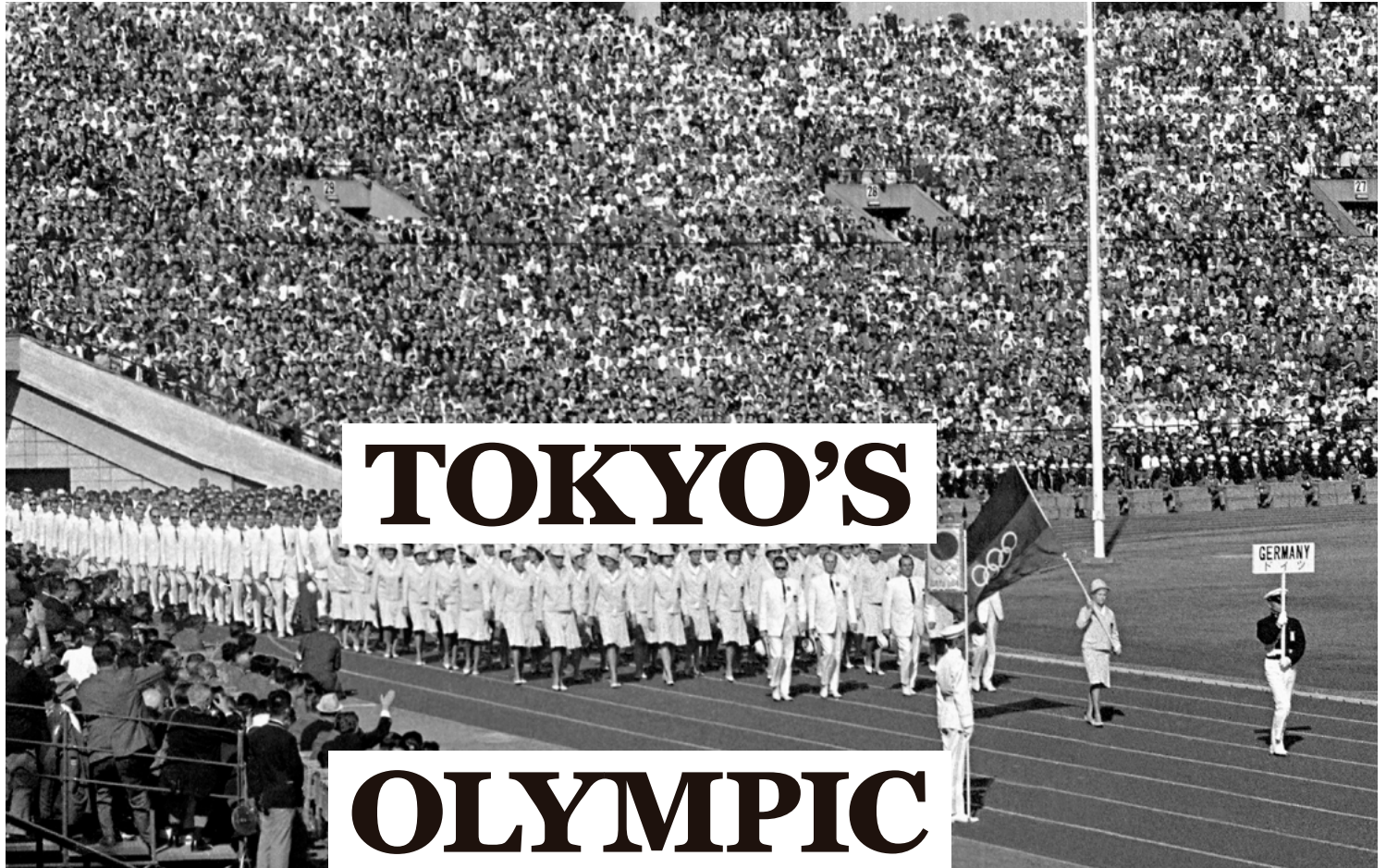


NUMBER 1 SHIMBUN

July 2021 · Volume 53 · No. 7



TOKYO'S OLYMPIC



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Marunouchi Nijubashi Building 5F, Marunouchi 3-2-3 Chiyoda-ku Tokyo 100-0005, Japan
www.fccj.or.jp E-mail: front@fccj.or.jp Tel: +81-3-3211-3161 Fax: +81-3-3211-3168

NUMBER 1
SHIMBUN

July 2021 · Volume 53 · No. 7

Contact the Editors

no.1shimbun@fccj.or.jp

Publisher FCCJ**Editor** Justin McCurry**Designer** Julio Shiiki**Editorial Assistant** Naomichi Iwamura**Photo coordination** Hiroko Moriwaki, Norio Muroi**Publications Committee**

Justin McCurry (Chair), Peter O'Connor, Suvendrini Kakuchi, Monzurul Huq, Robert Whiting, David McNeill

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Marunouchi Nijubashi Building 5F

Marunouchi 3-2-3 Chiyoda-ku Tokyo 100-0005

Tel: (03) 3211-3161 Fax: (03) 3211-3168 fccj.or.jp

Published by the FCCJ All opinions contained within *Number 1 Shimbun* are those of the authors.As such, these opinions do not constitute an official position of *Number 1 Shimbun*, the editor or the Foreign Correspondent' Club of Japan.

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In this issue

JUSTIN McCURRY

After months of fierce debate, resignations and recriminations, it now looks certain that the Tokyo 2020 Olympics will open, as planned, on July 23. The June issue of the *Number 1 Shimbun* looked at why large sections of the Japanese media had failed to reflect widespread opposition to holding the Games during a global health emergency and, as our deadline approached, amid rising cases in the host city. While much could change in the coming weeks, this feels like the right time for writers to outline their hopes and fears for the Olympics. Here too, consensus is impossible, with our four contributors - Monzurul Huq, Sean Carroll, Jeremy Walker and Jeff Kingston - divided over whether the Games will be a source of hope in difficult times or a disastrous mistake (and a professional challenge). The theme continues with spectacular black-and-white images from happier days in Japan's Olympic history - the 1964 Games in Tokyo. Elsewhere, *Number 1* contributors examine the "inequitable" arrangements for prime ministerial press conferences, Tokyo's many assassination sites, Japan's nuclear power industry and the fallout from "Operation Tomodachi", and the campaign to protect the legacy of Fleet Street, the spiritual home of London's newspaper industry.

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Cover photos: top courtesy of Aflo; bottom by Justin McCurry

THE FRONT PAGE

From the President

Dear members,

This is my first message following the election results, which brought us both good and bad news. I was delighted that so many people took part this time, and that most members opted to use the online system, which helps enormously with simplifying the whole process and reducing the costs involved. The fact that we nonetheless failed to assemble a complete Board on this occasion is disappointing, and I think the lesson we should take away is that we need to create opportunities for regular members and associate members to get to know one another. From my conversations with many voting members, I realized that many people feel uncomfortable clicking the button to support people they don't know all that well, if at all. Since we are a club, the obvious solution is to make sure everyone has more opportunities to cultivate networks among the membership. I hope that will become possible as we emerge from the worst of the pandemic. Journalists shouldn't forget that the associate members are key to the survival of the Club and we need to reach a point where we're able to vote in a full quota of three associate Board directors without the need for run-off elections.

It's now 11 months since I took on the mantle of president amid the worst crisis the Club has ever faced. I had little idea of what this would entail, and how far the post would take me from my comfort zone of writing and talking about political developments in Japan and Asia. Without a general manager in place, the president becomes responsible for all sorts of aspects of club management that are about as far from journalism as you can imagine. In navigating my way through this, I can say I received valuable advice from every single member of the current Board, as well as several other former directors. I don't have the space to mention all the names, but I'm sincerely grateful to all these people.

As you know, the Club remains in a very difficult position, with our membership numbers continuing to fall. Retaining members and attracting new ones will need to be the overarching priority for the new Board, as well



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as for staff and the membership at large. We already have a business plan proposed for us by our Japan Market Expansion Team, based on extensive research, and we need to make sure we act on it.

In closing, I wanted to say a few words about *why* we should continue to devote time and energy to the FCCJ, despite our current difficulties and the changing nature of the media itself. Of course, we have a distinguished past that we shouldn't forget. More importantly, the events of this year in Hong Kong, Myanmar and elsewhere have made clear that the freedom of the press is increasingly at risk in this region. Now more than ever, we need to thrive so that we can continue to play a role in support of journalists who risk their lives to report the truth.

● **Isabel Reynolds has been reporting for Bloomberg in Tokyo since 2012. She has lived in Japan for more than 20 years and been a regular member of the FCCJ for most of that time.**

COVER STORY

FREEDOM FROM FEAR

Olympic buzz will come, despite Covid restrictions



PHOTO: ARNE MUSELER / ARNE-MUSELER.COM / CC-BY-SA-3.0

JEREMY WALKER

Tokyo 2020 will be my seventh summer Olympic Games - a run that started in the dazzling Mediterranean sunshine of Barcelona in 1992.

After skipping Atlanta 1996, when I was studying Japanese in Kyoto and watching England's Paul Gascoigne score his incredible goal against Scotland at Euro '96 in a packed

basement sports bar, I am five-for-five from Sydney 2000 through to Rio 2016.

What I will miss most in Tokyo, based on the Olympic "playbooks" and almost daily communication with Tokyo 2020 media operations, is freedom.

The freedom to get out and about and explore the city during downtime (Rio de

FREEDOM FROM FEAR



► Walker at work for the Olympic Council of Asia.

There will be no freedom to decide which sport to attend on the day of competition, as booking forms must be completed in advance, with a deadline of the previous day.

Janeiro easily springs to mind); the freedom to decide, on the spot, where I would like to go for the day; and the freedom to stroll through Olympic Park and soak up the atmosphere of the occasion away from the roar of the crowd, the tension of competition and the scramble and stress of work.

This will not be possible in Tokyo. For the first 14 days, overseas media will not be allowed to take public transport. They must stay in the Olympic “bubble” and use only official transport from their authorised hotel to approved destinations, such as a stadium, the Olympic Village or main press centre. No Ebisu. No Meguro. No Gotanda – my gold, silver and bronze medal-winners of the Yamanote Line Olympics.

There will be no freedom to decide which sport to attend on the day of competition, as booking forms must be completed in advance, with a deadline of the previous day.

If I turn up at a venue on the day and my name is not on the list, I will be denied entry. This is a

very unwelcome addition to the administrative aspects of work. As if it wasn't hard enough to keep receipts in order for the post-Olympics expenses claims. Now they're asking us to book tickets on a daily basis!

As for the summer vibes to be found in Olympic Park, this is one of the highlights of the Olympic Games for me and a major factor in determining how successful the Games have been overall. In Tokyo, with no spectators from overseas and only a limited number of local fans, how can Olympic Park create the buzz, energy and sense of unity and friendship among people from so many different nations? It is a cliché, I know, but it is what has made previous Olympic Parks such special places.

Take London 2012. That was incredible. The food kiosks, the music, the street entertainers, celebrity-spotting, sponsors' giveaways and family fun ... they all contributed to the Olympic atmosphere, especially for people who couldn't get a ticket to watch the sport.

FREEDOM FROM FEAR

In Tokyo, with no spectators from overseas and only a limited number of local fans, how can Olympic Park create the buzz, energy and sense of unity and friendship among people from so many different nations?

