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INVENTING THE SOCIALIST CHILD IN CHINA, 1949-1966

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by

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Abstract

Inventing the Socialist Child in China, 1949-1966

Melissa A. Brzycki

"Inventing the Socialist Child" illustrates the thinking, institution-building, and daily practices by which childhood was reformulated and shaped in the context of socialist nation-building in urban China from 1949 to 1966. This project draws on archival and published documents, mostly from the cities of Shanghai and Tianjin, to demonstrate that, despite numerous and overlapping political campaigns, unstable foreign relations, and rapid policy changes during the decades following the establishment of the People's Republic of China in 1949, one area in which the state had a remarkably consistent policy was its efforts to foster a specific kind of socialist childhood. Although the officials of the Maoist state believed children should be reared by their families, their goal of producing cooperative, revolutionary citizens required efforts to constrain non-state "bad influences." State officials' wariness about the values imparted by family and community members was compounded by the mobilization of women for production, which took many adult women out of the home and had the potential to leave children unsupervised for long periods. The desire to supplement or supplant inadequate supervision of children caused the state to intrude in family structure and child-rearing in new and important ways. "Inventing the Socialist Child" helps scholars understand how the shift to socialism brought major changes to every area of life, including gender roles, family life and child rearing, and the

everyday experience of childhood during a time of revolutionary change. “Inventing the Socialist Child” enters broader conversations about childrearing and family-state relations in the postwar era around the world, and demonstrates that China used children in a tool of its postwar stabilization and nation-building efforts, deploying images of children in domestic and international propaganda, as well as actual children as agents of state-directed change—both ideological and practical—within families and society.

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Learning to do academic research, writing, and other work is not an easy process; nevertheless, my time in graduate school was also extremely satisfying, stimulating, and, at times, even joyful. I am so fortunate to have gone through that process within a small and extremely supportive matriarchy at the University of California, Santa Cruz. At the head of this matriarchy were Gail Hershatter and Emily Honig, who were both the best advisors and models for an academic life that one could ever dream of. The other advisees in our program—the "Red Guards"—were supportive friends, careful readers, intellectual companions, sympathetic mentors, and much more, as were my many comrades in other areas. UCSC's history program attracts many excellent scholars and warm-hearted people, and there are too many to name, but I would like to mention Xiaofei Gao in particular for her friendship and support. If ever there were a Model Friend or Scholar, it would be Xiaofei.

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Introduction

In 1949, just after the Communists took over Tianjin, a large city in north China not far from Beijing, steelworkers at the Tianjin Steel Mill established a school for their children.[1] The factory would be in charge of funding the school, which offered grades one through four, or lower-primary school. Steelworkers could send their children there, as well as their nieces and nephews. As of September 2, 1949, the first day of school for the fall term, there were seventy students enrolled.[2] The steelworkers at the Tianjin Steel Mill obviously valued schooling enough to hope that their children would at least receive a foundational education.

The same year, half a world away, the foundry at International Harvester Company in Milwaukee, Wisconsin did not operate its own schools, but the children of the workers had access to public and private schools in the community. Those children included my father and his siblings, born in Milwaukee between 1951 and 1961. Their father, Gilbert, worked at International Harvester controlling the bucket of molten steel used to fill the molds that made agricultural and automotive parts, while their mother Marcella worked as a cashier at Gimbel's, the local department store. Although neither Gilbert nor Marcella had more than an eighth-grade education—Marcella had left school even earlier than Gilbert, after the sixth grade—they expected that their children would at least graduate from junior high school and

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[1] TMA, File: X198-Y-143-1, "Cha benching sheli zidi xuexiao yijie xuan jingpaiyuan qianwang" [Investigating the proceedings of this factory in choosing staff to establish a school for the children], Sept. 2, 1949.
[2] TMA, File: X198-Y-143-2, "Hanqing zhi an" [The case letter], Sept. 16, 1949.

go on to attend high school, and perhaps even college. Like the steelworkers in Tianjin, they valued their children's education.

Their four children, Robert, Gilbert Jr., Theresa, and James, all in fact did receive more years of formal schooling than their parents. They attended their church's local Catholic school, but once the school began charging tuition in the mid-1960s, they switched to the local public schools. All four children attended the local high school, and the oldest and youngest, Robert and James, both went on to graduate from university.

