Regardless of location, any Olympics host city undergoes gentrification that ushers in displacement and evictions of rough sleepers and public housing communities. In the case of the Tokyo Olympics, the Olympic Village will be converted into luxury condominiums after the Games are over. This land, owned by the TMG, is contracted to be sold off to a group of 11 major real estate developers at a price less than a tenth of the value of neighboring land. This is yet another loss that should be added to the real costs of the Olympics.

# 2

## The Lie That Was Building a Stadium Without Changing City Planning

“Some people have the wrong idea, so let me put them straight. Though the National Stadium in Jingu will be remodeled, the Tokyo 2020 Olympics will almost entirely reuse the venues from 40 years ago, making it the world’s cheapest Olympics.”

This was a tweet sent by Naoki Inose on July 27, 2012, when Tokyo had been selected as a candidate city but the actual host for the 2020 Games was not yet decided. It was a delicate point in time: if the media had given a platform to those opposed to holding the Olympics and public opinion had turned against the campaign, the Tokyo might not have been selected. The then vice governor made this completely unfounded statement on Twitter. The citizens who accepted this at face value and then supported the Olympic bid bear a great responsibility. Why? Because without this, the construction of the New National Stadium would never have happened.

In Tokyo’s failed bid for the 2016 Olympics, the main stadium was planned for Harumi, near Tokyo Bay, not in the Kasumigaoka area of central Tokyo. In a report by the Tokyo 2016 Bid Committee, it said that both

Harumi and Kasumigaoka had been considered from the perspectives of site area, laws and regulations, accessibility, and subsequent usage, and a conclusion reached that it would be difficult to complete an Olympic stadium in Kasumigaoka by April 2007.

How could it be that something that was regarded for the 2016 bid as impossible to achieve in Kasumigaoka for reasons of spatial and legal restrictions could then be built for the 2020 bid? The trick was relaxing the urban planning laws and regulations and expanding the stadium site.

On February 15, 2011, the all-party parliamentary group supporting the bid for hosting the Rugby World Cup 2019 put forward a resolution that the National Stadium in Kasumigaoka be rebuilt into a venue with a capacity of 80,000.

The group's resolution said that the city planning of the Meiji Jingu Gaien area and the surrounding environmental improvements should quickly undergo assessment in order that a sports facility for the whole area can be rebuilt, turning the current National Stadium in Kasumigaoka into a stadium with capacity to hold 80,000 spectators and which can be used to host not only the Rugby World Cup in Japan but also other large-scale international sporting events and tournaments in Tokyo in the future. Here we can see that blueprints were already drawn up for enlarging the National Stadium and changing the zoning and environmental layout of the area.

On March 6, 2012, the first meeting was held by a group of experts considering the future of the National Stadium. Ichiro Kono, a member of the executive board of both the Japan Sport Council and the Japan Rugby Football Union, took the lead in the discussion by telling the participants that the "starting line" for the scale of the stadium must be 80,000. He then produced the resolution and claimed it as the basis for his proposal.

Kono also served as chair of the 2016 bid committee and fully understood the difficulty of constructing a main stadium in Kasumigaoka with the size of the area and various legal restrictions that existed. Nevertheless, he still made those comments to the attendees. As a result, Meiji Park, which had long been used as a location for holding protests and flea markets, became part of the area for the New National Stadium.

Given that the park was land owned by the Tokyo Metropolitan Government, it would be natural for the JSC to pay the TMG for use of the land. This, however, was not something that the mainstream media deemed

worthy of reporting. Accordingly, it was decided by the TMG on January 26, 2016 to loan the park for free until the Olympics.

Even when the Kasumigaoka Apartments, a TMG public housing complex, were demolished to secure the area around Meiji Park that was lost to make way for the New National Stadium, the inherent inconsistency of building a main stadium in a location previously deemed unsuitable was not properly reported in the media, and the residents were treated in the same way as when any public housing site is rebuilt.

By changing the urban planning, it became possible to build the new Nippon Seinenkan (height: 70 meters, 16 floors above ground), the Japanese Olympic Committee's new hall (height: 60 meters, 14 floors above ground), and Mitsui Garden Hotel Jingugaien Tokyo Premier (height: 50 meters, 13 floors).

Ultimately, it was not possible to build a main stadium without destroying the lives of citizens.

# 3

## A Mega-Event With Mega Levels of Vested Interests

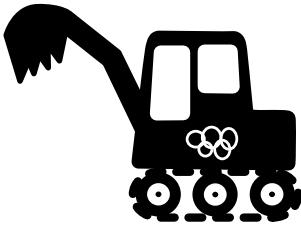
Olympic sponsors receive the rights to use the Olympic and Paralympic Games logos as well as video and photos of athletes and events. But these “rights” are actually vested interests. The sponsorship money is divided into two sets: the roughly \$500 million collected from the global corporations, the so-called Top Olympic Partners (TOP) who have contracts directly with the International Olympic Committee; and the \$3.3 billion from local sponsors, comprising those corporations who have contracts with the organizing committee.

Launched in 1985 by the IOC after it witnessed the wealth generated by the money-centric 1984 LA Games, the TOP sponsorship tier includes

the following 14 corporations: Coca-Cola (USA), Airbnb (USA), Alibaba Group (China), Atos (France), Bridgestone (USA), Dow (USA), General Electric (USA), Intel (USA), Omega (Switzerland), Panasonic (Japan), P&G (USA), Samsung (South Korea), Toyota (Japan), and Visa (USA). Each of these corporations pays an annual sponsorship fee of around \$90 million to the IOC. For example, Toyota made an eight-year contract (2017–2024) worth \$835 million, which meant Toyota taxis in Tokyo could use the Olympics logos and each vehicle receives a subsidy of around \$5,500 from the Tokyo Metropolitan Government. By 2020, 10,000 such taxis had gone into operation in the city. In order to prolong the life of the Olympics, the IOC has high hopes for making lots of money from Japanese corporations at the Tokyo Games.

It is said that the organizers have raised more money than originally expected from Japanese corporate sponsors. There are currently 15 Tokyo 2020 Olympic Gold Partners, who each paid a reported nearly \$130 million to the organizing committee: Asahi Breweries, ASICS, Canon, JXTG Nippon Oil & Energy (Eneos), Tokio Marine & Nichido Fire Insurance, Nippon Life Insurance Company (Nissay), NEC, NTT, Nomura Holdings, Fujitsu, Mizuho Financial Group, Mitsui Sumitomo Financial Group, Mitsui Fudosan, Meiji, and Lixil. It is here where rights turn into vested interests. Take the case of the real estate developer Mitsui Fudosan. It was given almost sole responsibility for the redevelopment of the Jingu Gaien area around the New National Stadium, turning a district with parks and a strong public or civic character into a commercialized area in order to generate huge profits, while the voices of the residents were ignored. Mitsui Fudosan won the gold medal in the development competition. The Olympic Village was built on TMG land in the Harumi district. Following the end of the Olympics, it is set to undergo renovations so that Mitsui Fudosan and others can offer high-end condominiums for sale to the general public. The TMG sold off this land to Mitsui Fudosan and 10 other corporations at a tenth of the price of nearby lots. This is why the Olympics are a money tree for the sponsors.

There are 32 Tokyo 2020 Olympic Official Partners, who paid a reported roughly \$55 million: the four newspaper companies for the Yomiuri Shimbun, Asahi Shimbun, Nikkei Shimbun, and Mainichi Shimbun; airweave; Ajinomoto; All Nippon Airways; Cisco Systems; Daiwa House; DNP; Earth



Corporation; East Japan Railway Company; Education First; Hisamitsu Pharmaceutical; Kikkoman; KNT-CT Holdings; Japan Airlines; Japan Airport Terminal; Japan Post Holdings; JTB; Mitsubishi Electric; SECOM; Sohgo Security Services (ALSOK); Tokyo Gas; Tokyo Metro; Toto; Tobu Top Tours; Toppan Printing;

Narita International Airport; Nissin Group; Recruit Holdings; and Yamato Holdings. There are also 20 Tokyo 2020 Olympic Official Supporters, who pay a somewhat less expensive fee for the privilege, including Aoki, Google, the Hokkaido Shimbun, Kadokawa, Kokuyo, Marudai Food, Pasona Group, Sankei Shimbun, and Shimizu Corporation. Needless to say, the partners and supporters all launder their sponsorship rights into vested interests. Recruit and Pasona, for instance, are providing “career support services” for 400 contract employees working for the organizing committee. It goes without saying that these employees’ contracts will be terminated once the Games are over. Since the organizers cannot say that these people are discarded after being abused for the sponsors, in the same way as the athletes are, the two corporations are paid to perform quasi-mind-control labor management duties.

But the real gold medalist in this regard is Dentsu, one of the world’s largest advertising agency. It is Dentsu who has paved the way for the Olympics to become the cash cow they are, working with the businessman Peter Ueberroth, who oversaw the 1984 LA Olympics, and launching a joint venture with the head of Adidas to secure Olympics marketing rights, and creating the top-tier sponsorship system that converts rights into vested interests. A former key figure at Dentsu is also closely connected to an ex-member of the IOC now accused of bribery. The Paralympics are also increasingly tainted by commercial interests. Even though we should today aim to create a barrier-free society, this is a sporting event that actually erects further barriers by dividing participants into Olympians and Paralympians, and by separating Paralympians according to levels of so-called disability. This contradiction is symbolic of the warped worldview that the Olympics and Paralympics embody.

# 4

## Bribery During the Olympics Bid

At the International Olympic Committee Session held in Lausanne, Switzerland, on January 10, 2020, Japanese Olympic Committee President Yasuhiro Yamashita was formally elected as a member of the IOC. President Yamashita has continued to voice doubts about his own suitability as a member of the IOC. He has said that he never even expected to become president of the JOC. He was designated personally by Tsunekazu Takeda, who was forced to resign in June 2019. The first thing Yamashita did upon becoming president was to make the JOC's board of directors sessions, until then held as a general rule publicly in front of the media, completely private.