Olympic Park was always open, always alive and always welcoming. I remain optimistic, however, that Tokyo 2020 will ease some of these restrictions once everyone is there and the show is up and running. I don't expect this to come from a major announcement or a major change in policy. It is more likely to be a more gradual process through daily experience and cooperation so that, by the end of the Games, there is a more normal working environment.

This was certainly the case at Rio 2016. The buildup had been dominated by the Zika virus, and I attended several Olympic meetings in which a series of guidelines was presented to avoid catching the disease on arrival in Brazil. It really did sound dangerous. But, in the end, nothing happened. I can't remember any cases of athletes, officials, volunteers, media or even spectators in a venue contracting the virus.

Covid-19, of course, is more serious and more deadly - but most people coming to Tokyo will be fully vaccinated. The Macau SAR government has handled this pandemic admirably, from the beginning of 2020, when the airport resembled a scene from *The X-Files*, up to now.

For the past 16 months, I have worn a mask every day, and shown the health code clearance every morning on entering the office. It is not possible to get on a bus or train or get into a taxi in Macau without wearing a mask, so this is nothing new for me. It is totally acceptable and reasonable. Thanks to the swift and cohesive measures of the Macau SAR government, there have been only 53 infections and zero coronavirus-related deaths since the start of the pandemic. I have completed my two jobs

of the Pfizer/BioNTech vaccine, free of charge and booked through a very efficient online appointment system, so I feel I am well prepared for Tokyo.

Despite the restrictions facing the media at Tokyo 2020, I am looking forward to meeting athletes and officials from the 44 National Olympic Committees affiliated to my organization, the Olympic Council of Asia [OCA], due to compete this summer. From Afghanistan to Yemen, and all points in between.

It is important not to forget the athletes in all of this, and I know what many of them have been through to get this far. My last overseas assignment on OCA business was in Hangzhou, China in December 2019, connected to Hangzhou's hosting of our 19th Asian Games in September 2022, so I am looking forward to catching up with colleagues and contacts.

By the time the 19th Asian Games open, we are hoping life will have returned to normal and that the 10,000 athletes due to attend will be able to prepare, train and compete in Hangzhou, just as they did at the 18th Asian Games in Indonesia in 2018, which now feels like it was in the previous century.

Above all, I am hoping for one thing: freedom. The freedom to work, and to enjoy the Olympic experience.

● **Jeremy Walker is editor of the Olympic Council of Asia's quarterly magazine, *Sporting Asia*, which he founded in 2009, as well as content manager for the OCA website, www.ocasia.org. He has worked in sports media in the U.K., Hong Kong and Japan for 40 years and has attended six summer Olympic Games. He lives in Macau.**

COVER STORY

KEEPING THE FAITH



PHOTO: ARNE MUSELER / ARNEMUSELER.COM / CC-BY-SA-3.0

Tokyo 2020 will be rare chance for minor sporting nations to shine

MONZURUL HUQ

The Olympics seem almost certain to go ahead, despite public opposition due to concerns that the Games will help spread the coronavirus.

The Japanese government, the International Olympic Committee (IOC), the organizing committee, the Tokyo metropolitan government and other parties are counting the days until the Olympic flame reaches the main stadium for the opening ceremony on July 23.

However, a significant portion of people in Japan and elsewhere remain unconvinced about the wisdom of holding a mass sports event during a global pandemic.

As the opening day approaches, the scales appear to be tilting towards supporting the Olympics, which will make their first appearance in Tokyo for more than half a century, and after an unprecedented yearlong delay.

Some recent opinion polls now suggest that opposition to the Games has weakened over the past couple of months, although a significant number would still like them to be delayed again or cancelled altogether.

That said, there has been a noticeable shift in sentiment. Naomi Osaka, one of Japan's most successful athletes, who only a month ago said she was "really not sure" the Games should go

▲
Aerial view of Tokyo
Ariake Arena

KEEPING THE FAITH

►
Huq covering
the G20
summit in
Osaka in 2019.



Bangladeshi athletes have performed well in international archery competitions, including the last world championship, and it is possible that our male and female archers could make a breakthrough in Tokyo this summer.

ahead, recently said that winning a tennis gold medal in Tokyo would “mean the world” to her.

Outside of Japan, some commentators continue to oppose the Games, largely as a result of negative media coverage highlighting Japan’s haphazard response to the pandemic and its initially slow vaccination program.

The situation has improved considerably since then, particularly on the vaccine front. Now, more than a million people are being inoculated every day, compared with just 37,000 in mid-April. However, with daily cases rising again in Tokyo, some people, here and overseas, remain apprehensive.

Much of the criticism towards holding Tokyo 2020 at a time when a mass gathering of people from around the world could trigger a virus outbreak stems from the IOC and organizers’ determination to go ahead with the Games come what may. But this view ignores the people who make the Olympics such an important and exciting event: the athletes.

Everyone remembers the extraordinary feats of great Olympians such as Abebe Bikila, Nadia Comaneci and Usain Bolt, to name but a few. Then there are countless others who get nowhere near the winners’ podium, but whose efforts help make the Olympics a celebration of global solidarity.

The opinions of the participants should matter more than those of officials, politicians or activists. After all, it is the athletes who would stand to lose most if the Games were cancelled

or postponed. They begin their training regime as soon as one Olympics ends and continue until the next Games, driven by the hope that they can demonstrate their prowess on the world stage and fulfill a lifelong dream.

Depriving them of that once-in-a-lifetime opportunity makes no sense. Elite athletes reach a peak they can sustain only for a very short time. Missing even one Olympics could deprive them of the biggest opportunity of their careers, and even hasten their retirement.

It is clear that the pandemic is still causing havoc in many parts of the world. We also know that our battle against the virus is ongoing, and that victory is no longer a pipe dream.

The Tokyo 2020 organizers are doing their best to ensure that the Games do not trigger a Covid-19 catastrophe. That includes making the huge sacrifice of banning overseas spectators, although a limited number of domestic sports fans will be permitted to attend sports events. In addition, the official “playbooks” for athletes and officials contain strict measures to ensure their safety and that of everyone else. These measures should not be taken lightly.

The Olympics are not just about giving competitors the opportunity to realise their dreams; they are also a chance for participating countries to take pride in the athletes’ achievements. This is particularly true for smaller nations that ordinarily struggle to make their presence felt.

I come from one such country – Bangladesh. It never wins medals, and fails to qualify for all but a few events. The Olympics are its moment in the sun,

Recently, Bangladeshi athletes have performed well in international archery competitions, including the last world championships, and it is possible that our male and female archers could make a breakthrough in Tokyo this summer. The people of Bangladesh can finally dream about Olympic glory.

Cancellation – or even postponement – would deprive those proud athletes of the chance to compete in the highly pressurized Olympic setting, and crush the hopes of an expectant nation. That is why I’m putting my faith in the ability of the organizers to face down the pandemic.

● **Monzurul Huq is Tokyo bureau chief of *Prothom A/o*, the leading national daily of Bangladesh. He joined the FCCJ more than two decades ago and was president in 2009-2010.**

COVER STORY

QUICK AND PAINLESS



TRAVIS JONES ON UNSPLASH

Many sports journalists have lowered their expectations for the Games

SEAN CARROLL

Being at the stadium and having direct access to players, coaches, and club staff is not only one of the most enjoyable parts of being a football journalist, it is also critical when you're freelance and depend largely on gathering exclusive comments for your work.

Before Covid-19 hit, that was how I'd covered the J. League and Japan national football teams for over a decade, whether traversing the length and breadth of the country for domestic games or heading further afield for international matches. In the process, football provided opportunities to visit parts of the

world I would otherwise never have seen - Tehran, Wuhan, Al Ain - and meet people I never would have met.

Although the message has perhaps lost its true meaning due to the platitudes trotted out by marketing types at FIFA and the International Olympic Committee, the true power of sport lies in its ability to bring people together - figuratively and literally.

Top-level sport viewed on screens is increasingly homogenized on account of official partners, rights issues, and the media training of its participants. Being on the ground, however, provides the sense of freshness and excitement

QUICK AND PAINLESS



► Carroll at the Asian Cup soccer tournament in 2015

As well as the distinct lack of buzz in the air, the Tokyo 2020 action itself will be far more of a slog for those competing for medals - and those writing and talking about them doing so.

that sets competitions apart and creates the atmospheres and memories that players, fans, and members of the media never forget.

London 2012, for instance, created a wave of good feeling around the United Kingdom, and as I followed the Japan men's team from Glasgow to Newcastle to Coventry (not every destination is exotic) I encountered locals relishing the chance to take in some world-class football on their doorsteps alongside fans from across the globe.

That vital ingredient will be entirely absent from Tokyo 2020, and the limited number of domestic fans permitted to attend will be doing so under so many restrictions that the creation of bonhomie will be impossible. I say that with confidence, because the J. League was one of the first football leagues in the world to resume last June. Since then, games have been held behind closed doors or in front of restricted numbers of supporters, who are asked to wear masks, observe social distancing, and do little else but applaud. The resulting atmosphere hardly sets the pulse racing.

As well as the distinct lack of buzz in the air, the Tokyo 2020 action itself will be far more of a slog for those competing for medals - and those writing and talking about them doing so.

In a recent interview for *The Guardian*, for instance, Nadeshiko Japan star Mana Iwabuchi confessed to having mixed feelings about the home Olympics. While describing appear-

ing at them as a dream since Tokyo won hosting rights in 2013, the Arsenal forward also admitted to apprehensions about the spectre of the coronavirus. What if one of the mooted daily tests comes back positive, she wondered, in addition to expressing concerns about the psychological strain of living in a bio-secure bubble, with no clear idea of where and how players will be able to switch off and relax between matches.

The integrity of contests may also come into question. The Japan men's first team were forced to play a last-minute warm-up against the Olympic squad in Sapporo at the start of June, for example, when their original opponents, Jamaica, had to pull out after several players were told they could not board a flight because they had insufficient test documentation.

Japan also served as centralized host for some World Cup qualifiers last month, when Kyrgyzstan had to play Myanmar and Mongolia with center-back Aizar Akmatov in goal because all three of their goalkeepers were self-isolating as close contacts of a Covid-positive member of the party. Olympic favorites could miss out on medals for similar reasons - would those winning in their place get the same level of satisfaction?

From a media point of view, too, the pandemic has created a whole range of issues that have drastically changed the coverage of live sport.

Media numbers for J. League games were initially limited - and still are for national team matches - while questionnaires detailing travel plans and daily temperatures for the fortnight's preceding matches must also be submitted. Media access to players and coaches is now only possible via online press conferences, meaning everybody gets the same bland soundbites and is unable to pursue different angles - something that was previously possible in mixed zones.

The eve of the Games is usually a time of great excitement for most people in the host country. This year, however, it feels more like a trip to the dentist - we know it's going to happen, but just want to get it over with as quickly and painlessly as possible.

● Sean Carroll is a freelance football journalist who has covered Japanese football for various domestic and international outlets, including Football Channel, the-AFC.com, and *The Guardian*.