The son of a steelworker in Tianjin might have had a daily life similar in some ways to that of the Brzycki children. In their spare time, Chinese working-class children did their homework, helped with chores, and ran errands for their parents. My father recounts an entirely similar life on the south side of Milwaukee, doing homework at the kitchen table and traipsing down the street with a little red wagon to buy a case of beer for his father.

While the Brzycki children grew up in a time when there were enough schools for all children to attend, the same was not yet true of their counterparts in Tianjin, which is why the Tianjin Steel Mill workers were compelled to start their own school. However, while the institutional infrastructure in Tianjin and Milwaukee differed considerably, the basic goals of parents did not. Marcella and Gilbert's hope that their children would have better educational opportunities, better job opportunities, and more comfortable lives than they had was a particular version of what is often described as the American Dream. But the dream of a better life for the next

generation is not, and never has been, confined to the twentieth-century United States. During the early years of the People's Republic of China, parents also hoped that their children would get an education—at the very least, a few years of formal education that would allow them to become literate—even if they themselves had never had that opportunity.

In 1949, the prospects of a working-class Chinese family achieving that dream were better than they had ever been. Tianjin, including its school system, had suffered during the War of Resistance (1938-1945) and the civil war (1947-1949), and only a minority of the city's children were attending school by the time of the Communist takeover—often referred to as Liberation—in January 1949. The years following the establishment of the PRC were an important time for expansion of the educational system in China. A boy born to a steelworker in Tianjin in 1951, the same year Robert Brzycki was born to a steelworker in Milwaukee, would have had a far better chance of going to school than a peer born in Tianjin ten years earlier. The normalcy for children in Tianjin, with a stable environment and relatively widespread access to schools was an entirely new situation for Tianjin's residents in 1949. To understand how that change came about, this dissertation traces the efforts by the new Chinese Communist state to create a universal educational system and produce successors who could carry on the revolution.

Sometimes a revolution can best be measured not by what it overthrows, but what it fixes in place. "Inventing the Socialist Child in China, 1949-1966" explores

efforts by the People's Republic of China (PRC) to stabilize the place of children in the new society envisioned by the state. Beginning in 1949, that state promised to normalize the lives of children who had been displaced, orphaned, traumatized, and denied schooling by eight years of Japanese occupation, followed by four years of political tension and outright civil war. This dissertation investigates how the state kept this promise: by expanding the educational system, encouraging heroic and selfless models for children's behavior, and shifting its own goals as state priorities changed.

"Inventing the Socialist Child" explores the varied and sometimes contradictory pedagogical tools state actors employed to promote their visions of childhood and youth from 1949 to 1966, how these ideas changed to fit the domestic and international context, and how children and their families interacted with these initiatives in pursuit of their own, sometimes divergent, interests. Whereas the new Chinese Communist state no doubt played the largest role in the expansion of the educational and extracurricular system in the 1950s and 1960s, the expansion was successful not only because of the top-down push from state officials, but also because parents and communities desperately wanted their children to receive an education. State initiatives often caused new tensions between the state and families, between state actors pursuing contradictory goals, and within families.

A history of Chinese socialist childhood and youth is crucial to understanding the connection between the grand historical narrative of revolutionary political campaigns and daily life in the first several decades of the PRC. This research reveals

how the shift to socialism affected all aspects of daily life, including gender roles, family relationships, and child rearing, and demonstrates the importance of a stable childhood in anchoring a time of revolutionary change.

Although officials of the Maoist state believed children should be reared by their families, their goal of producing cooperative, revolutionary citizens required efforts to constrain "bad influences." The wariness of state officials about the values imparted by family and community members was compounded by the mobilization of women for production, which took many adult women out of the home thereby potentially leaving children unsupervised for long periods. The desire to supplement or supplant inadequate supervision of children caused the state to intrude in family structure and child-rearing in new and important ways.

This dissertation centers on urban children, as the state focused its efforts to create a socialist childhood in cities. Although urban children represented only about twenty per cent of the nation's children, the greater state penetration and access to resources in the cities allowed for the state to better realize its vision. Research on urban childhood indicates the direction of the state's efforts for children, and how the state envisioned the future.