Takeda had been considering a revision to the rule that stipulates JOC executives should be under 70 years old when elected in order to remain as president for the upcoming Olympics. The JOC was in the process of adopting a new policy regarding the age limits. But when investigators in France launched an investigation into Takeda over allegations of bribery, he had no choice but to resign.

Takeda is the third son of Prince Tsuneyoshi Takeda, who was a first cousin of Emperor Hirohito. An equestrian, he competed in the 1972 Olympics in Munich and the 1976 Olympics in Montreal, and later served as an Olympic coach and director before taking up the post of president of the JOC from September 2001.

As head of the executive board overseeing Tokyo's bid for the 2020 Olympics, Takeda is held responsible for the payments of 2 million euros made to a Singaporean consultancy, Black Tidings, allegedly to win the Games for Tokyo. French investigators are now probing the possibility that these funds were used for corruption or money laundering. The Tokyo 2020 Bid Committee was encouraged to make the contract with Black Tidings by someone at the advertising agency Dentsu. In addition to Takeda, the approval of this payment involves Tokyo Metropolitan Government employees as well as officials from the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology and Ministry of Foreign Affairs seconded to the bid

committee. Though Takeda has claimed that the payment to the consultancy firm was a legitimate and appropriate remuneration for the services rendered, the press conference that he held in January 2019 to explain what happened lasted a mere seven minutes.

According to reports, the affair began in May 2016, when the bid committee in Japan sent 2.8 million Singapore dollars to a bank account linked to Papa Massata Diack, the son of Lamine Diack, the former head of the International Association of Athletics Federations and a one-time member of the IOC, allegedly to buy African votes for the bid. Diack had already been arrested by French police on suspicion of accepting bribes and money laundering in connection with Russian doping allegations. French investigators then started looking into possible corruption during the bids for the 2016 and 2020 Olympics.

The JOC asserts that payments between civilians and private entities are not covered by bribery laws in Japan, and that what was done was fully lawful and did not constitute a breach of trust. There is, however, certainly a possibility that the Unfair Competition Prevention Law was violated, and, given that the members of the organizing committee of the Tokyo Olympic and Paralympic Games are considered to be public servants (that is, officials), they should be liable to charges of bribery, but no one is pursuing this in public.

It is a well-known fact that Olympic bids involve brazen competition and the outlay of vast sums of money. Carlos Nuzman, the former IOC member and the head of the organizing committee for the Rio de Janeiro Games, has been arrested on suspicion of vote-buying and is now standing trial. The “suspicions” over Takeda that are euphemistically lamented for “dampening” the Olympics festivities, not to mention the far greater crimes of those in power—a conspiracy between the national government, TMG, JOC, Dentsu, and others—may well come out yet. Then it will really bring the curtain down early.

At present, Takeda is still under investigation (at the pretrial stage ahead of indictment) and has not been formally charged with any wrongdoing. In September 2020, Lamine and Papa Massata Diack were found guilty of corruption relating to the concealment of organized doping by Russian athletes. This verdict will certainly have repercussions for the Olympic bid allegations against the father and son defendants.

# 5

## Prioritizing Money Over Safety

On November 1, 2019, nine months before the Olympics were supposed to open in summer 2020, the marathon and race walk were relocated to Sapporo. This was a measure taken to deal with the problem of Tokyo's summer heat, after many athletes were absent from competing in the World Athletics Championship in Doha in September and October 2019. When the proposal to relocate the events first appeared, Tokyo's governor, Yuriko Koike quipped, "If you want somewhere cool, why not choose the Northern Territories?" This incurred the displeasure of Russia, with whom Japan has a territorial dispute over those islands to the north of Hokkaido. But what the incident really exposed was the peculiarity of the International Olympic Committee, which can lay down policy without any consultation with the host city. The head of the organizing committee, Yoshihiro Mori, did apparently know about the proposal prior to its announcement but his role was simply to obey whatever the IOC decided. Until quite recently, the IOC had forbidden the Olympics from taking place in several cities but is adept at changing its own rules whenever the circumstances demand it. It is a closed organization, one whose members are chosen internally; a nongovernmental organization on paper but wielding the power, if not more, of a government.

What the IOC prioritizes is not the athletes but, above all, the American broadcaster who is its biggest investor. NBC signed an exclusive \$12-billion contract with the IOC for the American broadcasting rights to the 10 editions of the Summer and Winter Olympics between 2014 and 2032. The reason the Summer Olympics are held during the hottest time of the year is because the television broadcasters want to avoid scheduling clashes with other major sporting events. The 1964 Summer Olympics in Tokyo opened on October 10 but since the Olympics became increasingly focused on money after the LA Olympics in 1984, with the exception of Sydney, which is located in the Southern Hemisphere, they have mostly taken place in July or August. Even the time slots for the individual compe-



titions are decided based on viewing figures in America, with the finals for the swimming events, which attract high viewing figures, scheduled to take place in the Tokyo Olympics in the morning, despite this being far from the most suitable time.

It comes down to the fact that the Olympics today cannot be held without the vast amounts of money provided by the corporate sponsors and television broadcasters. The idea of the Games as being a celebration of amateur and noncommercial sporting achievement is a fairy tale from long ago. The money that the IOC receives is distributed to each international sport competition organization according to the numbers of viewers and spectators. Since this is an indispensable source of revenue for the elite, the athletes, staff, and spectators are asked to put up with the heat. The Olympics that now happen in this extreme heat are a symbol of how sports today have become massively commercialized.

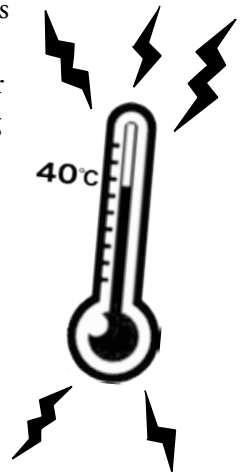
When the IOC was calling for bids from cities to host the 2020 Olympics, one of the conditions it set was that the Games must be held between July 15 and August 31. In response to this, the bid from Tokyo asserted that holding the Olympics in the city from July 24 to August 9 was well suited: “With many days of mild and sunny weather, this period provides an ideal climate for athletes to perform at their best.” Along with the dubious claim by Shinzo Abe, who was the Japanese prime minister at the time, in his speech to the IOC that the situation at Fukushima was “under control,” here we have yet another lie at the foundation of the upcoming Olympics, lies that no one could surely ever believe and yet they pretend to do so. Lies that endanger the lives of many. It was based on these lies that Tokyo was chosen to host the Olympics.

When told of the proposal to move the marathon to Sapporo, someone connected with the event commented: “Because the Japanese can only beat Africans in a hot place, I want them to do it in Tokyo.” In the Tokyo summer, where people die from heatstroke even if they do nothing, athletes and spectators from around the world as well as volunteers will be exposed to the brutal heat. This twisted reasoning that a few victims are unavoidable if it helps Japan to win was the basis for various tactics proposed for dealing with the heat in Tokyo, from introducing daylight saving time to turn back the clock or planting morning glory plants to help cool down the city. These ideas were quietly dropped.

IOC President Thomas Bach announced that the relocation to Sapporo was done to put athletes' needs first, but if that was truly the case, the IOC would not even contemplate holding the Olympics during the height of the Japanese summer in the first place. No, the true reason for the relocation was that TV footage of athletes collapsing during the marathon would have made the Olympics look bad and led to increased criticism of holding the Games in the summer months. But the danger posed by the heat is not only for those competing in the marathon and race walk. On days usually designated as too dangerous for doing exercise due to the risks of heatstroke (in 2019, 14 of the 17 days of the original 2020 Games period), the Tokyo 2020 Olympics originally scheduled such events as beach volleyball, boat racing, hockey, soccer, rugby, cycling, and equestrian competitions. The triathlon must not only face the heat but also the danger posed by the water in its venue: water polluted by sewage. The promise in the Olympic Charter that one of the missions of the IOC is "to encourage and support measures relating to the medical care and health of athletes" is truly in name only.

Sapporo, where the marathon and race walk were relocated, is indeed cooler than Tokyo in terms of temperature but is nonetheless still hot during this season. There are those who welcomed the relocation because it would prepare the bid for Sapporo to host the Winter Games again, though what this involves in reality is merely importing these "disaster Olympics" from Tokyo. It will be a huge nuisance for the city's residents, not least meaning that they cannot go to the beer gardens that are such a highlight of the summer.

In the future, global warming will mean that fewer and fewer cities will be able to host outdoor sporting events, while the faster melting of snow will also create problems for other places hosting winter sports. The Olympics are thus destined to fade away. But we want to send them on their way even sooner in order to prevent yet more people from suffering.



# 6

## The Dark Truth Behind the Exploitation of Volunteers

The Olympics will mobilize some 110,000 volunteers. This number includes 80,000 recruited as volunteers for the Games by the organizing committee and 30,000 recruited as volunteers for the city by the Tokyo Metropolitan Government. The recruitment of volunteers, which started in 2018, was regarded as a success because it had reached its target by the end of the year. What these volunteers will actually do is, in the case of the Olympics volunteers, support operations, provide information, and serve as guides and reception staff at the competition venues, Olympic Village, and other Olympics facilities. The TMG volunteers will provide guidance and information for visitors from Japan and overseas at airports, railway stations, and tourist destinations. (They will also likely assist in security, which is evidently insufficient. See the eighth topic, “Counterterrorism for the Olympics.”)

All of these volunteers are committed to duties lasting eight hours or more per day for 20 days. For this, they are paid nothing. They must also bear their own transport, travel, and accommodation costs. It was subsequently decided that they would be given a per diem of ¥1,000 (about \$9) per day but it is still effectively unpaid labor. Volunteering is something that an individual chooses to do of his or her free will, and they are generally able to decide how and how much they work. It is actually mistaken to define volunteering as entirely unpaid. For an event like the Olympics, where the members of staff are workers with duties and responsibilities comparable to professionals, it is perfectly reasonable that they should be paid. This kind of role is utterly different to that of the volunteers who go to an area hit by a natural disaster and assist in rescue and recovery. The Olympics are a vast commercial enterprise, one where the revenue from the dozens of sponsors alone comes to several billion dollars. Just to cover the per diem given to the 110,000 volunteers requires a vast amount of money. But working out in the brutal Tokyo summer heat for day after long day is nothing short of unjust exploitation, not to mention the heightened risk of coronavirus infection

that their duties will expose them to. Above all, we should remember that these volunteers do not have any employment contract, meaning that it is highly possible that the responsibility for compensation in case of accidents and so on is left deliberately ambiguous. Given the seriousness of the coronavirus pandemic, it was reported in early 2021 that many volunteers were quitting.