COVER STORY

JAPAN'S OLYMPIC FOLLY

Pandemic-era Games latest in a litany of shame



MARKUS SPIKES ON UNSPLASH - MODIFIED BY JULIO SHIKI

JEFF KINGSTON

It was supposed to be a global street party celebrating the end of the pandemic, but Tokyo has other ideas, banning booze, cheering, high fives and hugs. Imposing all these rules suggests that authorities know its madness to proceed with the Olympics because the pandemic is far from buried. And what is with withholding condoms from Olympians other than to encourage unsafe sex?

Tokyo 2020 is more like a gloomy requiem than a wild blowout, featuring the shamelessness of the money-grabbing International Olympic Committee, while NBC gleefully rubs

its paws in anticipation of a record haul of gold from selling ads. After all, as the pandemic surges anew on the wave of the new Delta variant, the Games are perfectly timed for when we all should be staying home glued to our TVs and avoiding large crowds.

The Olympics is a golden opportunity for nation branding, a chance to showcase a nation's virtues. But until now the run up to the Games has been an endless fiasco. Since 2013, the Japanese government and Olympic organizing committee have careened from one scandal to the next, shining a limelight on the darker corners of Japan and its feckless ruling elite. One can only hope that the worst is over, and the Games will go smoothly and generate some better memories.

One can imagine that Olympic boosters relish the "I told you so" moment that may lay ahead when they can berate all the Cassandras predicting doom and gloom. One might forgive the usually dour prime minister, Yoshihide Suga, oozing braggadocio if he manages to pull this gamble off "safely and securely" - his vague boilerplate reassurance that has failed to convince a skeptical nation.

Since taking over, Suga's wooden performance in impersonating a leader is worthy of a Monty Python skit, but the humor is lost on a disenchanting public. There has been comic relief in the interplay between Suga and Shigeru Omi, his top Covid-19 advisor. As the prime minister droned on about a safe and secure Games, his very own Dr. Fauci doggedly raised doubts about the wisdom of hosting the Olympics and allowing spectators at events. Time after time, Suga has ignored medical experts and stiff-armed warnings from various health professional organizations about the reckless risk of hosting the Olympics and their concerns that the medical system could quickly be on life support if there is a fresh surge in infections.

JAPAN'S OLYMPIC FOLLY



Kingston



Given that the medical expert consensus is opposed to hosting the Olympics because it could become the super-spreader event of all time, there is much speculation about why the government is taking such a big gamble with the health of the largely unvaccinated Japanese population. Political calculations are key as Suga is banking on successful Games to see off rivals angling for his job. The government spin-doctors and pliant media are trying to push the recent surge of vaccinations as a great comeback story, heaping praise on the government for belatedly doing what it should have done much earlier.

Since the Suga government has been so keen to host the Olympics despite scant public enthusiasm, it is remarkable that it didn't act sooner to accelerate vaccinations to ease widespread anxieties. Just over 9% of Japan's population is fully vaccinated, nearly on a par with Moldova and just ahead of Peru, but dead last in the G7.

Suga has pledged that all residents aged 65 or over will be vaccinated by the end of July, but what about Japan's other 90 million people? Thankfully, companies and universities are ramping up efforts to plug the gaps in the government's inadequate efforts, but the lingering image is one of bureaucratic bottlenecks and government dithering, not an impressive comeback. For many Japanese and the world, this baleful record was unexpected and is forcing a rethink about the nation's vaunted organizational abilities and efficiency. Apparently, those virtues were on holiday.

Beat Takeshi, a veteran *tarento* and filmmaker, recently speculated that holding the Olympics is akin to the outbreak of the Pacific War

- once the decision to attack had been made, nobody can overturn it. Rakuten's chief executive, Hiroshi Mikitani, also invoked the reckless sacrifice of war, likening the 2020 Games to a suicide mission. The publisher, Takarajima-sha, similarly drew invidious parallels between wartime Japan and the lack of vaccinations by taking out full page ads depicting children being trained to use sharpened sticks to fend off enemy invaders, overlaid with an illustration of the coronavirus.

But one need not look so far back to find cases of poor risk management. The three Fukushima reactor meltdowns also resulted from a wishing-risk-away mentality, leaving taxpayers with a \$600 billion tab for Tokyo Electric Power's folly.

Alas, in terms of branding, the Olympics has put a spotlight on the rot in Japan, beginning with former Prime Minister Shinzo Abe's 2013 dissembling to IOC delegates in Buenos Aires that Fukushima's tainted water issues had already been resolved. Eight years on, that still isn't true.

The litany of shame includes, inter alia, the plagiarized logo, the scrapped stadium design, massive cost overruns, allegations the bid was secured by bribery, and Yoshiro Mori's misogynistic comments followed by his bizarre attempt to appoint another clueless octogenarian as successor. More recently, the Suga government spiked legislation promoting LGBTQ rights, making a mockery of efforts to promote these as the "diversity Olympics".

It appears that 11,500 athletes and some 80,000 other Olympic-related visitors from all over the world will gather in Tokyo while the Delta variant is surging and mutating across the globe. What could possibly go wrong?

The government asserts that its pandemic countermeasures and protocols will prevent a surge in transmissions, but one need not be an epidemiologist to wonder if the risk is worth it. The government's own health advisers are worried this could become the incubator Olympics. Even Emperor Naruhito is concerned.

The worst-case scenario is that international delegations will bring nasty variants with them and in mingling here will spawn a super mutant Godzilla coronavirus that will sweep the globe as they return home. Let's hope not.

● Jeff Kingston is Director of Asian Studies at Temple University Japan

FEATURE

TAKE BACK CONTROL



PHOTOGRAPHER: KIYOSHI OTA/BLOOMBERG CREDIT: POOL/ZUMA WIRE/ALAMY LIVE NEWS

Favoritism toward big media at government press conferences damages democracy

YOICHIRO TATEIWA

▲ Yoshihide Suga, Japan's prime minister, speaks during a news conference at the prime minister's official residence in Tokyo, Japan, on Thursday, January 7, 2021.

On May 28, Japanese Prime Minister Yoshihide Suga conducted a regular press conference, where he gave relatively meaningful answers to questions from reporters compared to his usual responses to the media.

As a critic of press conferences given by Suga's predecessor, Shinzo Abe, I believe this is an improvement. However, Suga's official meet-

ings with journalists are still odd for a national leader. Officials restrict the number of journalists who join by randomly selecting some participants, while still prioritizing favored media organizations - known as the press club's *jokin kanjisha* - as will be explained later.

On May 5, media organizations led by the Kyodo news agency and *The Tokyo Shimbun* sent a letter demanding changes to prime

TAKE BACK CONTROL

ministerial press conferences to Kantei spokesperson Hikariko Ono and Kantei press director Kenji Tominaga. The document pointed out that amid the pandemic, the number of seats for the media is capped at 29 - 19 seats for journalists affiliated with the jokin kanjisha and the rest for non-jokin kanjisha, which include small media companies and freelance journalists selected by lottery.

This jokin kanjisha include major newspapers, press agencies and major TV networks including NHK. As a result, local newspapers in particular have struggled with this strict restriction, which hobbles their ability to directly question the prime minister.

The Kantei press conferences, which are organized by the Kantei press club, comprise political journalists called *seijibu kisha*. Since the Abe era, some have criticized the ceremonial nature of the question-and-answer sessions, in which government representatives answers pre-scripted questions from individual journalists. The whole event has the feel of a role-play game between *seijibu kisha* and the government. In response, officials agreed to limited reforms, such as allowing a freelancer to ask a question.

These press conferences should be - must be - an opportunity for the media, as part of a democratic society, to ask the prime minister questions on behalf of the public. Even Donald Trump, who described many sections of the media as his enemies, hosted free and open press conferences as president, while Shinzo Abe did not.

What about Suga? Nineteen out of the 29 seats available at his press conferences were grabbed by jokin kanjisha. The rest went to local newspapers and TV, and freelance jour-

nalists - all selected randomly. Each media organization is allowed to send one person into the room. These are the restrictions Suga introduced while acting as Abe's spokesman in the early days of the Covid-19 pandemic. And he has capitalized on the arrangement since becoming prime minister, as a virus prevention measure.

But are they solely intended as a virus measure?

The Kantei rules dictate that as a condition for entering the briefing room, journalists are not allowed to speak, other than to ask their question using a microphone located in the corner of the room. They must not speak to each other, despite abiding by social-distancing rules more diligently than government officials in the room. It is clear that doubling the number of seats would not increase the risk of infection.

What is particularly striking about the Kantei press conference problem is that the questioners from jokin kanjisha dictate the Q&A sessions. Although states of emergency have had a significant effect on Japan's regions, local media tend to be restricted in asking questions due to the monopolistic framework now in place.

Another hindrance to freedom at the press conferences is the "one media, one person" rule. Questioners are *seijibu kisha* reporting exclusively on Kantei affairs. Due to their cozy relationship with the Prime Minister's Office, their questions are sometimes considered too soft. That is a problem when you remember that these questions are supposed to be asked on behalf of the public.

For example, one NHK *seijibu kisha* asked about the Japan-U.S. summit at the start of a press conference that had been called to discuss the declaration of a new state of emergency. A Jiji Press *seijibu kisha* asked about the possibility of the cabinet reshuffle. Most people, especially people living in regions subject to Covid-19 restrictions, would have wanted to know about public health measures rather than diplomacy or the possible dissolution of the lower house of parliament.

The Suga administration, however, dismissed demands for changes to the way it runs his press conferences. "Due to the 'three Cs (avoiding confined spaces, crowds and close-contact settings), we will continue to take thorough measures to prevent the spread of Covid-19," it said in response to the

Questioners are seijibu kisha reporting exclusively on Kantei affairs. Due to their cozy relationship with the Prime Minister's Office, their questions are sometimes considered too soft. That is a problem when you remember that these questions are supposed to be asked on behalf of the public.

TAKE BACK CONTROL

May 5 letter. “Thank you for your cooperation and understanding regarding the restrictions in the briefing room.”

Some may agree with their response, especially those living in the center of Tokyo. But others living in the suburbs may feel differently. A local journalist had this to say: “The Kantei definitely downplays the press club because they know that it is already divided.” This refers to the fact that the protest letter was sent without the unanimous agreement of press club member organizations.

The protest letter was supported by 18 local publications, including *The Kyoto Shimbun*, *The Shinano Mainichi Shimbun*, *The Kumamoto Nichi Nichi Shimbun*, *The Kobe Shimbun*, *Ryukyu Shinpo*, and *The Okinawa Times* – all of which had an interest in highlighting the problem due to the prolonged states of emergency in Hyogo, Kyoto and Okinawa prefectures, where those newspapers are based. Following discussions with the 19 jokin kanjisha, opinion among press club members split into two camps.

“Although almost all of the jokin kanjisha newspapers agreed with our opinion, the broadcasters disagreed with us,” my source said. Broadcasters did not support the local newspapers because they said they wanted to prevent the spread of the coronavirus. There was no discussion at the time about how to gain support for writing the letter. As a result, it was

submitted under the name of the two kanjisha – Kyodo and *The Tokyo Shimbun* – but without the agreement of the entire the press club.

Therefore, the protest was meaningless, and was summarily dismissed by the Kantei.

And as a result, the system is still in place.

But is this how a press club attached to the highest office in the land should be conducting itself in a democracy?