Despite the state's focus on children, there was no single Bureau of Children to carry out a unified vision and cohesive program. Rather, the project of making youthful citizens was cobbled together by different organizations and government divisions, at every level of the state. Thus, in my research at the Shanghai, Tianjin, and Qingdao Municipal Archives, I have used documents from the Bureaus of

Education, Public Security, Public Health, and Civil Affairs, as well as the Women's Federation, the China Welfare Institute, and state broadcasting stations. Programs and institutions aimed at children also were run by all levels of government, including national, provincial, local, and even neighborhood committees. Accordingly, this study draws on national Ministry of Education announcements and reports, as well as local accounts of individual students chosen as Exemplary Young Pioneers and schools' reports about hiring, and much less frequently, dismissing teachers and staff.

In order to identify the messages being directed at children, I have also looked at children's textbooks, storybooks, comic books, and magazines. These published works would have circulated widely in urban areas such as Shanghai and Tianjin through bookstores and libraries—both places where people could read materials without necessarily buying them—in addition to schools and extracurricular organizations.

Children (*ertong*), the subject of this dissertation, is not a stable category. It often referred to young people who were primary school-age and younger, but even the definition of a primary school-age child shifted over this period. Children enrolled in primary school at age seven, but the length of primary school was unstable, shifting between five and six years for full-primary school.[3] This means that primary school-age children were generally between seven and thirteen or fourteen, although

[3] In China, one's age is generally given in *sui*, a method of counting age in which a baby is one year old at birth, and turns another year old at the New Year. This means that a child who was seven *sui* would likely be considered five or six years old if one used a contemporary American system of counting one's age. In this dissertation, ages are always given in *sui* unless otherwise noted.

especially in the early years of the PRC, many children enrolled in primary school late, and could still be enrolled in primary school in their late teens. Another line of demarcation was enrollment in the junior Party organizations of the Young Pioneers and Communist Youth League. One was eligible for enrollment in the Young Pioneers in primary school, and upon turning fourteen, could apply to join the Communist Youth League. The general institutional definition of a child, then, was young people under the age of fourteen. In practice though, teens over fourteen were sometimes referred to as children until the age of eighteen, although that depended on context, as they were also sometimes considered adults, or most often, the more specific category of youth (*qingshaonian*), which included young people from their teens through late twenties. This dissertation pays attention to any instance in which the state uses the term child or childhood, but focuses on children in primary and junior high school, who were generally no older than their mid-teens.

Childhood Studies

Previous historical research on children and childhood in China has covered the complex emotional world of children and the many roles open to them in late imperial China (1368-1912), although the state did not focus on children to the degree seen in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.[4] The discourse of children as bearers of national success has its roots in the late nineteenth century. Liang Qichao (1872-1929), a reformer in the late-Qing era, wrote a series of articles in late 1890s entitled

[4] Ping-chen Hsiung, *A Tender Voyage: Children and Childhood in Late Imperial China* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2005).

Bianfa tongyi (On Reform), in which he concluded that educational reform was the most important project for China.[5] Amidst all of the anxiety over reform at the turn of the century, the successful education of children was yoked to the success of China's modernization. This trend in reform efforts continued into the twentieth century. The intense state, elite, and popular focus on children and the linking of children to China's modernization became even more pronounced in the Republican period (1912-1949), the period of Nationalist (GMD) rule.

Other scholars have covered the rapid changes in child-rearing practices in the early twentieth century, including increased attention to children's education and development into patriotic citizens, and the sense of crisis over children's safety in World War II.[6] Andrew Jones traces a complex discussion about the proper place of

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[5] Limin Bai, *Shaping the Ideal Child: Children and Their Primers in Late Imperial China* (Hong Kong: The Chinese University Press, 2005), 183. Liang Qichao was one of the leading reformers in the late Qing era. A prolific writer and important politician, he was one of the leaders of the Hundred Days' Reform Movement in 1898. After its failure, he fled to Japan. Upon his return to China, he promoted Chinese knowledge of Western ideas, advocated constitutionalism and supported Yuan Shikai. See Pak-Wah Leung, ed., *Historical Dictionary of Revolutionary China, 1839-1976* (New York: Greenwood Press, 1992), 219–20; Philip Huang, *Liang Ch'i-Ch'ao and Modern Chinese Liberalism* (Seattle and London: University of Washington Press, 1972); Tang Xiaobing, *Global Space and the Nationalist Discourse of Modernity: The Historical Thinking of Liang Qichao* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1996).