Many of the volunteers are students. The Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology approached universities to help recruit volunteers. Since some of the originally planned period of the Olympics overlaps with the exam period, universities are asked to rejig their whole academic calendars in order to avoid this clash, holding classes during the spring holidays to bring everything forward. This is a blatant request to cooperate with the Olympics. And then there was talk of giving students course credits for volunteering, or that volunteering would help students when they are looking for a job to do after graduating. Not surprisingly, a union of teachers at private colleges put out a statement opposing how universities were cooperating with the recruitment of volunteers for the Olympics. There is not a single student who is genuinely interested in the Olympics. Is this not simply a contemporary version of the mobilization of students that took place during the Asia-Pacific War?

Ryu Honma is someone who has closely followed this issue, publishing a book in Japanese about it in July 2018. “We cannot help but suspect the lack of ethics displayed by major media outlets who, notwithstanding the misgivings that exist about this situation whereby the volunteers are exposed to danger, make no reference to those dangers but rather prioritize their own profit,” writes Honma in his book. “But there was also another time when they were guilty of the exact same folly: the time when they held their tongue regarding the dangers of nuclear power due to their desire for the advertising revenue from the electric power companies.”

The structure of a media that puts aside a critical mindset merely to laud and promote is indeed shared with the previously publicity machine for nuclear power. Moreover, for both nuclear power and the Olympics, the intervention of advertising agency Dentsu is very significant. Dentsu doesn't just handle advertising. As the intermediary between the organizers and the Olympics sponsors, Honma's book suggests, it probably enjoys from the billions that the latter pay a share as much as 20 percent or higher. Since the

broadcasters and major newspapers are almost all also sponsors (with the notable exception of the Tokyo Shimbun), you are very unlikely to see any articles probing Dentsu's role. Though the media did raise some of the problems with the volunteers during summer 2018, we now see more and more propaganda-like articles and advertorials as we move closer to the Games.

“The national government, Japanese Olympic Committee, Dentsu, and media all work together to incite the population into joining the ranks of voluntary slaves while creating this atmosphere where it is hard for people to voice their opposition is the same evil totalitarianism from the Asia-Pacific War,” Honma writes. Stop this outrageous exploitation!

# 7

## Evictions of Residents and the Unhoused

Whenever the Olympics are held, it always entails the violation of human rights in the host city. One of these is large-scale eviction and displacement of people due to the redevelopment of neighborhoods and the construction or renovation of venues. The Swiss-based Centre on Housing Rights and Evictions has reported that the six editions of the Olympics up to the Beijing Games in 2008 resulted in the eviction of more than 2 million people. For the 2012 London Olympics, much of the redevelopment took place in the east of the city, where there is a concentration of low-income earners, and led to the eviction of small factories, shops, and public housing. For the 2016 Rio Olympics, the favela slums were crushed under the pretext of rising crime, with around 77,000 people ultimately losing their homes. The ever-ballooning Olympics have morphed into a festival of exclusion, sought after by major cities that want to force through redevelopment on a massive scale and completely transform the city.

In Tokyo, too, significant levels of evictions are already taking place.

For the construction of the New National Stadium, which now takes up twice the area of its predecessor, the adjoining Meiji Park, Nippon Seinenkan building, and 10-block Kasumigaoka Apartments public housing complex were demolished. From the Kasumigaoka Apartments, around 230 households were displaced. Many of these were elderly residents for whom moving home presented various difficulties. Some even included residents who had already experienced displacement once before, when they moved to the Kasumigaoka Apartments to make way for redevelopment ahead of the 1964 Olympics in Tokyo. In February 2014, the Tokyo Metropolitan Government pushed forward with the demolition of the complex in spite of the fact that three households were still living there, including a 90-year-old resident. In the end, one household was forcibly evicted.

That same fate has also been suffered by the unhoused people who lived in Meiji Park and the surrounding area. There were several tents in one part of the park as well as some 30 people living around the park. Among them was one person who had called the area home for about three decades. These people earned their living by collecting aluminum cans for recycling or from flea markets. From 2013, after Tokyo was announced as the host city for the 2020 Games, the TMG started to intensify its expulsion of this community of rough sleepers. In January 2016, the majority of Meiji Park was closed and a large area of land was leased by the TMG free of charge to the Japan Sport Council. The JSC applied for a provisional disposition of land surrender for three unhoused persons who had sought talks. In the early morning of April 16, 2016, around 100 Tokyo District Court execution officers and others violently enforced this. It has led to an ongoing lawsuit by the former residents of the park against the TMG. In 2017, several unhoused persons found themselves suddenly trapped inside the place where they slept, Miyashita Park in Shibuya ward, when it was closed and fenced off for redevelopment as part of a commercial complex and high-rise hotel aimed at tourists. In 2018, around 10 rough sleepers were shut out from the area around Tokyo Metropolitan Gymnasium, located in Sendagaya close to Meiji Park and the New National Stadium, when renovation work began ahead of the Olympics.

Other TMG parks such as Yumenoshima Park and Odaiba Marine Park have been leased to the Olympics organizers for use during the Games, restricting their use by regular citizens. At Shiokaze Park, which will serve as

the venue for the beach volley events, five or six unhoused people were evicted in December 2019. In Hibiya Park, which is designated as a Olympic public viewing spot in Tokyo, and Komazawa Olympic Park, from where the Olympic torch will depart on the relay route in Tokyo, have undergone renovation through public-private partnerships ahead of the Olympics, and now no rough sleepers are to be found in the parks. In Ueno Park, a long-running and much-loved children's amusement park was closed down and other small shops evicted, while street vendors were raided in Yoyogi Park. Under the pretext of the Olympics, the government has encouraged private investment in public space, transforming places that should be free for all members of the public to use into spaces that are available to only certain types of users, excluding people without money.

Miyshita Park was effectively sold off to Mitsui Fudosan, a Gold Partner for the Tokyo Olympics. Mitsui Fudosan is also involved in the construction of the new Shibuya City Office and Line Cube Shibuya (Shibuya Public Hall), the redevelopment of public housing complexes such as Kita-Aoyama Apartments, the reconstruction of Gaien House (a public housing complex in the Sendagaya area) into a condominium high rise, and building a new luxury hotel in the stadium area called Mitsui Garden Hotel Jinguaien Tokyo Premier as well as the Olympic Village in the Harumi area by Tokyo Bay. This is how the Olympics reap big profits for major real estate developers and construction contractors, by letting them acquire land for cheap and evicting the poor and socially vulnerable from these locations.

There are also controversial evictions taking place in Kita and Suginami wards related to plans to build roads, long mothballed since the postwar period but now suddenly reactivated by the Olympics bandwagon that has ushered in citywide redevelopment. This has spread right across Tokyo, affecting the neighborhoods of Tsukishima, Tateishi, Koenji, Minami-Senju, and more. Tsukiji Market was relocated and demolished ahead of the Olympics, resulting in many local restaurants closing down. This unbelievable and reckless decision to force out one of Tokyo's most prestigious attractions, the world-famous market, and turn the site into a parking lot for the Olympics, speaks volumes about the reality of the Olympics.

# 8

## Counterterrorism for the Olympics

The Tokyo Olympics will serve as an experiment in rapidly strengthening law and order under the guise of counterterrorism. Still fresh in the memory is Prime Minister Shinzo Abe's use of the Olympics as justification for the highly controversial Anti-Conspiracy Law, which was enacted after it was railroaded through parliament in 2017. Many other developments have emerged before we reached this point.

In January 2019, the Tokyo Shimbun newspaper reported that the Tokyo Olympic Games organizers had requested the assistance of the Self-Defense Forces for counterterrorism measures. The SDF has long cooperated with the Olympics, from the appearance of the Blue Impulse aerobatic demonstration team at the 1964 Olympics to the students from the National Defense Academy of Japan who have served as standard bearers in the opening ceremony, and the use of helicopters to transport dignitaries and for providing emergency transport. But the emphasis on counterterrorism for the upcoming Tokyo Olympics is very different. The role of the SDF is gradually increasing, from drones for countering 9/11-style suicide attacks from the air to Aegis-equipped warships, Patriot surface-to-air missiles for intercepting attacks, the deployment of special combat forces alongside the Tokyo Metropolitan Police's special assault team and a coast guard special security team, and bomb disposal. Though barely reported by the media, the Ground Self-Defense Force has conducted joint training with Fukushima police in the prefecture. While this is done in the name of a scenario whereby terrorists and paramilitary forces launch an armed attack that the police are unable to tackle alone, the Olympics are evidently regarded by the SDF as one of the "emergency situations" under which it is deployed.

An article appeared in the Fukui Shimbun in February about a new video sensor system to be used for venue security at the Tokyo Olympics. Since the venues are spread out over a wide area, the latest video surveillance system will be installed that integrates infrared sensors and surveillance cam-



eras in order to expand security capabilities. Panasonic, an Olympic sponsor, plans to provide 2,500 sensor sets and around 8,000 surveillance cameras. In 2018, the Halloween street party in Shibuya grew rowdy and a small truck was overturned, leading to the arrests of four youngsters. According to news reports, the culprits were identified by surveillance camera footage and their contactless smart card usage. What attracted attention here was the newly established department within the Tokyo Metropolitan Police. A specialist team for quickly analyzing the masses of footage from an arsenal of surveillance cameras, it could link up the cameras and, moreover, even align this with the data log for smart cards to locate where the four suspects lived. The aim of this new department is said to be counterterrorism for the Olympics. In other words, a network of surveillance cameras will be watching everything from the streets to the venues.