I sincerely hope the jokin kanjisha agree to increase the number of journalists attending press conferences while taking thorough coronavirus prevention measures. If not, the 19 jokin kanjisha should also be chosen at random, along with members of the 10 other smaller media organizations, plus freelancers.

It is only fair that all journalists should be randomly selected to join the prime minister’s press conferences, whether they are friendly to the government or not.

At the May 28 press conference, a reporter from Mainichi Broadcasting in Osaka asked Suga a pertinent question: “How long will it take to complete vaccinations, given the correlation between vaccine coverage and the infection rate in Japan? Could you also give us a clear plan for your target of vaccinating 50% of the population?” By contrast, questions from many of the big media companies – the jokin kanjisha – missed the point.


An alternative to holding a mass lottery would be to reserve 19 chairs for local newspapers, freelancers and alike, and 10 for jokin kanjisha, with the occupants of either category selected at random. Those arrangements would benefit people throughout Japan.

We must regain control of our press conferences by Japanese leaders on behalf of the people. Doing so would be the most effective contribution the media can make toward fighting this pandemic.

A reporter from Mainichi Broadcasting in Osaka asked Suga a pertinent question: “How long will it take to complete vaccinations, given the correlation between vaccine coverage and the infection rate in Japan? Could you also give us a clear plan for your target of vaccinating 50% of the population?” By contrast, questions from many of the big media companies – the jokin kanjisha – missed the point.

● Yoichiro Tateiwa is executive editor of a nonprofit investigative journalism site *InFact*, co-founder of *FactCheck Initiative Japan* and co-founder of the *Japan Center of Money and Politics*. Japanese-to-English translation by Shoko Naito.

FEATURE



X

MARKS

THE SPOT

**Tokyo sites recall assassinations
(and sometimes the assassin)**

KYLE JOHNSON ON UNSPLASH

MARK SCHREIBER

In the autumn of 1994, I was invited to attend a symposium on the problems of guns in society. Held at the venerable Hibiya Public Hall adjacent to the park, the program featured opening remarks by Prime Minister Tomiichi Murayama, followed by a panel discussion. Then-UPI bureau chief Glenn Davis, a native Texan, had been enlisted to offer the American viewpoint.

When Davis' turn came to speak, he began by saying, "I feel a little strange talking about guns, when close to this very spot, Asanuma was assassinated with a sword."

Glenn's remark produced an audible reaction from the audience, who were reminded that on the afternoon of October 12, 1960, as Prime Minister Hayato Ikeda looked on, rival Socialist Party Chairman Inejiro Asanuma was

fatally stabbed on the stage by a 17-year-old student wielding a samurai sword.

In an e-mail, Davis wrote to me: "I would have liked to have had the opportunity of asking why Otoyama Yamaguchi, that 17-year-old, got a front row seat. Certainly the police knew he had been arrested on numerous (14) occasions for violent behavior and that he was a disciple of Bin Akao (leader of the Greater Japan Patriotic Party), who had repeatedly called for Asanuma's assassination. As far as I know, very few Japanese journalists have delved into that obvious set-up.

"When I later interviewed Akao at his home, he had a huge painting hanging on the wall of his living room portraying the moment of the assassination, with flames surrounding the assailant, as if it was a moment of heroic significance."

X MARKS THE SPOT



▲
The Hibiya Public Hall, where Inejiro Asanuma was assassinated on October 12, 1960.

“A surprising number of memorials and monuments to the victims of assassinations can be found in Tokyo. In some cases, memorials honor the perpetrators as well.”

Three weeks after Asanuma’s murder, Yamaguchi fashioned a rope from his bedsheet and hanged himself from a light fixture in his cell. On the wall, he’d used an amalgam of tooth powder and water to write “Long live the Emperor” and “Would that I had seven lives to give for my country.”

Fifty years to the minute of Asanuma’s assassination – at 3:03 p.m. on October 12, 2010 – a right-wing group held a ceremony on the stage of Hibiya Public Hall to commemorate Yamaguchi’s act. In a parallel universe, it would be akin to the Sons of Confederate Veterans renting out Ford’s Theater on April 14 to honor John Wilkes Booth.

The Asanuma incident was by no means Japan’s last political assassination, or assassination attempt. But by virtue of its being recorded by an NHK TV crew, and owing to Mainichi Shimbun photographer Yasushi Nakao’s dramatic shot showing the mortally wounded Asanuma – his hands positioned in a futile attempt to foil Yamaguchi’s second thrust – it was without a doubt the most sensational.

A surprising number of memorials and monuments to the victims of assassinations can be found in Tokyo. In some cases, memorials honor the perpetrators as well.

A century before Asanuma was cut down, on March 24, 1860, *Tairo* (great elder) Ii Naosuke, Japan’s most powerful official, was approaching the Sakuradamon gate of the palace when his retinue was attacked by a troupe of 17 *shishi* (men of high purpose) from the Mito domain,



The Sakuradamon gate, as it appears today.

and one from Satsuma. During the bloody melee, Ii, age 44, was pulled out his palanquin and decapitated.

Two years earlier, Ii had ordered the Ansei Purge, jailing, exiling and some cases executing 100 individuals accused of conspiring against the Tokugawa government. The killers also objected to Ii’s having negotiated, and in July 1858 signed, the Treaty of Amity and Commerce between Japan and the United States, as well as subsequent treaties with European powers.

Nearly a quarter of Romulus Hillsborough’s 2017 work, *Samurai Assassins: “Dark Murder” and the Meiji Restoration, 1853-1868*, is devoted to the circumstances surrounding the Sakuradamon Incident.

In 1909, the 50th anniversary of opening of Yokohama port, an imposing statue of Ii was erected on a hilltop in Kamonyama Park in the city’s Nishi Ward. Ii’s killers also have a monument, at the Atago Shrine in Tokyo’s Minato Ward, where they assembled before their attack.

Foreigners were frequently targeted by xenophobic samurai after the signing of the Convention of Kanagawa in March 1854 and the subsequent opening up of treaty ports around Japan.

On the night of January 14, 1861, the Japanese interpreter of U.S. Ambassador Townsend Harris, 28-year-old Dutch-born Henry Heusken, was returning on horseback from a dinner with a Prussian official when he was attacked by a group of *shishi* from the Satsuma domain at the Nakanohashi bridge near Azabu Juban. He managed to flee to the nearby American Legation, but the sword cuts left him eviscerated, and he was pronounced dead shortly after midnight. Heusken’s killers were never brought to justice. He left behind a Japanese wife and child.

A plaque previously identifying the assassination site at Nakanohashi has been removed, but a newer sign in Japanese has been posted out-

X MARKS THE SPOT



Kamonyama statue



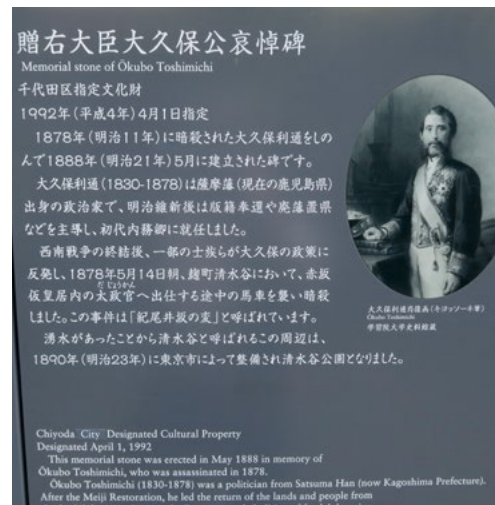
Heusken Grave

side Korinji temple, close to the French Embassy, where Heusken's grave can be visited in the temple's cemetery.

The sword remained the assassins' weapon of choice well into the 20th century. In his 1921 memoir, *A Diplomat in Japan*, Sir Ernest M. Satow (1843-1929) described what happened to French army Lt. Henri J.J. Camus at Idogaya in Yokohama on October 14, 1863.

A French officer of Chasseurs named Camus, while taking his afternoon's ride at a distance of not more than two or three miles from the settlement ... was attacked and murdered. His right arm was found at a little distance from his body, still clutching the bridle of his pony. There was a cut down one side of the face, one through the nose, a third across the chin, the right jugular vein was severed by a slash in the throat, and the vertebral column was completely divided. The left arm was hanging on by a piece of skin and the left side laid open to the heart. All the wounds were perfectly clean, thus showing what a terrible weapon the Japanese katana was in the hands of a skilful swordsman.

A decade into the Meiji Restoration, on May 14, 1878, the carriage of Lord of Home Affairs



Monument to Toshimichi Okubo, close to the spot where he was killed in May 1878.

Toshimichi Okubo was attacked by a group of samurai from the former Kaga domain (now Ishikawa Prefecture). The 47-year-old Okubo, a native of Satsuma (now Kagoshima) and regarded as one of the three great nobles who effectuated the Meiji Restoration, was cut to ribbons and died on the spot. The monument to Okubo and an explanatory bilingual signboard are situated in Shimizudani Park in Kiyoi-cho, directly across the street from the Hotel New Otani.

The outbreaks of political violence in the 19th century were to continue during the first three

X MARKS THE SPOT



▲ Monument to “constitutional government” at Asakusa Honganji temple. The names of 10 assassinated officials (including survivors) are inscribed on its reverse side.

and a half decades of the 20th century, chipping away at the underpinnings of the Taisho Democracy - not unlike concurrent events in Weimar Germany. Indeed, the list of plots, assassination attempts and successful assassinations reads like a veritable *Who's Who* of Japan's oligarchs, politicians and business leaders. They include the heads of the Yasuda and Mitsui *zaibatsu*, Zenjiro Yasuda (1921) and Takuma Dan (1932), and army Major General Tetsuzan Nagata, Head of the Military Service Bureau (1935). Two others - *Yomiuri Shimbun* publisher Matsutaro Shoriki (1935) and constitutional scholar Tatsukichi Minobe (1936) - were wounded but survived.

Each day, thousands of people walk, in most cases unknowingly, past two monuments in



Statue of Korekiyo Takahashi, killed during the army uprising in February 1936, at the location of his former residence.

Tokyo Station. Few pause to contemplate the wall plaques and floor markers designating the spots where the assassinations occurred.

A plaque under the rotunda of the Marunouchi South Exit indicates where Prime Minister Takashi Hara (65) was stabbed to death by a railway worker on November 4, 1921. A second, mounted on a pillar close to the wicket of the Tokaido Shinkansen, indicates the spot where, on November 14, 1930, Prime Minister Osachi Hamaguchi was shot by a member of an ultra-nationalist secret society.

Hamaguchi had infuriated opponents of the London Naval Treaty, which he had supported as an austerity measure to deal with Japan's economic crisis. He lived for nine more months before dying, aged 61.

In 1943, veteran journalist Hugh Byas (1875-1945), a Scot who for several decades reported from Tokyo for *The Times of London* and *The New York Times*, published *Government by Assassination*. This is how Byas summarized the evolution of political assassinations in his book:

Some of the young officers ... had shown that the Japanese army was infected with ideas supposed to be confined to the fanatics of the patriotic societies When it appeared that the army was in the movement, the Black Dragon Society and all the others became supers on the stage. There were no more political murders by civilians. The patriotic societies relapsed into

X MARKS THE SPOT



▲ This statue of the goddess Kannon was erected in 1965 on the site of the former Yoyogi military prison, where 17 army rebels and two civilian ringleaders were executed by firing squad in July and August 1936.

anti-foreign and pro-war mobs, the role for which they were naturally fitted. The army installed itself in power with the concurrence of a docile nation intoxicated by foreign war, its civilian leaders terrorized by assassination.