[6] Andrew F. Jones, *Developmental Fairy Tales: Evolutionary Thinking and Modern Chinese Culture* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2011), http://site.ebrary.com/id/10477348; Margaret Tillman, "The Authority of Age: Institutions for Childhood Development in China, 1895-1910," *Frontiers of Chinese History* 7, no. 1 (2012): 32–60; Margaret Tillman, "Engendering Children of the Resistance: Models of Gender and Scouting in China, 1919–1937," *Cross-Currents: East Asian History and Culture Review*, no. 13 (December 2014); M. Colette Plum,

children and the form of an ideal childhood that had its origins in the 1930s, a time when, as he points out, "the figure of the child became a ubiquitous emblem of the nation and its developmental hopes" during the unstable Republican era.[7] This figure of the child linked to the nation was the precursor to World War II and post-World War II discourses on children. The importance of children to state legitimization continued in the post-war era, and this dissertation shows how the CCP built on these earlier projects by holding up its successes in creating stable conditions for children as part of its political legitimacy.

During the Republican Period, despite extensive public discussion about "saving" Chinese children and educational reform, in practice few educational opportunities were available to them, and child labor was widespread by the 1920s.[8] Although the use of child labor began to decline overall in the 1930s, a trend that generally continued through World War II, the material situation of many children was obviously quite different from the ideals espoused at the same time. Education may have been the ideal in Republican China, but in reality most Chinese children did not have access to an education, and spent their childhood laboring in factories, the fields, and at home.

"Unlikely Heirs: War Orphans During the Second Sino-Japanese War, 1937-1945" (Stanford University, 2006).

[7] Jones, *Developmental Fairy Tales: Evolutionary Thinking and Modern Chinese Culture*, 23.

[8] Joshua Howard, "History of Child Labor in China," in *Child Labour's Global Past, 1650-2000*, ed. Kristoffel Lieten and Elise van Nederveen Meerkerk (Bern, NY: Peter Lang, 2011), 510.

World War II brought changes to discourses on children. In many areas, women's labor had become increasingly necessary, because of the material needs of the military and war efforts, and because women were needed to replace the men who were now soldiers by doing productive labor both for the survival of households and the war effort. Some women helped organize other women into textile production in their spare time, others made supplies for the army, while others did agricultural work.[9] With the pressures of war forcing a focus on adult labor, women's especially, early childhood education quickly became an auxiliary part of the labor system, rather than a foundational step in the education system. Other scholars have shown that there was an increased state and institutional interest in children. Colette Plum demonstrates that during World War II, Chinese elites and the state saw children as the future of the Chinese nation and race, and thus the survival of all children, including war orphans, was a national priority. In practice, however, reformers hoping to train a new generation through experimental early childhood education were replaced by beleaguered leaders, much more concerned with wartime issues of production, labor, and the physical safety of children.[10]

This dissertation is also informed by the work of other scholars who have highlighted continuity in state-building efforts across the 1949 divide, especially as those efforts related to vulnerable populations, such as the child in need of education.

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[9] Kay Ann Johnson, *Women, the Family, and Peasant Revolution in China* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1983), 65.
[10] Melissa A. Brzycki, "Kindergartens in Modern China, 1900-1958" (University of California, Santa Cruz, 2013).

Janet Chen's *Guilty of Indigence* is part of a small body of that has analyzed the construction of vulnerable populations in China and the practices and discourses aimed at them.[11] Chen finds active, competitive state-building attempts by both the GMD and CCP during the period from 1945 to 1949. Her research also demonstrates the great degree to which the GMD projects before 1949 were continued by the CCP after 1949. This dissertation shows the continuity between child-centered discourses and practices between the GMD and CCP, despite CCP state discourses during the Korean War that aimed to showcase differences between the two.

Our understanding of women's lives shifts when we foreground children, since state policy persisted in linking women and children despite the radical nature of other aspects of its family reform campaigns. For the post-1949 era, scholars have expressed skepticism about whether or not Chinese women had a revolution, pointing to the limited reach of efforts to improve women's rights and the family structure and women's continued child-rearing and home-making responsibilities despite mobilization to work outside the home.[12] Although many women were in practice still

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[11] Henrietta Harrison, *The Making of the Republican Citizen: Political Ceremonies and Symbols in China, 1911-1929*, Studies on Contemporary China (Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 2000); Zwia Lipkin, *Useless to the State: "Social Problems" and Social Engineering in Nationalist Nanjing, 1927-1937* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Asia Center : Distributed by Harvard University Press, 2006); Janet Y. Chen, *Guilty of Indigence: The Urban Poor in China, 1900-1953* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2012).