If we go back further, to September 28, 2018, the Olympics organizers held their first joint training with the Tokyo Metropolitan Police to “realize smooth and safe admission” to the competition venues. It carried out identification checks using a newly introduced facial recognition system, along with testing more advance luggage scanners. The aim of the facial recognition system is to check visitors from overseas, staff, and the 110,000 volunteers. The idea is to prevent lone wolf terrorists from infiltrating the volunteers, though the police will also employ this technology to search for “opposition” movements—activities that will also certainly not stop after the Olympics are over. Since it exceeds the capacity of the police, the security will also be outsourced by the Olympics organizers to private security companies to obtain the roughly 14,000 personnel apparently required, though even this may not be enough for handling regular duties under the brutal summer heat. As such, sponsors and local governments are currently coming together to set up a joint venture to undertake the special security requirements for the Games. In this way, the police, private security companies, and special security unit will carry out surveillance in an increasingly militarized city.

We also expect phone tapping and email interception by police to escalate under the pretext of countering the threat of cyberterrorism. But even with this extensive security system in place, lone wolf terrorists are by their nature unlikely to be among the lists of suspects that the public security police bureau is checking for, meaning they may escape detection. Campaigns will also surely be launched encouraging the public to report and

inform on people's movements and activities, from the workplace to the local neighborhood. Given all this, it will undoubtedly become harder to find venues that allow people to hold anti-Olympics rallies and events, while restrictions on street demonstrations and marches will also surely increase.

# 9

## Hiding the Truth About Fukushima Under the Mantra of the “Recovery Olympics”

At the International Olympic Committee session held in Buenos Aires on September 8, 2013, Prime Minister Shinzo Abe sought to impress upon the world that the Fukushima nuclear crisis was over. “The situation is under control,” he said. This was a claim made entirely to win the bid for the Tokyo Olympic and Paralympic Games.

But what is the true situation regarding the nuclear power plant in Fukushima? The nuclear fuel debris released during the accident at the plant has not been removed, while the (now-contaminated) water injected into the reactor core to stop it from melting further has now reached well over a million tons. The tank filling with water contaminated with tritium that can stay inside the bodies of living creatures will be full by around 2022, with the water set to be released into the sea in spite of opposition from local fishermen. By the time the Olympics take place, the government wants to conceal the removed contaminated soil but due to insufficient storage facilities or disposal sites, is planning to rebury it under roads or fields under the guise of “reuse.” The approximately \$30 billion (¥3 trillion) initially spent on cleanup costs of the nuclear disaster have merely lined the pockets of major contractors, resulting in mountains of removed toxic soil. In October 2019, when a typhoon caused immense damage nationwide, vast amounts of this radioactive soil was swept away by river floods. The situation surrounding the contamination caused by the Fukushima disaster is in no way

one that can be said to be “under control.” The government is positioning the Tokyo Olympic and Paralympic Games as the “Recovery Olympics” and, in the recent updates to the Basic Act on Reconstruction in response to the Great East Japan Earthquake, it says the Games will “convey our gratitude to other countries for all their generous support and tell the world that our nation is robustly recovering with all its collective might.” As such, those in power are trying by whatever means possible to make it look like the Fukushima disaster is a thing of the past.

Japan is still under a state of nuclear emergency, while there continue to be areas that remain evacuated, not least the so-called difficult-to-return zones. According to official figures from the Reconstruction Agency, there are (as of December 2019) approximately 49,000 evacuees living in the 47 prefectures nationwide. The actual number of evacuees, though, is much higher, since outside the designated evacuation areas, a great many people are voluntarily living away from their hometowns in temporary or rented housing. But in keeping with its policy of “accelerated recovery,” the national government has set a criterion for forcibly returning people to areas of Fukushima Prefecture if exposure to radiation for the general public is less than 20 mSv annually and, in March 2017, stopped providing free housing to people who voluntarily evacuated from areas with high radiation doses. And now Fukushima Prefecture has pushed ahead with discontinuing support for voluntary evacuees living in national government employee housing. Of all things, the prefecture has since April 2019 even started sending monthly invoices for damages equivalent to twice the rent to those evacuees who could not be evicted and is trying to sue the households who cannot pay. The national government’s policy to erase the victims from public view before the Olympics happen is being abetted by the very prefecture that suffered the most in the disaster.

In addition, Fukushima has seen a rapid rise in cases of thyroid cancer among children since the nuclear disaster, reaching more than 200 people—80 times the normal rate. The pro-nuclear lobby is campaigning for the safety of radiation—claiming that there is “no effect” on the human body for doses up to 100 mSv per year, that there is “more negative impact from worrying too much about exposure to low doses of radiation,” and that “excessive diagnosis” is detecting tumors that won’t become malign or only develop into cancers that are not severe—in the process, endangering the

health of the people of Fukushima Prefecture. The nuclear plant workers involved in the cleanup operation after the accident are experiencing various health issues arising from their exposure to radiation, but the Basic Act on Reconstruction makes no mention of these workers and they are treated as if they are unrelated to the recovery. There are many victims and citizens now investigating the impact of the nuclear disaster that has been concealed for the purposes of the “Recovery Games.” The national government has turned its eyes away from the health damage caused by low radiation doses without recognizing the criminal responsibility or failings of the former top management of Tokyo Electric Power Company, insisting rather that acknowledging the harm to victims is an “unfair evaluation of the land of our nation.” This is nothing short of a violation of human rights that ignores the future of the victims, especially those in Fukushima Prefecture.

Now is the time to cancel the Tokyo Olympics and Paralympics, to recast the policy of abandonment that is the Recovery Games, and to finally confront the truth about the nuclear disaster.

## 10 Destroying Asia’s Forests for the Olympics

Construction was completed of the New National Stadium, which will serve as the main venue for the Olympic and Paralympic Games, and an opening event took place on December 21, 2019. The design originally chosen for the stadium was by the Iraqi-born architect Zaha Hadid but, due to the escalating costs of implementing it, this design was scrapped and a new competition held for proposals, with the commission awarded to the bid put forward jointly by Kengo Kuma’s architecture firm, construction giant Taisei, and design firm Azusa Sekkei.

In comparison with Zaha Hadid’s quite innovative proposal, the se-

lected design is somewhat conservative, though the head of the Japan Sport Council's architecture department confidently remarked that the stadium blends into the trees and greenery of the surroundings. Needless to say, the scale of the stadium is immense, standing 47.35 meters in height (with two floors below ground and five above) and covering an area of about 109,768 square meters. Seating around 68,000, the total construction cost was \$1.4 billion (¥157 billion).

The New National Stadium is praised as a stadium that exists in harmony with nature. Though the main part of the stadium is indeed a new design, the plan to convert the roads and parking areas into a “three-dimensional urban park” with a concrete foundation and then soil laid on top is unchanged from the original Zaha Hadid design. Over the artificial ground, they will apparently lay streams but these are merely decorative touches of “nature” added just for show. To embody the catchword of “coexistence with nature,” the structure of the stadium roof and the outer eaves employ a vast amount of wood—some 2,000 cubic meters. The roof and columns are apparently made with local timber, but the use of large quantities of wood logged from rainforests in Southeast Asia as the plywood panels for shaping the concrete foundation has become an international problem.

According to the organizing committee of the Tokyo Olympic and Paralympic Games, more than 170,000 plywood panels had been used by November 2018, imported from Indonesia and Malaysia for construction at Olympic sites, of which around 120,000 were used for the New National Stadium. This corresponds to as much as about 9,823 cubic meters of round timber. To this end, the rainforests of Asia have been logged and exploited, and huge damage inflicted upon their rich and diverse ecosystems.

Not only environmental destruction, violations of the human rights of indigenous people and locals as well as illegalities in the logging and supply chains have also been identified. According to Rainforest Action Network, investigators in April 2019 found tropical plywood at the New National Stadium construction site supplied by Shin Yang. The same company has been implicated in the destruction of untouched rainforests in Sarawak in Malaysia, in illegal logging, and in human rights violations. But the organizers in Tokyo continue to use wood from these notorious suppliers.

Japan is already the world's largest importer of form plywood whose production is leading to the destruction of the rainforests. It is said that

there is a shortage of construction materials, but the organizers are willing to destroy the lives of the people who live in the forests in order to concentrate these resources. This is the Olympics disaster that Japan is causing, one that crosses national borders and violently affects the people of Southeast Asia.

In response to criticism from NGOs and the fears of experts, the organizing committee announced a revision to its sustainable timber sourcing code first set in 2016, but this won't stop what is happening in reality and transparency of information guaranteeing the legality of supplied wood is still lacking.

The Tokyo Olympics are cloaked in promotional slogans: they are, we are told, “sustainable” Games, “environmentally friendly” and contributing to the United Nations’ Sustainable Development Goals. But the reality is that the construction of the New National Stadium necessitated the destruction of Meiji Park and the felling of many trees. Similar situations can be found all over Tokyo, not least at Heiwa no Mori Park in Nakano ward in the west of Tokyo, where 17,700 trees were cut down, including 251 medium-sized and large trees, in order to transform it into a sports-oriented park in anticipation of receiving Olympics and Paralympics subsidy.

In Sapporo for the 1972 Games, in Nagano for the 1998 Games, and in all other locations that have hosted the Summer or Winter Games, the Olympics have caused incredible environmental destruction. For the Winter Games in Pyeongchang in 2018, 300,000 trees were cut down from a virgin forest protected for 500 years. The Olympics destroy nature and living environments: they are a mega-event that advances development for the sole benefit of capitalism.