On May 15, 1932, 11 junior naval officers stormed into the office of Prime Minister Tsuyoshi Inukai. Their leader exclaimed, "Dialogue is useless!" before opening fire and killing him.

Reporting on Inukai's assassination, Byas wrote: "The man in the street was startled but not alarmed. A Japanese neighbor was a little amused by my excitement. 'The Japanese people will not be very angry about the Prime Minister's murder,' he said. 'Many of us think the politicians needed a lesson.'"

On February 26, 1936, some 1,500 soldiers belonging to the army's Imperial Way faction launched a bloody uprising to demand a "Showa Restoration."



The Kodokan museum in Mito City, an institute of higher learning for samurai, displays a large scroll of *Son-Jo* - an abbreviation for "sonno joi" (revere the Emperor, expell the barbarians) - the slogan adopted by opponents of *kaikoku*, or the opening of Japan to foreign trade).

At the prime minister's residence, rebel officers mistook army general Denzo Matsuo for Prime Minister Keisuke Okada and executed him by machine gun. (Okada escaped by hiding in a closet; but he resigned 12 days later.) Makoto Saito, Lord Keeper of the Privy Seal, was killed at his home in Yotsuya. General Jotaro Watanabe, Inspector General of Military Training, was machine-gunned at his home in Ogikubo as his wife and daughter looked on.

Of four important figures assassinated that day, 81-year-old Minister of Finance Korekiyo Takahashi had previously served as a former president of the Bank of Japan and prime minister. At gunpoint, a servant led two officers into his bedroom, upon which they killed Takahashi as he slept.

Takahashi's former residence became a memorial park next to the Canadian Embassy in Aoyama. The house in which he was slain was rebuilt at the Edo-Tokyo Open Air Architectural Museum in Koganei City.

The dark histories surrounding the Prime Minister's Office and neighboring residence have not escaped the notice of contemporary politicians. Former Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi reportedly arranged for a Shinto priest to perform an exorcism. The two most recent prime ministers, Shinzo Abe and Yoshihide Suga, simply refrained from moving into the residence. The considerable outlays for renovations and maintenance notwithstanding, it has remained unoccupied since 2012.

● Mark Schreiber writes the Big in Japan and Bilingual columns for *The Japan Times*.

FEATURE

SAVING FLEET STREET



CREATIVE COMMONS ATTRIBUTION-SHARE ALIKE 4.0

Campaign launched to spare iconic buildings from wrecking ball

ANTHONY ROWLEY

One of the more endearing characteristics of the British is their love of historical buildings and their willingness to fight for their preservation. That spirit is very much in evidence now as the Chartered Institute of Journalists [CJoJ] battles to save part of London's Fleet Street - the former home of London's newspaper industry.

What the CJoJ (itself a 117-year-old institution) calls "iconic buildings and monuments which are part of the vital free press and newspaper heritage of London" are at the heart of the battle, and the institute is taking the fight all the way to the top to the prime minister, Boris Johnson.

A proposed new "justice quarter" consisting of law courts and a police station will require the destruction of the entrance to Chronicle House at number 78 Fleet Street, which was built in 1924 and named after one of Britain's great campaigning liberal newspapers.

"This is a terrible desecration of the history and significance of a vital section of Fleet Street which has been the inspiration for media freedom everywhere in the world," said the CJoJ's president, Prof. Tim Crook, in the latest issue of the institute's house magazine, *The Journal*.

Crook first became involved with Fleet Street

▲
Chronicle House at
number 78 Fleet Street

SAVING FLEET STREET



► **Thomas Power O'Connor (1848 - 1929), journalist, Irish nationalist politician**

when he did some income-supplementing street sweeping jobs there before going on to a career that saw him become a lecturer in media law and ethics at Goldsmiths University in London.

That passion never left him.

The CloJ, he said, is also “appalled” that the new development involves the removal of a bust to the reforming newspaper editor and Parliamentarian Thomas Power O'Connor - or simply T.P. O'Connor as he was usually known - who lived from 1848 to 1929.

In 1888, O'Connor founded *The Star*, an evening newspaper in London, which campaigned for the rights of the homeless, poor and destitute. The paper opposed the Boer War and made it its mission to expose the unacceptable face of capitalism - stances that prompted brokers to set light to copies of the paper on the floor of the London Stock Exchange.

O'Connor was a fellow of the institute and bequeathed a charity in his name that has since benefited hundreds of journalists in need. The Ireland-born journalist was the only Irish Nationalist Home Rule MP to be elected to parliament from an English constituency.

The institute is supporting the campaign by SAVE Britain's Heritage, which has launched a petition to persuade the secretary of state for housing, communities and local government, Robert Jenrick, and the U.K. government to intervene and preserve the facade of the historically significant Chronicle House (which served as the first headquarters of the CloJ).

Crook is also writing to the Johnson and the minister for the cabinet office, Michael Gove, because of their backgrounds in journalism, as well as the secretary of state for digital, culture, media and sport, Oliver Dowden.

“There is no reason why the new development could not have imaginatively retained the architecture and symbolism of this memorable and famous section of Fleet Street, which has been the case with [Lord] Beaverbrook's Express building and the former headquarters of the *Daily Telegraph* group, said Crook, who was once employed by the City of London as a road sweeper in Fleet Street and its surrounding alleyways and adjoining squares.

“As a teenager while sweeping Fleet Street, I read the tribute to T.P. O'Connor, and the other commemorative plaques and statues dedicated to great journalists and writers such as Charles Dickens, Edgar Wallace, William Makepeace Thackeray and Dr Johnson and these drew me to my future 44-year career in journalism,” he said.

It is “really heart-breaking this development means so many historic Fleet Street newspaper buildings will be lost. When you destroy such important memories and symbols of the past you also destroy the values and significance they bring to the present”.

For this writer, who worked as a journalist on *The Times of London* from 1968 to 1976, memories of a then vibrant Fleet Street are strong. Walking into the street in the early hours of the morning from late duty at at the Times' headquarters in Printing House Square, Blackfriars, was to enter another world.

There was a frenzy of activity as workers loaded bales of newspapers fresh off the roaring presses into fleets of delivery vans that sped off to deliver their cargo to railway stations, from where the news was taken to breakfast tables all over Britain and beyond.

There was a sense of belonging to a newspaper industry that combined the crafts of writers, subeditors, linotype operators, printing press operators, loaders, van drivers and delivery boys. Fleet Street was at its center. Its greatest days are surely worth preserving.

● **Anthony Rowley is the Tokyo correspondent for *Singapore Business Times***

BOOKS

THE CIA AND THE PROMETHEUS OF JAPANESE NUCLEAR POWER

An extract from Jon Mitchell's new book *Poisoning the Pacific: The US Military's Secret Dumping of Plutonium, Chemical Weapons, and Agent Orange*

JEREMY BISHOP ON UNPLASH

In December 1953, President Dwight D. Eisenhower gave his “Atoms for Peace” talk at the United Nations to sell the world on the civilian use of US nuclear power and distract growing criticism from its ever-expanding program of weapons tests. Given its destruction of Hiroshima and Nagasaki less than a decade earlier, the US government understood that Japan would be the perfect showcase for nuclear power stations—and it found ready supporters among the Japanese conservatives who it had allowed back into powerful positions following its Reverse Course.

Pivotal to US machinations for nuclear power was Shoriki Matsutarō. Prior to World War II, Shoriki had been a police chief in Tokyo, cracking down on public demonstrations and launching raids on universities. Then, in 1924, he purchased the struggling *Yomiuri Shimbun* and soon transformed it into the most influential newspaper in Japan via an unlikely editorial line of supporting Japanese colonialism in Asia and promoting baseball by arranging visits by such US teams as Babe Ruth's New York Yankees. In 1936, he helped create a single government-run news agency, *Domei Tsushinsha*, which endorsed militarism and censored any news critical of the authorities, particularly, as time went by, Japan's losing war. Following surrender, Shoriki was arrested by the United States; his file noted,

“He ought to be regarded as one of the most evil influences in poisoning the public mind.” But during the Reverse Course, the United States realized it could make good use of his media and political clout. Thus, after dismissing accusations against him as leftist scuttlebutt, it released Shoriki from prison.

Throughout its 1945–1952 Occupation, the United States waged a multipronged propaganda campaign in Japan; on one hand, its censorship removed anti-US sentiments, and on the other hand, the US Information Agency churned out thousands of hours of radio shows and cinema reels to promulgate pro-US feeling. Worrying the end of the occupation would limit such operations, the CIA reached out to Shoriki—who they dubbed PODAM—and others to wage psychological warfare on the newly restored sovereign nation. In 1952, backed by the CIA and the American Council, Shoriki set up Japan's first commercial TV station, *Nippon Television* (NTV); it quickly became a massive success.

With Shoriki on side, the United States now could influence both the *Yomiuri Shimbun* and NTV. It consolidated its power by pumping millions of dollars into the newly created Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) to promote US interests and block the spread of progressivism. The funding continued for decades, and, since 1955, the LDP has remained in power almost continually,

One of the prime goals for the United States, Shoriki, and the LDP was the promotion of nuclear power; stripped of the empire that had once provided Japan with coal and oil.

THE CIA AND THE PROMETHEUS OF JAPANESE NUCLEAR POWER



US NAVY PHOTO BY MASS COMMUNICATION SPECIALIST SEAMAN NICHOLAS A. GROESCH

On March 22, 2011, sailors aboard the USS Ronald Reagan scrub decks to remove radioactive contamination following the triple meltdowns at the Fukushima Daiichi power plant; hundreds believe they were sickened by exposure.

transforming Japan into a de facto one-party state, riddled with nepotism, corruption, and subservience to Washington.

One of the prime goals for the United States, Shoriki, and the LDP was the promotion of nuclear power; stripped of the empire that had once provided Japan with coal and oil, Japanese conservatives realized their resource-strapped nation needed a way to produce electricity; nuclear power held the extra appeal of providing plutonium to make the nuclear weapons for which many rightists hankered. The United States realized the sale of nuclear reactors to Japan would be both a financial boon and a public relations victory that might go a long way in dispelling its image of using Asians as, in the words of the *Washington Post*, “nuclear cannon fodder.” Starting on January 1, 1954, the *Yomiuri* began a series of articles lauding the wonders of nuclear power, the first of which was titled “Finally, the Sun Has Been Captured.”

Three months later, the Bravo disaster and contamination of the Lucky Dragon derailed their propaganda campaign, causing a public backlash against nuclear technology. In secret memos, the CIA decried those who “rang the gongs of pollution by atomic waste, the Bikini incident, and Hiroshima, attempting to exercise the by now well-known Japanese terror of atomic radiation.”