[12] Judith Stacey, *Patriarchy and Socialist Revolution in China* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1983); Margery Wolf, *Revolution Postponed: Women in Contemporary China* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1985); Johnson, *Women, the Family, and Peasant Revolution in China*; Gail Hershatter, *The Gender of Memory: Rural Women and China's Collective Past* (Berkeley: University of

the primary caregiver and had to work the "double shift," these new constraints on their during the early years of the PRC meant that teachers and educators increasingly bore the burden of taking care of children both during and after school.

Overall, recent historical scholarship suggests the growing importance of children to national projects in twentieth-century China. The importance of children to state legitimization continued in the post-war era, and this dissertation investigates how the CCP built on these earlier projects by holding up its successes in creating stable conditions for children as part of its political legitimacy. Children and youth were integral to the PRC's state-building and socialization projects. My research bolsters this point, but also illuminates the continuing instability of discourses on the proper role of children and the formation of childhood.

This dissertation speaks not only to Chinese studies, but to the growing body of scholarship on childhood as a historical subject. Scholars have explored childhood under imperialism and colonialism, childhood in times of postwar recovery, and, in particular, the position of children and childhood within and in the immediate aftermath of the Japanese empire.[13] All of this work informs my project, particularly

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California Press, 2011); Jacob Eyferth, *Eating Rice from Bamboo Roots: The Social History of a Community of Handicraft Papermakers in Rural Sichuan, 1920-2000* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Asia Center: Distributed by Harvard University Press, 2009).

[13] Satadru Sen, *Colonial Childhoods: The Juvenile Periphery of India, 1850-1945*, Anthem South Asian Studies (Chicago: Anthem Press, 2005); Ruby Lal, *Coming of Age in Nineteenth-Century India: The Girl-Child and the Art of Playfulness* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2013); Tara Zahra, *The Lost Children: Reconstructing Europe's Families after World War II* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2011); Catherine A. Jones, *Intimate Reconstructions: Children in*

its attention to postwar nation-building and revolutionary projects. "Inventing the Socialist Child" enters broader conversations about childrearing and family-state relations in the postwar era around the world, and demonstrates that China used children in a tool of its post-war stabilization and nation-building efforts, deploying images of children in domestic and international propaganda, as well as actual children as agents of state-directed change—both ideological and practical—within families and society.

Organization of the Dissertation

"Inventing the Socialist Child" comprises five chapters, organized both thematically and chronologically. Chapter One explores the PRC's re-establishment of stable childhood in 1949. It demonstrates how the CCP and its state apparatus depended on previous Nationalist efforts and relied on existing staff and institutions as it took control of the educational system. At the same time, in promoting socialist childhood, the new Party-state implemented new strategies such as classes in socialist politics and emphasized the enrollment of the children of peasants and workers. This chapter also establishes that the Mao-era educational and extracurricular systems were important sites for interaction between the state and its citizenry.

Postemancipation Virginia, A Nation Divided: Studies in the Civil War Era (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2015); Mayumi Itoh, *Japanese War Orphans in Manchuria: Forgotten Victims of World War II* (New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010); Mark A. Jones, *Children as Treasures: Childhood and the Middle Class in Early Twentieth Century Japan*, Harvard East Asian Monographs 328 (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Asia Center: Distributed by Harvard University Press, 2010).

Chapter Two shows how the Party-state's portrayal of its successes in rearing the next revolutionary generation formed an integral component of its claim to popular support, and undergirded its campaign for international leadership during the Cold War. Following the establishment of the PRC in 1949, Chinese newspapers, propaganda posters, and children's books portrayed children as well nurtured by the new state. These cared-for children were meant to serve as evidence of the success of Chinese socialism. Early Communist portrayals of happy, healthy future citizens were also deployed in support of China's efforts to become a leader of the Third World during the 1950s and 1960s, particularly after the Sino-Soviet split.