# 11

## The Grim Reality Behind Constructing the Olympic Venues

The reality of the harsh conditions at the construction sites for the Olympic venues, where work was accelerated to meet the demands of the timetable, is finally receiving the attention it deserves. After its original design was scrapped and thus the initial construction schedule greatly delayed, the New National Stadium became a notorious case in point: a site supervisor in his twenties involved in ground reinforcement took his own life in April 2017, having logged more than 200 hours on the job in the previous month. It was widely reported that admonishments were issued to 81 companies involved in the construction of the stadium, not least the prime contractor Taisei, after the Tokyo Labor Bureau confirmed numerous instances of violations, including long overtime and unpaid wages. There have also been several accidents resulting in injuries and fatalities at the Olympic Village in Harumi: a worker was killed when crushed by heavy machinery in January 2018; another fell to his death that December. At Tokyo Big Sight, too, which has undergone renovations to convert the exhibition center temporarily into the International Broadcast Centre and main press center for the Olympics, a worker in his fifties collapsed with heatstroke and died in August 2019. The report “The Dark Side of the Tokyo 2020 Summer Olympics” by the Geneva-based Building and Wood Workers’ International criticizes the working conditions for the Olympic venues as highly dangerous and strongly recommends that immediate improvements be made. At Olympic host cities, problems always occur as organizers rush to meet the tight timetable for preparing for the Games: demanding the completion of difficult construction work in short periods; mobilizing large numbers of workers for temporary jobs and overworking them; using and discarding migrant labor; and not paying wages properly. Once the Games are over, the need for construction drops off suddenly, leaving many workers unemployed and causing an economic downturn. This cycle is repeated each time.

While urban areas in Japan are benefitting from the competitive redevelop-

opment that piggybacks on the Olympics or from the large-scale development schemes ushered in by a government initiative that has designated certain districts as “strategic,” regional areas rather face delays in construction and uncompetitive conditions due to labor and resource shortages. This is particularly chronic in the parts of the country directly affected by the 2011 disaster and which are supposedly undergoing recovery efforts.

In a survey of mayors in 42 cities, towns, and villages in Iwate, Miyagi, and Fukushima—three prefectures devastated by the Great East Japan Earthquake—60 percent of respondents said that the Tokyo Olympics were having a negative impact on the recovery of the region. Since 2011, many other serious natural calamities such as earthquakes and flooding have occurred across Japan. The Tohoku region in the northeast is no longer the only disaster zone.

In order to deal with the labor shortage, the national government enacted a temporary migrant construction worker scheme in 2014 to run until 2020, which they followed with a revision to immigration laws in December 2018 that was railroaded through parliament without proper debate. Creating a new “specified skills” visa status and allowing for 340,000 migrant workers over five years, this revision is expected to amount in part to merely a transfer of the controversial foreign technical intern trainee system, once again turning the spotlight on how such trainees are exploited as de facto slave labor and have their human rights grossly violated by employers taking advantage of the scheme. Shouldering a debt of around ¥1 million yen to get sent to Japan, the trainees then have their passports taken away from them at their work location, where they are essentially confined and forced to work for wages far lower than the legal minimum and without days off. A survey by the Ministry of Justice found that around a quarter of the trainees who died over the past eight years were sudden deaths likely caused by overwork, and that close to 10 percent of the deaths were suicides. A survey by the Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare found violations such as illegal levels of overtime and unpaid wages at about 70 percent of the roughly 6,000 workplaces that accepted trainees. The violations in the construction sector include violence, intimidation, and confinement. These are the ways in which the construction industry in Japan seriously threatens the human rights of migrant laborers.

Though promoted as the “Recovery Olympics,” the health risks for



workers involved in the decontamination and decommissioning of the nuclear reactor in Fukushima are severe. That notwithstanding, it has come to light that trainees from Vietnam were assigned to decontamination duties. Given no explanation at all as to the dangers of radiation, they received just ¥2,000 of the ¥6,600 special per diem they should have received. This is the reality behind the slogan of the Recovery Olympics, one of foreign workers deceived and exploited.

At the Rio Olympics, everyone from teachers to civil servants, fire-fighters, and police officers fought for workers' rights by going on strike and opposing the Olympics. Not only in the construction industry, everyone who is mobilized for the Olympics has the right to refuse how they are being called upon to work. Let's fight this together!

# 12

## Children Mobilized by Olympics Education

People overseas are often surprised by the Olympic and Paralympic Games education that is pushed onto children in Japan through their schools.

There are two main problems with this. Firstly, it uses education to force children to accept the values that the government believes the Olympics and Paralympics embody. Secondly, it mobilizes children to take part in volunteering, the torch relay, and watching the events.

Let's look at the specifics. The Tokyo Metropolitan Board of Education has designated that all children attending kindergarten, elementary, junior high, and high school, and special needs schools should receive 35 hours per year (one hour per week) of education about the Olympics and Paralympics for five years, starting with the 2016 academic year. The Board of Education has spent a lavish amount of money on distributing textbooks and educational materials on the Olympics in general and on the 2020 (subsequently

2021) Olympics, while the organizing committee of the Tokyo Olympic and Paralympic Games has distributed a Tokyo Olympics arithmetic practice book to every sixth-grade elementary school student at public schools in Tokyo.

The Tokyo Metropolitan Government's guidelines for Olympic and Paralympic Games education extol its significance as follows: "Along with cultivating the human resources who can contribute to international society and undertake the further development of Tokyo and Japan, the irreplaceable legacy that forms the seeds for their future lives will be left in the hearts and minds of each and every one of the children through the experience of the Tokyo 2020 Games." During the war, Japan stole the "hearts and bodies" of children through educating them to revere the emperor and created a generation of young people who could willingly give their lives for their nation. Such words like "hearts and bodies" are dangerous.

Integrated into all educational activities, Olympic and Paralympic Games education places "morality" above other subjects, something that can now be seen across educational activities in Japan. The five focuses of the initiative—a volunteer spirit, understanding of disabilities, healthiness through sport, pride and self-awareness as a Japanese, and rich international mindset—are shared with the 2006 "revision" made to the Basic Education Law to foster patriotism, morality, and a healthy body. The Japan Sports Agency has also released similar materials with the same purpose, meaning that education intended to raise patriotic and obedient citizens is now unfolding across the country.

J-Village, the starting point of the Olympic torch relay in Japan, reopened in September 2018 after it was used as a base for handling some of the response to the Fukushima nuclear plant emergency. In October, the three local governments of Iwaki, Naraha, and Hirono held a mock torch relay in order to promote their bid as a location for the torch relay route and over 100 children ran along National Route 6. Mobilizing children to appeal for reconstruction and recovery in an area where radiation levels are still high is nothing less than criminal.

The mobilization of children is also a concern for watching the events at the Olympics and the actual torch relay that will take place nationwide. The organizing committee has distributed 1.3 million "school affiliate tickets" (at a cost of ¥2,020 per ticket) in the areas where competitions will be

held as well as the areas hit by the 2011 disaster. Even though it is the summer holiday season, watching the events as lessons, school activities, or club activities is compulsory for the students and teaching staff. In Tokyo, which plans to mobilize all children with a million tickets paid for by taxpayers, over 300 elementary schools have refused the offer. We say “No!” to forced mobilization. People who don’t want to go should have their right to say no guaranteed.

High school and college students are also expected to volunteer to gain practical skills. The Tokyo Metropolitan Government has started recruiting junior high and high school volunteers. The Japan Sports Agency has sent notifications permitting special measures that allow classes and exams not to take place at universities and colleges during the period of the Games. Many universities have signed agreements with the organizing committee and are apparently considering changing class schedules and giving course credits for volunteering students. If this is allowed simply because the Olympics are a major national event, it may very well lead to student mobilization for other “enterprises of national importance.” Many people including students are now loudly criticizing this mobilization of volunteers during the intense heat of the Tokyo summer as mass exploitation.

Children are being exploited to help build buzz for an Olympics that no one is excited about, all in the name of it being a “once-in-a-lifestyle Olympics.” We want organizers to stop forcing patriotic education on children.



# 13

## The Emperor, National Flag, and National Anthem

When a Japanese Olympian wins a medal, he or she stands on the podium with the national flag raised and, if it is a gold medal, the national anthem playing. This flag and anthem are originally the flag and song of the emperor, and, with the appointment of Emperor Naruhito as honorary patron of the upcoming Tokyo Olympics, he is even more directly linked to the Olympics.

If you have seen Kon Ichikawa's documentary film about the 1964 Games, *Tokyo Olympiad*, you will likely remember that it is a still-young Emperor Hirohito who announces the formal opening of the Games. Avery Brundage, the president of the International Olympic Committee at the time, spoke in Japanese, asking the emperor to open the 18th Olympic Games, which he then did.

According to Rule 55, Paragraph 3 of the Olympic Charter, the head of state of the host nation reads out a determined announcement to proclaim the opening of each edition of the Games. Emperor Hirohito also officially opened the 1972 Games in Sapporo, while the 1998 Winter Games in Nagano were opened by Emperor Akihito.

For these editions of the Olympics, the emperor also served as the honorary patron. This has become the custom in Japan when the Olympics are held in the country, while the crown prince has served as the honorary patron for the Paralympics. For 2021, however, Emperor Naruhito is serving as honorary patron of both Games due to the "intention of the organizing committee to treat both Games equally." Following the yearlong ceremonies marking his enthronement that took place in 2019, this will mark another "big moment" for him on the international stage.

But the emperor is not the head of state. Japan, in fact, has no legal provision for a head of state. In the Constitution, the emperor is described only as "the symbol of the State," which is a completely different concept to a head of state. According to the Constitution, the emperor has no political

authority and cannot be a head of state who fulfills a political role, be it large or small. That the emperor is nonetheless automatically appointed as honorary patron of the Olympics and proclaims the opening of the Games each time as head of state is yet another way of inscribing into people's unconscious that the emperor is something special in Japan, an idea that has been historically instilled into the culture.

It has become a matter of course for people to come together as a nation for the Olympics. Even though people are aware of the various problems related to the Olympics, as described in this pamphlet, once it is decided that their country will host the Games, a mood is created whereby it is somehow natural for people to pull together and contribute to the Olympics. And it is the emperor who appears as a "symbol" of this act of everyone in the country coming together. For excluding people who raise objections to this and fomenting peer pressure to suppress these voices, the emperor is a potent instrument, as was made abundantly clear during the media reporting of the abdication process.