Redoubling its efforts, the United States paid \$2 million “condolence money” to the Japanese fishermen. Soon thereafter, the Japan Atomic Energy Commission (JAEC) was created, and Japan and the United States signed the Atomic Energy Agreement to allow shipments of enriched uranium to Japan. Shoriki, now a member of the first LDP cabinet, was appointed the inaugural president of JAEC. His CIA file notes he touted himself as “Prometheus who was bringing this fire to Japan.” Meanwhile,

to win over skeptics in academia, the US government lavished Japanese university professors with trips to the United States to sell them on the benefits of nuclear power...

In the coming decades, fifty-four nuclear reactors were built in Japan. This rapid spread was facilitated by Japan’s “Nuclear Village,” a loose network of politicians, academics, corporations, and the media, working together to convince the public, and one another, that nuclear power was cheap and safe. LDP politicians received campaign funds from the industry, and upon their retirement, they parachuted into high-paid corporate jobs in the companies they had previously overseen. Pronuclear academics received research grants, while antinuclear scholars were kept out of the loop.

Power companies ensured media support and/or silence via extravagant advertising budgets. At a local level, the communities where the nuclear power plants were built—many of which were in rural areas already suffering from declining populations and economies—were awarded subsidies to host the facilities, and the plants provided jobs for residents.

The close relationship between government agencies, corporations that built nuclear reactors, and electric power companies ensured that the nuclear power industry was largely allowed to regulate itself, putting profits ahead of safety. Inevitably, such self-policing and lack of outside oversight led to results similar to the US military: The industry cut corners, downplayed risks, and ignored worst-case scenarios; for decades in Japan, for instance, the operators of nuclear power plants falsified safety records.

In 1999, an accident at the Tokaimura plant, Ibaraki Prefecture, spread radiation more than 1.5 kilometers, forced 300,000 residents to shelter indoors, and exposed more than 600 people,

THE CIA AND THE PROMETHEUS OF JAPANESE NUCLEAR POWER

two of whom died. In its wake, only minor reforms were introduced. More significantly, operators ignored the risk of earthquakes, siting plants near fault lines and building them to ride out only relatively small tremors. Such incidents made many Japanese people skeptical of the benefits of nuclear power, and communities filed lawsuits against the construction or operation of such plants; however, the courts unfailingly ruled against citizens in favor of the industry. The mainstream media, instead of siding with the public, failed to place nuclear businesses under scrutiny, instead basking in utilities' advertising revenues and personal favors. Top Japanese media executives were on a nuclear industry-sponsored junket to China in March 2011 when the folly of packing so many reactors into one of the most tectonically active places on the planet became clear...

3.11 and Operation Tomodachi

Following the tsunami, the US military dispatched relief teams to Tohoku in a mission called "Operation Tomodachi." It was brave, essential work that helped thousands of Japanese survivors—but at the same time it showed that the military had learned little about how to deal with radioactive contamination six decades after the debacle of Operation CROSSROADS.

During Tohoku relief operations, service members and vehicles became contaminated with radiation that was then spread far and wide throughout its bases in the mainland and Okinawa. According to briefings from the military's Joint Task Force Civil Support, a group specializing in chemical, biological, and radiological incidents, among the vehicles contaminated in Japan were Humvee trucks and Sea Knight helicopters. Radiation accumulated in the vehicles' air filters and wheel wells—and also on the blades of helicopters. The report stated that some equipment was "permanently damaged beyond repair."

Another report from the US Army's Center for Army Lessons Learned shows the primitive methods by which the military attempted to decontaminate its vehicles. Service members used paper towels, "baby wipes," duct tape, and hot water; it seems some were not equipped with protective clothing. The reason given for such basic techniques was that they were "based upon an effort not to alarm the civilian population." The contaminated water and solid waste were stored on six installations: Misawa Air Base, Yokota Air Base, NAFA, Yokosuka Naval Base, Sasebo Naval Base, and MCAS Futenma.

One internal document revealed the large volumes involved. As of May 2011, Misawa Air Base had more than 30,000 liters of liquid waste, and Atsugi Air Base had almost 95,000 liters of liquid waste and 37 barrels of solid waste; there were smaller volumes, too, at Yokota Air Base and Sasebo Naval Base. In response to my enquiries, the military admitted that radioactive wastewater had been dumped at the Misawa and Atsugi bases; it claimed the liquid was "determined to be safe based on GOJ standards for discharge into the sewer system." Neither of the communities near the bases had been notified of the disposal, and when my investigation made headline news, there was widespread anger.

Many US service members believe they were sickened during relief work. Operating off the coast of Tohoku, there were twenty-five navy vessels — including the largest, the USS Ronald Reagan — with approximately seventeen thousand crew; when explosions tore apart the Fukushima power plant, radioactive materials drifted out to sea. One of those on board the Reagan recalled the clouds as a warm gust in the freezing cold air; it felt "like I was licking aluminum foil," she said.

The ship's commanding officers announced they had entered a radioactive plume and ordered everyone below decks. Ventilation systems were turned off, but, much to the crew's dismay, they were soon ordered back into the area where they had encountered the cloud. Other ships arrived in the vicinity as well. Just like those involved in Operation CROSSROADS, their vessels' drinking water was produced from desalinated seawater, and this too had become contaminated with radiation. The crews drank it, ate food that had been cooked in it, and showered in it.

One sailor recalled what he believes was the immediate effects of exposure, saying, "People would shit themselves on the flight deck so often that it wasn't even a surprise anymore." In addition to diarrhea, other short-term symptoms included hair loss and rashes. As sickness spread throughout the crew, the navy blamed it on stress and then gastroenteritis. With the broken reactors continuing to emit radioactive steam and particles, the navy vessels remained in the area conducting relief operations for the next several weeks; according to sailors, they were sometimes so close to shore that they could see the nuclear power station. Service members were ordered to decontaminate the decks; photos from the work show them scrubbing with brushes; no one is wearing masks or ventilators.

In 2014, the assistant Secretary of Defense for health affairs, Dr. Jonathan Woodson, concluded the exposure of Operation Tomodachi participants was "very small and well below levels associated with adverse medical conditions." In the following years, sailors fell ill from thyroid disorders, leukemia, and other cancers; at least seven died. Unable to sue the Department of Defense, they filed lawsuits against TEPCO at a court in San Diego, where, at the time, the USS Ronald Reagan had been homeported.

The number of sailors involved in the case reached four hundred; however, in March 2019, the court dismissed the case, with the judge stating, "After considering the Japanese and United States governments' views, the Court finds that the foreign and public policy interests weigh toward dismissal." The handling of the case has infuriated veterans and their legal team; one of their lawyers stated, "These kids were first responders. They went in happily doing a humanitarian mission, and they came out cooked."

● **Jon Mitchell is a British journalist and author based in Japan. In 2015, he was awarded the Foreign Correspondents' Club of Japan's Freedom of the Press Lifetime Achievement Award for his investigations into human rights issues on Okinawa. His research has featured in reports for the US Congress and been the focus of debate in the Japanese parliament.**

CLUB NEWS

New members

**ASSOCIATE MEMBER**

LOW HON MUN Low took up the post of deputy chief of mission at the Singapore Embassy in Tokyo in December 2020. This is his second posting to Japan. He previously served in the embassy from 2012 to 2016 as first secretary, and subsequently as counsellor.

Since joining the ministry of foreign affairs in 2007, Mr Low has served in various capacities on issues related to Southeast Asia and Northeast Asia. He was also special assistant to the foreign minister from 2010 to 2011.

Low graduated with a Master's of Science degree in electrical engineering from Stanford University in 2005, and obtained a Master of Arts in security studies from Georgetown University in 2017.

**ASSOCIATE MEMBER****SHUJI YONEDA****REGULAR MEMBER**

AGNES TANDLER is a freelance journalist who has been covering Asia for more than a decade. Currently based in Sapporo, she focuses on politics and topics related to public health. Agnes grew up in Germany and worked as a correspondent for the Associated Press in Berlin. Her fascination for Japanese culture began as a child when visitors from Japan gave her a miniature statue of the Buddha of Kamakura as a gift. In her free time, Agnes enjoys walking and has written a book about the Shikoku *henro* pilgrimage route. She holds a PhD in political science from the European University Institute in Florence, Italy.

New in the library

1

**An I-Novel**

Minae Mizumura; tr. by Juliet Winters Carpenter
Columbia University Press

2

**Fukushima: Den dramatiske beretning om et herligt sted i Japan**

Asger Røjle Christensen

Turbine
Gift from Asger Røjle Christensen

3

**Shinigami to Yobareta Otoko: The Man Who's Called The Reaper**

死神と呼ばれた男

Yusuke Wada
Water Tree Publisher
Gift from Yusuke Wada

4

**War on Wheels: Inside Keirin and Japan's Cycling Subculture**

Justin McCurry

Pursuit
Gift from Justin McCurry

CLUB NEWS

Join the Film Committee

Join us on Monday, July 5, at 5 pm for a sneak preview screening of *The Gift of Fire*, a film that imagines the possibility that Japan could have been the perpetrator, and not the victim, of the atomic bomb in 1945. The secret history of Japan's own efforts to build a bomb began to emerge about a decade ago, when veteran NHK director Hiroshi Kurosaki discovered a fragment of a young scientist's diary in a Hiroshima library, and began researching its revelations. Kurosaki brought together an international team of creative collaborators to tell the true story of the team of budding scientists at Kyoto Imperial University and their efforts to develop "a new type of bomb that will turn the tide of war." Seventy-five years later,

The Gift of Fire tackles the sticky moral issues arising from mankind's pursuit of scientific advancement, and underscores their emotional costs. Kurosaki and two of his producers, Ko Mori and Katsuhiko Tsuchiya, will join us for the Q&A session. (*The Gift of Fire*, Japan, 2021, 111 minutes, in Japanese/English with Japanese subtitles).