Chapter Three explores how educational and extracurricular institutions continued to expand from 1949 to 1956. The biggest problem the Party-state faced in relation to children was how to keep them off the streets and beyond the reach of what Party members regarded as bad influences. Children's unsupervised free time had been an issue before 1949, but during the 1950s the problem became particularly acute because the state was mobilizing women to work outside the home, leaving children without much adult supervision outside of school hours. This problem was further exacerbated by the popularization of the two-shift, or half-day, school system. This system enabled the resource-strapped state to increase the number of children receiving an education, but it also expanded the amount of free time students had outside of school before or after their shift. State officials saw children's time outside of school as perilously unstructured, and responded with the establishment of

institutions including neighborhood study groups, Young Pioneers, and Youth Palaces.

Chapter Four shows that in contrast to images of a more passive, obedient child of the early PRC, during the Great Leap Forward (1958-1960) periodicals, storybooks, and newspaper stories portrayed children as independent problem-solvers and political actors, often more perceptive and politically advanced than adults. Although children had been promoted as political participants as early as the land reform campaign of the late 1940s and early 1950s, the Great Leap Forward represents one of the most crucial periods for the emergence of children as political participants. Because of children's latent potential for political, scientific, and social knowledge, the relationship between children and the state was portrayed as a direct one, with little need for mediating adult parties such as parents or teachers. State propaganda lauded children as capable participants in all areas of society, politics, and production. The latter half of this chapter argues that in the 1960s, given the failure of the Great Leap Forward and the instability that Chinese leaders saw in the worldwide socialist coalition, state officials promoted young defenders of the revolution as the childhood ideal. Thus, in storybooks, radio programs, and films, children during the 1960s were depicted as fighting for the revolution in dramatically heroic ways, giving life and limb if necessary.

Chapter Five traces rising official concerns from 1956 to 1966 that children born into the new socialist society lacked the revolutionary experiences, political consciousness, and proletarian values necessary to carry on the revolution. Raising

revolutionary successors could go terribly wrong if harmful influences were allowed to affect children's development, and therefore the process required vigilance. Writings about children during the 1950s and 1960s suggested that there was no innate human nature or talent and no "bad eggs," only bad influences. This meant that with the proper upbringing, education, and environment, all children could be raised to be smart, hard-working, revolutionary citizens. In the context of an ostensibly successful socialist transformation, education officials thus found children who engaged in mild transgressions like truancy, and young people who committed crimes, to be particularly vexing. How to forestall and compensate for bad influences became a central task of the educational system inside and outside the classroom.

"Inventing the Socialist Child" shows new state interest in and intervention in childrearing, that state officials increasing linked childhood and the future of the revolution, and that despite the unprecedented level of local control exerted by the PRC, children still often ignored and circumvented plans for their time and education, illustrating the limits of state power. The rapid institutionalization of childhood and the changing model of the ideal child in the early People's Republic of China were shaped by the USSR, the PRC's domestic and international agenda, and the interests of non-state actors. This study suggests that the vast institutional apparatus created to educate and supervise children and the state's strong presence in all aspects of life at the grassroots during the early years of the PRC laid the groundwork for family structures and models for children and youth in contemporary China.

Chapter One

Re-Establishing Childhood

In January 1949, the Communists marched into Tianjin, the largest city they had yet occupied. Five months later, they took control of Shanghai. Both cities, like much of China in 1949, were full of children who had been displaced, orphaned, traumatized, and denied schooling during eight years of Japanese occupation (1937-1945) followed by four years of political conflict and outright civil war. Some of the more privileged children had been going to school continuously, while many of the refugee children had never been in school, and working-class children had been put to work to help support their families.

One of the first projects that the Communists attempted when they took control of the city was to enroll as many children as possible in primary school. Children's education was a top priority for the CCP, partially to bolster its own legitimacy when contrasted with the failed efforts of the GMD. Getting children off the streets was a powerful sign that life in the city was returning to something approaching normalcy. Beyond that, sending children to school was part of a broader project to create a new generation of socialist citizens to support the revolution. The CCP wanted to create "New Children" for New China, and establishing a system of universal primary school was an important first step in that project.

This chapter explores the importance that the CCP placed on children and children's education from the very beginning of its rule in 1949, drawing on materials

from the cities of Tianjin and Shanghai. Both of these large east coast cities had been treaty ports, sites of semi-colonial foreign settlements during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, and both had been occupied by the Japanese from 1937-1945, although the foreign concessions were not, and some parts of Shanghai were not occupied until 1941. Both cities generally offered more stability and safety than their surrounding rural areas, so they were a common destination for refugees during the first half of the twentieth century. The resources available in important commercial and industrial cities on the coast, as well as elite-driven projects to reform and expand education, meant that both cities had more well-developed school systems than many other areas in China, but education was still far from universal. By focusing on these two cities, we can understand the CCP's priorities as it transformed itself from a guerrilla wartime organization to the ruling party of a large country.