The flags and songs of the Olympic athlete teams are also treated as a matter of course like the national flags and anthems of each country, and, notwithstanding the Olympic Charter's claim that "the Olympic Games are competitions between athletes in individual or team events and not between countries," all the attention focuses on the competition between countries to see whose athletes win the most medals. With the activities of the Japanese athletes functioning as the activities of the whole Japanese nation, it is easy to see how people are spontaneously swept up by nationalism. Some may well say that it doesn't matter, since the Olympics are a festival of "peace," not war. But while Japanese supporters are enjoying the mood of the event by painting their faces in the red and white colors of the national flag and waving little flags as they call out "Japan, Japan," they feel a shared sense of identification with the Japanese nation and unity as Japanese. This mechanism ties the citizen emotionally and mentally to the nation. It is an effect that manifests at many sporting events but at the Olympics, the largest sporting event, by dint of it being literally a national event, it fulfills a function of national mobilization.

In fact, Pierre de Coubertin, the father of the modern Olympics, paid close attention to this point. A year before the 1936 Berlin Olympics, he was invited to the German capital and said the following in a radio address: "The

ancient as well as the modern Olympic Games have one most important feature in common. They are a religion. When working on his body with the help of physical education and sport, like the sculptor at a statue, the athlete in antiquity honored the gods. By doing the same today, the modern athlete honors his homeland, his race, and his flag.”

# 14

## The True Meaning of the Torch Relay

On December 17, 2019, the organizing committee of the Tokyo Olympic and Paralympic Games announced the 2020 Olympics torch relay route and the prospective Olympic Torchbearers. According to this, the relay would start on March 26, 2020 and continue for 121 days until the opening ceremony of the Games on July 24, in that time covering 858 cities, towns, and villages in all 47 prefectures of Japan and involving 10,000 runners. (The relay was later delayed, initially due to the coronavirus and then by the subsequent postponement of the Olympics to 2021.)

The torch relay carries the titular torch whose flame is first lit on Mount Olympia in Greece. Though regarded as an indispensable ceremonial aspect of the Olympics, it actually only made its first appearance in the modern Games in 1936, at the Berlin Olympics that were overseen by the Nazi Party. It is evident now that the relay was exploited by the Nazi leaders to conduct preliminary tests on the best route for a military invasion. As such, some people argued for the abolition of the ceremonial torch after the war, but it continued to be organized, presented instead as a symbol of peace. In the past, there was a relay traveling from across the world to the host nation, but following the various disruptions during the relay for the previous year’s Beijing Olympics, it was decided in 2009 that relays would take place only in the host country.

The average distance covered by each of the 10,000 torchbearers nominated or recruited from the general public is a mere 200 meters. The media has reported that the relay will be led by loud music playing from speakers on trucks featuring the logos of the sponsors, and that this motorcade will stretch out for several hundred meters. The torchbearers will pose for the television cameras, say a message, and pass on the torch. In the media coverage, the relay is praised for how the route travels through places rich in traditional performances or UNESCO World Heritage sites. It is a route strongly infused with the ability to disseminate the attractiveness of the regions around Japan to the rest of the world, they say.

The relay is an incredibly celebratory and festive occasion. During the course of the relay, events are planned day after day at the locations where the torch passes through. Along the route, locals will be mobilized in great numbers, in particular children through their schools. In the actual Olympic and Paralympic Games, all the people except the various direct stakeholders and interest groups are simply spectators at the competitions. The torch relay, on the other hand, is an event involving the participation of the general public as it traverses the nation, and serves as a tool for mobilizing large numbers of local people for the Olympics.

Of course, the costs of holding the torch relay are immense. An official has said that for just 100 days (the maximum length of the relay as stipulated by International Olympic Committee rules), the costs for the organizing committee alone are as much as \$46 million (¥5 billion). Each prefecture is responsible for the costs of security along the route and securing venues for the welcoming events, with around \$37 million (¥4 billion) of this apparently to be raised by revenue from the lottery. Since IOC rules state that admission to the welcoming events held each day at the locations along the route must be free of charge, the actual overall costs of the relay will be closer to \$92 million (¥10 billion).

If we look at the designated route, we can see that the areas have been chosen for highly political reasons. The torch carrying the flame from Greece was transported to Japan Air Self-Defense Force base in Matsushima, Miyagi Prefecture, and was then put on display in Miyagi and Iwate prefectures as the “Flame of Recovery,” before being taken to Fukushima Prefecture. The starting point for the delayed nationwide relay is none other than J-Village, which straddles the towns of Naraha and Hirono in Fukushima. This was

once a location centrally involved in the cleanup operation at Fukushima Daiichi Nuclear Power Plant. In 2013, it was converted into a control center for entering and leaving the area. This was the place people changed buses and underwent radiation screening and decontamination. Originally, it was Japan's largest soccer training facility, equipped with 11 grass pitches, and "gifted" to the prefecture by Tokyo Electric Power Company in return for allowing the construction of two more reactors at the plant. It was surely chosen as a place that can strikingly convey a story of the prefecture that supposedly goes from sport to the nuclear power plant disaster, recovery, and sport again.

After leaving J-Village on the first day, the relay will travel south to Iwaki City and then back north through the Hamadori region of Fukushima to Minamisoma. The route includes many cities, towns, and villages in the euphemistically named "difficult-to-return zones," while only small numbers of former residents have returned to many of the areas where the evacuation order has been nominally lifted. The relay will pass along National Route 6, around which radiation levels remain high. Though they may make it look like "recovery," this was a place that until recently was filled with piles of black sacks containing radioactive soil from the decontamination process. The torch relay is nothing more than an event that functions to distract us from these facts, a festival that galvanizes the nation to affirm that these areas have truly "recovered."





# 15

## Eugenics and the Paralympics

The roots of the Paralympic Games go back to war. During World War II, the tactics of the Allies were planned on the presumption of large numbers of casualties. Sport was introduced for rehabilitating soldiers wounded or maimed in battle, leading to the organization of large-scale tournaments. The Paralympics can thus be described as a means of rehabilitating people with war wounds back into society. One researcher has pointed out that the purpose of medical treatment for soldiers was for returning them to the battlefield. It could even be said that the Paralympics are incorporated into the mechanisms of carrying out warfare.

At school, children are tested on their academic and physical abilities. The results of these tests are widely reported and any downward tendency is perceived as a major social problem. But other abilities like senses of color or sound are not treated in the same way. The criteria that are used to appraise people are based on whether or not, or the extent to which, they possess abilities that can be utilized for creating wealth for society and leading it to victory in war. Not having the types of abilities desired by society equates to having a so-called disability or impairment. The Paralympics is truly a fitting model for these social demands, whereby participants strive to achieve this “desired ability,” compete against one another, and aspire to be the “best.”

At elementary, junior high, and high schools in Japan, moral education is now a part of the curriculum and has become one of the ways in which children are appraised. Moral education textbooks never fail to include people with disabilities as committed to sport. The majority of children’s literature or paintings that deal with disabilities seem either to portray how they are helped out by those around them or how they are devoted to sport. The Japanese education system is premised on noninclusive learning that separates the classroom according to ability or disability. The same is also true of moral education. If children are defined as “disabled,” they either become people who must be treated kindly or “Paralympians” who encour-

age and inspire us able-bodied lazybones. The stereotypical image of the disabled person that is cultivated by moral education has taken on a life of its own and any kind of “disabled” person who does not fit into that is ignored.

Irrespective of the Paralympics, the so-called disabled have long been able naturally and spontaneously to enjoy various things like sports. In inclusive learning, moreover, children with “disabilities” and those without have done many kinds of things together while sharing knowledge with each other. The exaltation of the Paralympics and disabled sport (para-sports) hides from view the people engaged in non-sport activities and pushes the people living side by side us regardless of ability merely to the background.

Many disabled sports are divided into detailed classes according to disability types and level. The idea of a world where winning or losing is determined in units of seconds is premised on a hierarchy of people according to severity of disability and degree of capability. Almost as a matter of course, it is demanded of people to “know their place” according to their respective severity of “disability” or degree of capability. This is no different from the eugenics of Nazi Germany that led to a national policy of exterminating those deemed to be “disabled.”

Many people with “disabilities” have long campaigned for better accessibility and barrier-free public transport. With the Paralympics and other big sporting events, it may sometimes feel almost like pennies from heaven. As such, quite a few people say that the Olympics and Paralympics bring about a positive legacy to the lives of the disabled. However, improving people’s lives and ensuring their well-being is not about these events but rather listening to the actual people demanding these things and making what they need a reality. The money spent on the Olympics and Paralympics should be spent rather on improving infrastructure and support for the vulnerable people in our society.

When people with disabilities are striving intently toward a goal, it is by no means an easy thing to criticize openly. But this condones a situation that is actually sportswashing, whereby the Paralympics are covering up many issues related to the Olympics.

# 16

## The Olympics and Gender

At the first modern Olympics held in Athens in 1896, there was not a single female athlete. This was because Pierre de Coubertin, the founder of the modern Olympics, was firmly opposed to women participating in the Games. The inaugural modern Olympics, however, took place right in the midst of the first wave of feminism to sweep Europe and America. Female participation in sport and criticism of their exclusion from the Olympics both grew until women were gradually permitted to enter certain competitions deemed not to conflict with the idea of “femininity” at the time.

That serious issues related to gender remain latent in the Olympic movement, which reveres such a figure as its founder, should not surprise us. A strong, sturdy, and trained “masculine” body came to be praised as a symbol of a world order based on military might and the industrialization and “modern” nation-state that formed the foundation of capitalism, colonialism, and nationalism. This body of the male Olympians was endowed with connotations of national strength as well as “advancement” and “masculinity.” That the Olympics became the stage for proxy wars between ideologies, ethnic groups, and nations, that nations invest vast sums of money in training athletes, and that they compete as nations against each other to win the highest number of medals is all due to this.

The female body was also gradually incorporated into this competition. But the path to participation for female athletes in competitions held in the “male domain” that was the Olympics has not been a level one and there are still many gender issues even today. Not only the problems of exclusion from certain events and training facilities, or gender discrepancies in terms of salary or prize money as well as broadcasting times and competition environments, the countless examples of gender issues include sexual harassment and violence from managers and coaches, and the emphasis in the media on patriarchal gender roles. Homophobia and transphobia also remain deeply ingrained.