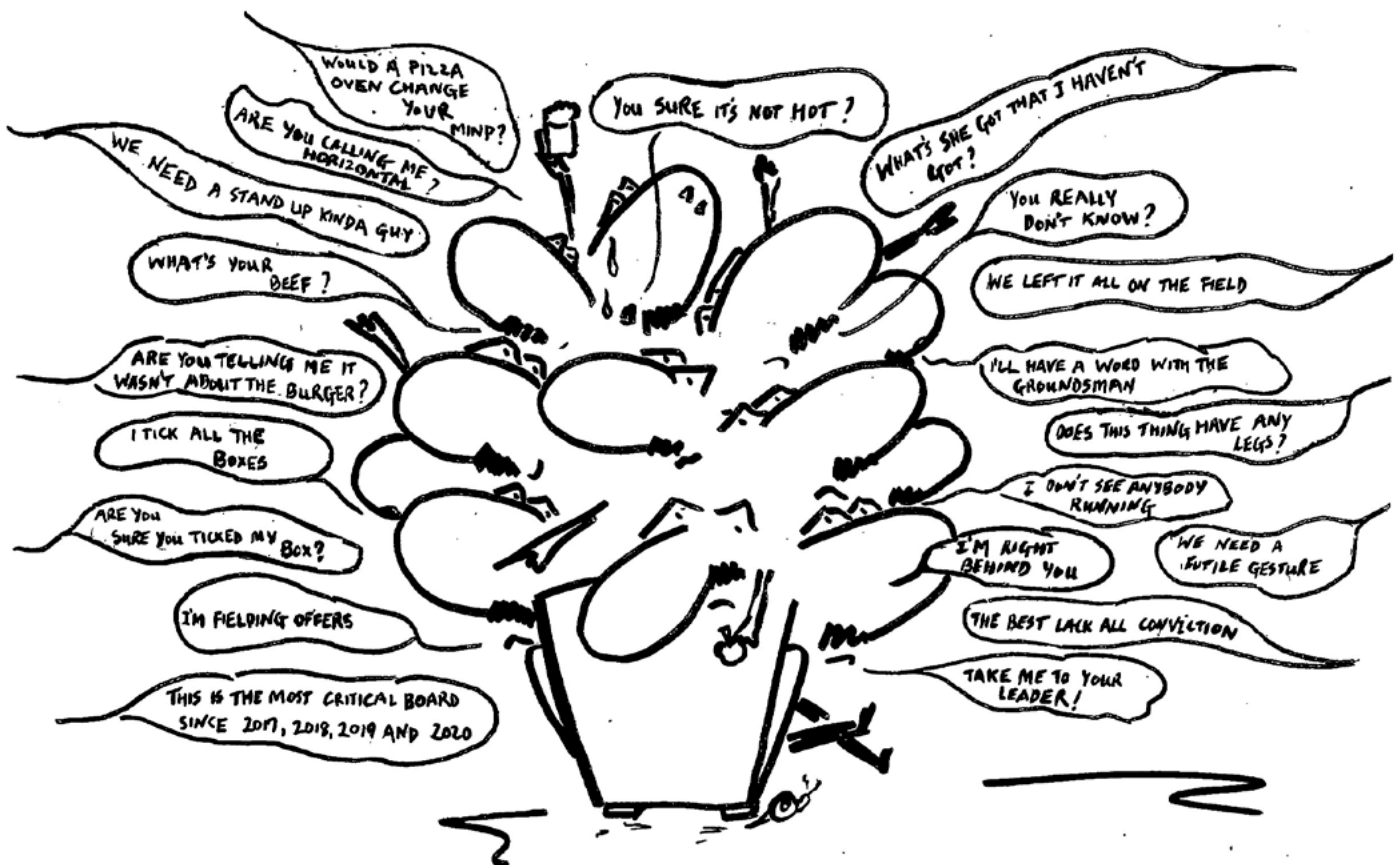


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● Karen Severns

REGULAR in "Limbo"

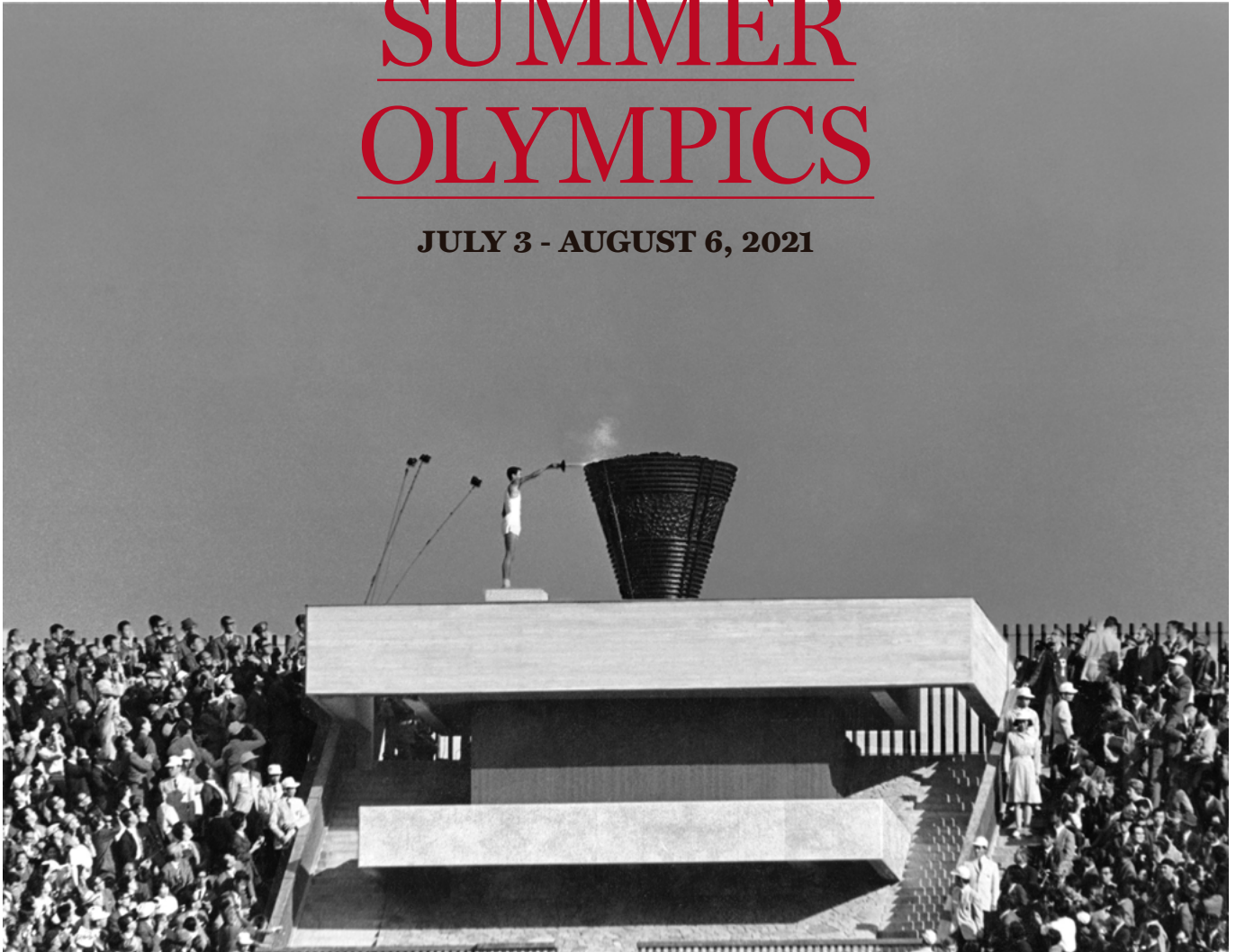
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EXHIBITION

1964 TOKYO SUMMER OLYMPICS

JULY 3 - AUGUST 6, 2021



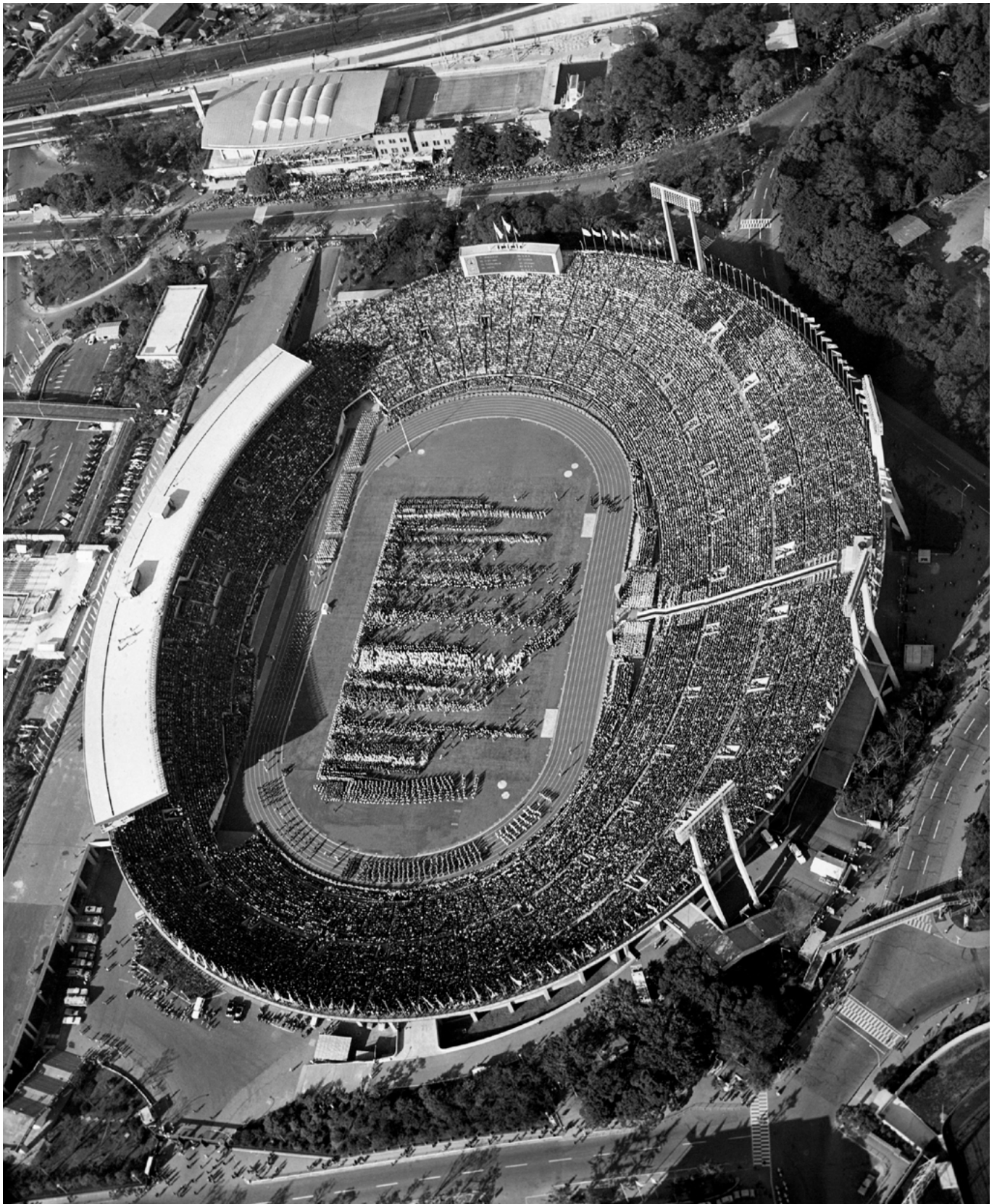
Japanese runner Yoshinori Sakai lights the Olympic cauldron during the opening ceremony of the 1964 Summer Olympics. Sakai was born in Hiroshima on Aug. 6, 1945, the day the nuclear bomb destroyed the city. As the last carrier of the Olympic torch, he symbolized the rebirth of Japan in the 19 years following the end of Second World War.
October 10, 1964

The 1964 Summer Olympics, officially known as the XVIII Olympiad, were held in Tokyo from October 10 to 24. The Games were a venue for demonstrating Japan's transformation from wartime enemy to country of peace. To demonstrate the country's recovery from the war, many infrastructure projects were initiated, including the Shinkansen bullet train service between Osaka and Tokyo, the modernization of Haneda Airport, and construction of numerous highways, expressways and subway lines. In an effort to beautify Tokyo, streets and rivers were cleaned up and more greenery planted throughout the city. The Tokyo Olympics were the first to be held in Asia. It was also the first time that computers were used, improving the accuracy in the timing and scoring of completions. The Games were also the first to be televised internationally.

A growing middle class in Japan rushed out to buy television sets to watch the Games, as well as other household appliances, leading to the term "the Olympic economy". Ninety-three countries competed in the Olympics. Japan won 16 gold medals, five silver and eight bronze, coming in third behind the United States and the Soviet Union. The Games' memorable champions include Abebe Bikila of Ethiopia - the first athlete to win the marathon twice - and Soviet gymnast Larysa Latynina, who brought her career medal total to 18.