Another major problem with regard to sport and gender norms is hyperandrogenism, a highly topical issue that also relates to the history of sex verification testing. For women athletes whose sexual differentiation does not fall within the archetypal definitions of “female” (such as intersex people or those with disorders of sex development, or DSDs), they face either having their eligibility stripped if their testosterone levels are above a certain level or are required to suppress their testosterone levels through surgery or hormone inhibitors.

Those who are forced to make this ultimate choice between medical intervention with many side effects or accepting that their career hopes as athletes are dashed are almost always women athletes from developing nations and around 20 years old. Without adequate explanation about the details of the medical intervention methods, side effects, or the necessity for hormone therapy that will impact their whole lives, or without being able to understand due to a language barrier, some agree to medical interventions and suffer chronic side effects and social sanctions. Even when athletes with physical characteristics that do not fall into Western gender norms suffer such grave human rights violations, the myth of “fair play” is trotted out to justify what is done.

As another major distinguishing aspect of the Olympics, we might raise how they accelerate the structural exploitation of capitalism in the host city and nation. Land and home are seized from the poor in particular and communities are razed, while the natural environments that were integral parts of the lives of people for generations are destroyed so that the competition venues, Olympic Village, and highways can be built. In a society that discriminates against women, it is women who are most vulnerable and inevitably more likely to suffer from the destruction and exploitation that the Olympics bring. The makeup of the residents at the Kasumigaoka Apartments public housing complex, which was demolished to make way for the Olympics, attests to this.

Violent evictions continue of the homeless and rough sleepers who threaten the glittery image of the host city that the organizers shape as well as of the migrant workers now deemed “illegal.” The Olympics are a machine that ushers in further persecution of the socially oppressed and, simultaneously, allow the privileged to accumulate even more wealth, status, and power. If we open our eyes to the gender and sexuality injustices that the

Olympics cause as well as to the various further forms of oppression and violence that accompany this, we can then understand how the Olympics justify the suffering through the emotions and elation that the Games temporarily whip up.

# 17

## Athlete Health Risks

Sport is fun and healthy. This might be the kind of exercise we can all do easily on an everyday basis, such as running, weightlifting, or stretches. Perhaps it is a sport that requires special equipment and locations like skiing, swimming, or golf. We like to play team sports, too, such as basketball, baseball, and soccer. But because we also know that doing excessive training or exercise can cause damage to our bodies, we try to integrate sport into our lives in an appropriate and sensible way.

What about spectator sports, though? For the spectators, at any rate, such sports are fun to watch and don't have any bearing on their health. But what are the spectators actually enjoying? It is the sense of astonishment and awe at the skill, beauty, speed, height, and strength of the athletes. It is the thrill of watching a favorite athlete or team achieve success. Or perhaps it is the feeling of a shared identity with their fellow spectators all watching together. However, what about the people on the other side of this experience, the athletes and players? For them, it is the exact opposite of healthiness.

As the desire of spectators to watch something exciting and fun reaches ever more alarming levels, events like the Olympics pour vast sums of money into the facilities and athletes. The competitors are accordingly tasked with the responsibility of entertaining the spectators and beating their opponents, which makes risky demands on their bodies. They have to undertake training not for their own health but rather for the sole sake of

winning.

If you look up scholarly literature on athlete health disorders, you find many articles about female athletes. In 2007, the American College of Sports Medicine issued a position stand updating its definition of the female athlete triad. In the 1990s, the triad was recognized as an association of disordered eating, amenorrhea, and osteoporosis seen in activities that emphasize a lean physique. But the revised publication referred to the female athlete triad as the interrelationships among energy availability, menstrual function, and bone mineral density, which may have clinical manifestations including eating disorders, functional hypothalamic amenorrhea, and osteoporosis. It is notable that amenorrhea, which is defined as the absence of menstrual cycles, is often caused by habitual, strenuous physical activities as well as having a low body fat percentage or lower body weight. It is frequently found in female elite athletes in endurance sports and aesthetic sports, such as gymnasts and distance runners. Amenorrhea can also lower bone density.

But why do athletes undertake training that leads to low body fat and weight? It is enlightening here to go back to an old BBC documentary about female athletes.

The documentary showed how female gymnasts were deliberately raised to have smaller physiques. It included truly horrifying cases where pregnancy was induced through artificial insemination before competitions and then aborted in order to make athletes take part in training and competitions while their hormone levels were highest. There is even a special name for this practice: abortion doping. The particulars regarding how medical science is used like this to destroy the bodies of athletes are sickening.

In the BBC documentary, girls younger than 10 years old were shown starting to undergo harsh training in order to become top athletes. Only a tiny fraction of the children succeed in their ambition. This small number of athletes would reach the top only after enduring training so severe that it can cause disorders and disabilities. And then there are all the athletes who wreck their bodies but still do not reach this top class. This is the tragic reality of elite athletes.

These men and women are forced to perform faster, higher, stronger, and more beautifully in response to the expectations of their sponsors, fans, and nations. They must delight the spectators and endure the stress and pressure from the expectations of the many supporters, governments, and

capitalists who have invested in them. Destroying your own body has become part and parcel of being a top athlete.

Sports competitions that normalize such a culture of endangering human beings, of treating people as expendable, are not events that we should watch and enjoy. A society that condones this and takes pleasure in the Olympics is a cruel and heartless one. The cheers of spectators and fans resonating around the competition venue seem to echo the jubilant cries of the upper classes watching gladiators fight to the death in the Colosseum of ancient Rome. Faced with this reality, we should question what it actually means to enjoy watching sport.

# 18

## Coubertin and Olympism

On the Japanese Olympic Committee website, there is a section on “Coubertin and Olympism.” It first describes the basic facts about the intellectual development of Pierre de Coubertin (1863–1937). Born into a French aristocratic family, for Coubertin’s generation, France’s defeat to Prussia in the Franco-Prussian War (1870–1871) was an immense shock. Seeking an example for how to reform education in France, he then took inspiration from how British public schools (as private schools are known) treated intellectual, moral, and physical education as interrelated: for the public schools, sport was also a way to cultivate spiritual and moral well-being in young people. The problem with the JOC’s presentation of Coubertin comes with its explanation of how he subsequently acquired an international perspective. “At the time, Coubertin felt the necessity for incorporating sport in order to reform his nation’s education, which then gradually developed into a vision of an international competition. Observing locations around the world and becoming involved in inviting athletes from overseas to take part

in competitions with local athletes, he came to see that sport can have another role: that of international exchange and peace.”

But what “international” meant at the time was Europe and the United States, which was then the world order. And for Coubertin, “peace” was something that should be realized not by reducing militaries but by the balance of power. To a man like Coubertin, there was no contradiction in rebuilding France militarily while reviving the Olympics. As Coubertin wrote in “La Force nationale et le sport” (National Strength and Sport) in 1902, “Sport is superb physical preliminary training prior to enlisting in a modern army.” (The word he uses for “preliminary training” is actually *débourrage*, a dressage term denoting the stage where a rider builds up the physical strength of the horse prior to full training.) In yet another text on the psychology of sport from 1913, Coubertin writes: “Through sport, youth do not become more martial but rather simply more inclined to becoming militaristic. That is, they come to possess the feeling that that they have power, without being incited to use that power excessively. Sport has neither increased the possibility of war, nor decreased it.” What we can see here is a peculiar idea of “peaceful war” that is not the renunciation of war contained in Article Nine of the Constitution of Japan, but rather far closer to Prime Minister Shinzo Abe’s “proactive contributions to peace” that aim to turn the Self-Defense Forces into a national army by changing the Constitution. When the Olympics are described as a “festival of peace,” this is what was originally meant.

For Coubertin, those who should be trained through sport was accordingly only young men. He was vehemently opposed to young women participating in the Olympics. “Boys who cannot do pull-ups are not boys,” he wrote in the aforementioned essay. “The pull-up is a passport of masculinity. However, we must leave young ladies out of this. The pull-up is not their realm. [...] Gentlemen, be sure to do your pull-ups. [...] The physician may well pull a sour face but the ladies will give you a hearty cheer!”

Like the majority of Europeans at the time, Coubertin approved of colonial rule. He claimed, however, that sport serves a purpose in transforming styles of governance. In “Les sports et la Colonisation” (Sport and Colonization) (1912), he wrote: “Sport can serve an intelligent and effective role in colonization. Of those races whose colonization we Europeans are accustomed to viewing it as natural, as a result of our rule and guidance of them



these past few centuries, it is not the case that the majority are ill-suited to sport. Sport is a tool of regularization and also produces all manner of fine social qualities in terms of hygiene, cleanliness, discipline, and self-control. Indigenous people should surely acquire these qualities. In doing so, they will surely also become easier to handle than by other means [that is, subjugation by force].” This is the reality of what is called Coubertin’s “humanism.”

The idea of reviving the Olympics emerged from the conventional wisdom of the nineteenth-century West that “humanity” was “discovered” in ancient Greece. This view of humanity is inseparable from a misconceived admiration of Athenian “democracy,” which actually excluded women, slaves, and foreigners. Throughout his life, Coubertin never doubted the racist thinking that regarded the modern West as the legitimate successor to ancient Greece and as having the right to lead the rest of the world.

# 19

## The Olympics and War

The Olympic Charter states: “The goal of Olympism is to place sport at the service of the harmonious development of humankind, with a view to promoting a peaceful society concerned with the preservation of human dignity.”

We are led to believe that the Olympics are a celebration of peace. A glance at history, however, reveals that this is a grave misrepresentation of the truth. It is immediately evident that war, politics, and money have been a major element of the modern Olympic Games since they were founded in 1896.

The 1936 Olympics in Berlin were used to conceal the racial discrimi-

nation and militarism of the Nazi regime and promote an image of Germany as peaceful and tolerant, successfully deceiving the foreign tourists and news reporters. The imagery of the sports competitions during the Games associated the Nazis with ancient Greece, disseminating the Nazi ideology that good German citizens were the rightful inheritors of so-called Aryan culture and uniting the nation around this belief.

The torch relay was also first held during the Berlin Olympics and the route taking the torch from Olympia in Greece to Berlin was later used for military invasions during World War II.

The first Olympics in Japan were supposed to be held in Tokyo in 1940. The deteriorating situation globally during the wars in Europe and Asia resulted in the cancellation of the Games in 1938. A year after the Olympics were originally scheduled to take place, Japan attacked Pearl Harbor and the Asia-Pacific War began. This track record demonstrates the impotence of the Olympics to actually prevent war and promote peace.

In how they are promoted as the “Recovery Olympics,” the upcoming Tokyo Olympics are also highly political in nature.

The “phantom Tokyo Olympics” of 1940 were a political event intended to present an image of recovery after the Great Kanto Earthquake of 1923 that devastated Tokyo. The 1964 Tokyo Olympics were meant to demonstrate recovery after the end of World War II. And the next Tokyo Olympics, planned for 2020 and then postponed to 2021, are yet another example, this time promoting the apparent recovery from the 2011 Great East Japan Earthquake and Fukushima disaster.

The Tokyo 2020 bid was based on a lie from the start. Prime Minister Shinzo Abe claimed that the situation in Fukushima is “under control” at the International Olympic Committee session where Tokyo was chosen to host the Olympics. But the truth is that the fallout from the Fukushima nuclear meltdown is far from over. These Olympic Games are the realization of a political aim to conceal this reality.

Of these three Tokyo Olympics, the 1940 and 2020 (2021) Games seem to have a particular affinity. In 1940, Japan was about to enter a state of total war, having started the Second Sino-Japanese War in 1937 and already expanded its incursion into China, and next set to begin the Asia-Pacific War in 1941. But these conflicts had yet to impact fully on the daily lives of regular people and Japan was faced with the challenge of how to

unite the nation for the immense war effort that would soon be necessary.

The government planned to hold a national celebration marking 2,600 years since the legendary founding of Japan by the first emperor, Jimmu. The bid for the Tokyo Olympics were an extension of these plans.

In 2019, Emperor Akihito abdicated and Naruhito ascended to the throne. In 2021, the Olympics will open with an address from the new emperor and these Games will form another opportunity for inaugurating and proclaiming the start of Naruhito's reign on the world stage. In this way, the Olympics are an advantageous event for shaping the national consciousness in order to build a new militarist state after establishing the legal basis for the Self-Defense Forces by reforming Article 9 of the Constitution. The 2021 Olympics will thus take on much of the significance that the 1940 Games were supposed to have for Japan.

The Japanese revolutionary socialist Hitoshi Yamakawa wrote about the Olympics in an article published in the magazine *Bungeishunju* in September 1936. “The Olympics are not the stage for sports but rather for international politics. The ultimate goal of participating in the Olympics [...] is to gain recognition of the capabilities of the nation as a world power and the greatness of the people, to propagate national prestige, and raise international standing; as such, the so-called ‘warriors of peace who have further raised the international standing of Japan by managing to bring the Olympics to realization’ are in essence no different from, for instance, the warriors of the battlefield who have further raised the international standing of Japan by hunting down enemy ships in the Battle of Tsushima.”

These words that Yamakawa wrote decades ago penetrated to the heart of the Olympics and continue to resonate today.



# 20

## Anti-Olympics Movements Worldwide: NOlympics Anywhere

From the corruption that inevitably accompanies a bid to the evictions of the poor and vulnerable, large-scale environmental destruction, and insidious onset of a eugenics mindset that all come with hosting the Games, the problems related to the Olympics are manifold and have sparked protests in cities around the world.

In Japan, cities have launched bids for the Olympics on numerous occasions and three editions of the Olympics and Paralympics have been held. The 1940 Olympics planned for Tokyo and Sapporo were canceled after the outbreak of the Second Sino-Japanese War. The 1964 Summer Olympics in Tokyo famously ushered in immense changes to infrastructure and the cityscape, but local residents who were evicted stormed the city hall in anger. At the 1972 Sapporo Winter Olympics, the construction of a downhill skiing course using six tons of dynamite at Mount Eniwa, a protected national forest, was fiercely opposed. In Nagoya, a campaign by local activists protesting the bid for the 1988 Olympics fielded a candidate in the mayoral election and also ran a hunger strike in front of the city hall. The city's bid was ultimately not selected to host the Olympics. In Nagano, the environmental damage caused by the construction of the venues and flagrant development of roads and Karuizawa resorts ahead of the 1998 Winter Olympics was tenaciously pursued and exposed by locals, culminating in large-scale opposition to the Games. During the Tokyo bid for the 2016 Olympics, activists protested in such ways as sending a letter directly to the International Olympic Committee.

Of course, these kinds of protests are not limited to Japan and are taking place in other countries in cities hosting or bidding for the Olympics. During the Winter Olympics in Vancouver in 2010, for instance, indigenous people and rough sleepers opposed to the Games occupied locations for several days. There was also a protest in front of the stadium in Sochi, the next host city for the Winter Olympics. In London, one example of opposi-

tion was a group of single mothers who occupied public housing set to be demolished for the 2012 Olympics. Activists from Rio de Janeiro, where demolition of housing for the poor was already underway for the 2016 Olympics, also participated in these protests. The 2014 Sochi Olympics took place on land originally inhabited by the indigenous Circassians, the development of the area for the Games serving as a way to cover up the nineteenth-century genocide of the native people, while the unprecedented budget allocated to counterterrorism led to oppression and grave human rights violation that incited protests. After Russia passed legislation banning what it called “gay propaganda” ahead of the Winter Olympics, there were calls in the international community to boycott the Sochi Games. At the 2016 Rio Olympics, forced evictions took place at numerous favelas, triggering demonstrations against the wave of expulsions and the Olympics in general. Various labor unions for subway workers and public servants went on strike, while high school and university students occupied campuses in protest at the inclusion of the Olympics in their curricula. At the large demonstration march held to coincide with the closing ceremony, opponents to the 2020 Tokyo Olympics also joined in. At the Winter Olympics in Pyeongchang in 2018, environmentalists protested how organizers destroyed a 500-year-old virgin forest in order to hold competitions for just a few days. A large-scale occupation also took place of Seoul Station by wheelchair users because the rail link newly opened for the Olympics was not barrier-free.

Behind the buzz and hype about the Olympics and Paralympics in the mainstream media lies the growing anger of locals in the host cities. People are realizing the emptiness of the “peace” proclaimed in the Olympic Charter, that the Olympics ultimately bring no economic benefits, and leave behind a negative legacy. In recent years, the number of cities bidding to host the Summer or Winter Olympics has dramatically declined. Boston withdrew its bid for the 2024 Summer Olympics after local support fell, while Hamburg also withdrew from the bidding after a plebiscite. Likewise, Calgary and Sion dropped their bids for the 2026 Winter Olympics following public referendums. The Budapest bid for the 2024 Summer Olympics was canceled when residents opposed to hosting the Games organized a petition for a referendum and gained over 250,000 signatures.

These voices of opposition are resonating around the world and joining with those of activists here in Tokyo. In November 2018, the Anti-Olympic



Torch (also known as the Olympic Poverty Torch) arrived in Tokyo, brought by activists who had protested the Pyeongchang Winter Olympics and handed over to former residents of the Kasumigaoka Apartments public housing complex and rough sleepers who used to live in Meiji Park, all evicted in order to make way for the New National Stadium. The Anti-Olympic Torch has traveled between cities like a counter version of the official torch relay, passed on by local activists for every edition of the Olympics since the 2010 Vancouver Games and helping to connect a network of anti-Olympics groups.

In July 2019, an unprecedented series of transnational events took place in Tokyo attended by anti-Olympics activists from more than eight cities. Under the slogan of “NOlympics Anywhere,” they joined together to demand a permanent end to the IOC and the Olympics. From neoliberalism to nationalism, colonialism, discrimination, and environmental destruction, anti-Olympics movements encompass a range of struggles and at times highly localized causes and contexts. But these grassroots protests are now transcending their municipal or national borders to expand and form a wave of solidarity across the whole world.

# Afterword: Join Us in Opposing the Olympics

Besides the issues introduced over the preceding pages, there are many other problems with the Tokyo Olympics.

There are people who flock to the benefits that the Olympics offer—not only the obvious commercial ones but also the way they facilitate the expansion of influence and power, and bring prestige—and these people with vested interests are naturally committed to bids to host the Games. On the other hand, there are the people who suffer actual negative effects (and even, in some cases, die) due to the Olympics: they are displaced or evicted from their homes; they are forced to work under harsh conditions; or, particularly this time, they must continue to live in a deprived region because recovery efforts have stopped to prioritize construction for the Olympics. (The athletes who are likewise forced to compete under harsh conditions, or do so voluntarily, can be considered part of the former group if they win but, if they lose, part of the latter group.)

But in fact, the numbers of people who either gain or suffer from the Olympics are not especially high. For the overwhelming majority of people, the Olympics are something that they just watch. There are, of course, those with absolutely no interest in the Olympics as well as the ardent fans, but most people just semi-consciously anticipate and welcome an edition of the Olympics as an “exciting” global sporting event.

These are the people who we want to read this pamphlet, the people who are seduced by the emotional thrill of the Olympics. Because the people who flock to the Olympics in the hope of securing vested interests are targeting this majority. They bid for the Olympics based on a presumption that this majority will quietly support them. As a result, the Olympics bring calamity and destruction.

Everyone more less already knows or senses the various problems with the Olympics. We now hope that people will take this a step further by opening their eyes wider and asking: Should we really hold the Tokyo Olympics?

Until the Tokyo Olympics open in 2021 and even while they are taking

place, we will continue to oppose them. Please look out for our activities.  
And join us in our fight!





# Translator's Note

This pamphlet is a revised and expanded version of *18 Reasons to Oppose the 2020 Tokyo Olympics*, which was first published in Japanese in July 2019.

The English translation has adapted certain parts of the original Japanese to make it easier to understand and more relevant for non-Japanese readers. Where appropriate, some details have been cut and others added. In a few instances, information has been updated, most notably to reflect the postponement of the Tokyo Olympic Games to 2021 that was announced in March 2020 during the coronavirus pandemic. Monetary values that were originally in Japanese yen have been changed to US dollars according to standard currency conversions (as of March/April 2020) and sometimes adjusted based on official sources or well-reported figures from the respective time periods.



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Anti-Tokyo Olympics Guidebook

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