EXHIBITION

1964 Tokyo Summer Olympics: July 3 - August 6, 2021

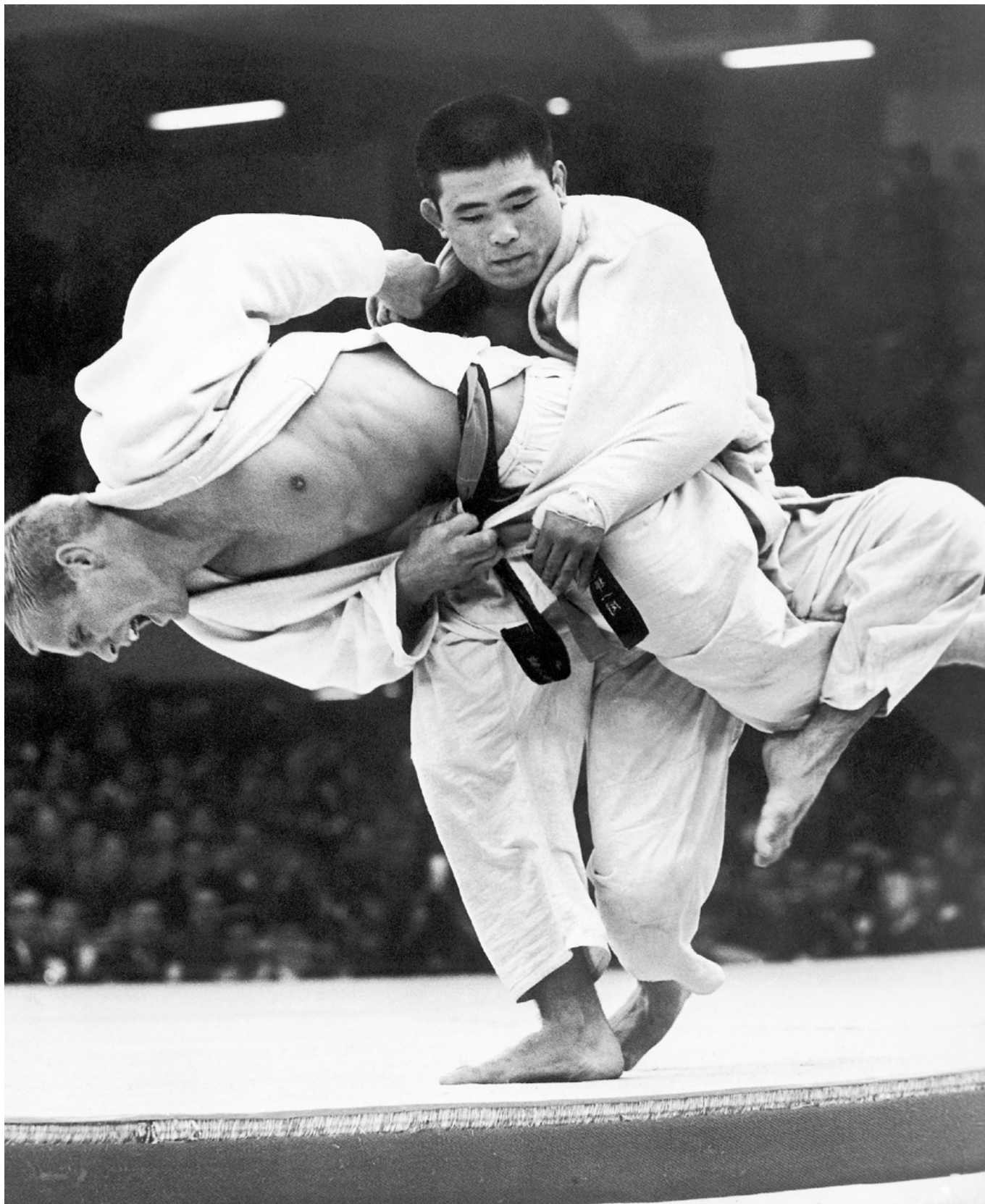


An aerial photo shows a National Stadium during an opening ceremony of Tokyo Olympic Games. October 10, 1964



EXHIBITION

1964 Tokyo Summer Olympics: July 3 - August 6, 2021



Japan's Isao Okano defeats Germany's Wolfgang Hofmann in the Judo Middleweight event to win the gold medal. It was the first time the sport was included in the Summer Olympic Games. October 21, 1964



EXHIBITION

1964 Tokyo Summer Olympics: July 3 - August 6, 2021



Japanese featherweight weightlifter Yoshinobu Miyake succeeds in jerking a 145-kg barbell for a new Olympic record during competition on his way to becoming the first gold medal winner for Japan in the Tokyo Olympics. October 11, 1964



U.S. Marine Lt. Billy Mills pulls off a stunning upset by winning the 10,000 meter Olympic race. Mills set an Olympic record Of 28:24:4 and was the only American ever to win the event. October 14, 1964

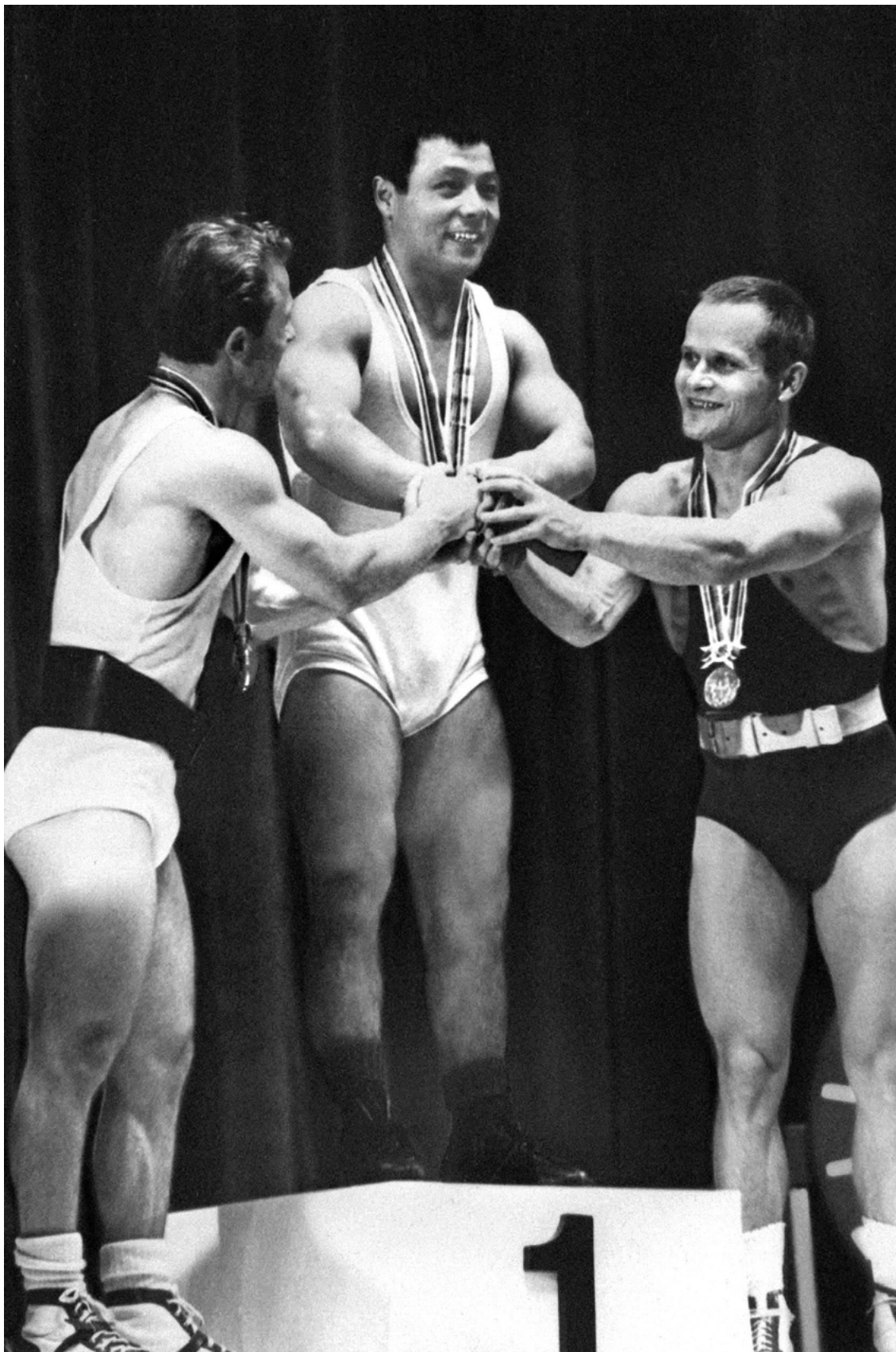
EXHIBITION

1964 Tokyo Summer Olympics: July 3 - August 6, 2021



Japanese runner Yoshinori Sakai carries the Olympic Torch during the opening ceremonies of the 1964 Summer Olympics in Tokyo. Sakai was born in Hiroshima on Aug. 6, 1945, the day the nuclear weapon destroyed the city. October 10, 1964





Gold medalist Yoshinobu Miyake of Japan silver winner (center), Issac Berger of USA (left), and bronze winner Mieczyslaw Nowak of Poland (right) shake hands during the awarding ceremony of the Featherweight Weightlifting competition. October 11, 1964

EXHIBITION

1964 Tokyo Summer Olympics: July 3 - August 6, 2021



Don Schollander of the USA poses with the four gold medals he won in the swimming competitions. He won them in the 100 and 400 meter Freestyle and swam legs in the winning 400 meter Medley and 800 meter Freestyle Relays. Schollander, at 18 years, is the first man to ever win four gold medals in Olympic swimming. October 18, 1964



EXHIBITION

1964 Tokyo Summer Olympics: July 3 - August 6, 2021



Czechoslovakia's Vojtech Masny (right) kicks the ball as Hungary's Gusztav Szepeni attempts to block during the soccer match finals. October 23, 1964

EXHIBITION

1964 Tokyo Summer Olympics: July 3 - August 6, 2021



A young Japanese lady wearing a traditional kimono has her hand kissed by Mexican pentathlon athlete David Barcena, wearing a sombrero hat, at the closing ceremony for the Tokyo Olympics. Mexico will be holding the 1968 Olympics in Mexico City.
October 24, 1964

EXHIBITION

1964 Tokyo Summer Olympics: July 3 - August 6, 2021



Royal Box in National Stadium during the opening ceremony of the 1964 Summer Olympics.
October 10, 1964



EXHIBITION

1964 Tokyo Summer Olympics: July 3 - August 6, 2021



Opening ceremony for the Summer Olympics. Flags of several nations in the foreground with the Olympic rings made in the sky by Japanese Air Force jets. The XVIII Olympiad was the first time the games were held in Asia with more than 7,000 athletes from 94 nations are competing. October 10, 1964

EXHIBITION

1964 Tokyo Summer Olympics: July 3 - August 6, 2021



Henry Carr of USA cuts the tape to win the Men's 200-meter final at the National Stadium in Tokyo. October 17, 1964.





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