Mao Zedong referred to the initial few years CCP rule as a continuation of New Democracy , in which China could combine two stages of the progress towards communism: capitalist bourgeois democracy and socialism.[1] During this stage, different classes, including national capitalists, were called to cooperate in building China's economy and industry. This hybrid stage, during which members of the bourgeoisie and capitalist class were considered necessary allies, involved some measure of moderation and compromise to lay the foundation for the Chinese

[1] Mao Zedong, "On New Democracy," Marxists Internet Archive, accessed May 3, 2018, https://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/mao/selected-works/volume-2/mswv2_26.htm.

Communist Party's more radical ultimate goal of establishing communism.[2] For education, this meant maintaining most of the educational infrastructure and staff, and allowing private schools—including religious schools—to continue to operate during these first few years to achieve the CCP's goals of expanding educational access, creating a literate population, and training a sufficient number of well-educated experts to help China develop.

Scholarly studies on urban takeovers by the CCP suggest that while some early conquests by the PRC in the north, like Changchun, were bloody and destructive, the takeover in larger urban centers such as Shanghai and Tianjin was

[2] For those scholars who view the first few years of the PRC as revolutionary, the New Democracy's transitional moderation and accommodation of private enterprises were a necessary aberration during a period of scarcity and precarity. Those who view those years as "evolutionary," in contrast, see that period as moment when lasting and important continuities between the Republic and the PRC were particularly clear. For further discussion, see Nara Nara Dillon, "New Democracy and the Demise of Private Charity in Shanghai," in *Dilemmas of Victory: The Early Years of the People's Republic of China*, ed. Jeremy Brown and Paul G. Pickowicz (Cambridge [M.A.]: Harvard University Press, 2007), 80–102; Mark Selden, *The Yenan Way in Revolutionary China* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1971); William Hinton, *Fanshen: A Documentary of Revolution in a Chinese Village* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1967).

relatively quick and peaceful.[3] The subsequent New Democracy period was, by most accounts, moderate, with conciliatory efforts aimed at remaining urban elites.[4].[5]

If we focus our attention on schools, the changes are better characterized as reform, not revolution. The relative lack of radical change seems to be a product of the same negotiation that James Gao saw in Hangzhou: the initial moderation was part of a revolutionary strategy necessitated by financial constraints, lack of

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[3] Frank Dikötter, *The Tragedy of Liberation: A History of the Chinese Revolution 1945-1957* (New York: Bloomsbury Press, 2015).

[4] Frederic Wakeman, "'Cleanup': The New Order in Shanghai," in *Dilemmas of Victory: The Early Years of the People's Republic of China*, ed. Jeremy Brown and Paul G. Pickowicz (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2007), 21–58; Jonathan J. Howlett, "'The British Boss Is Gone and Will Never Return': Communist Takeovers of British Companies in Shanghai (1949–1954)," *Modern Asian Studies* 47, no. 6 (November 2013): 1941–76, https://doi.org/10.1017/S0026749X13000140; Yongming Zhou, "Nationalism, Identity and State Building: The Antidrug Crusade in the People's Republic, 1949-1952," in *Opium Regimes: China, Britain, and Japan, 1839-1952*, ed. Timothy Brook and Bob Wakabayashi (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000), 380–403; James Zheng Gao, *The Communist Takeover of Hangzhou: The Transformation of City and Cadre, 1949-1954* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2004). Wakeman shows how the CCP managed to accomplish a mostly smooth takeover of Shanghai because of careful planning and mass mobilization, and Jonathan J. Howlett makes an argument similar to James Gao's in demonstrating that the CCP was relatively moderate in its takeover of industry in Shanghai because of financial and resource constraints. Zhou focuses on the efforts of a relatively poorly organized and financed campaign against opium dealers and users, arguing that the campaign to eliminate opium use was important part of PRC state consolidation. Former scholars have assumed they mostly used coercion, but Zhou argues that hey actually used three methods: propaganda, coercion, and mobilization. James Gao sees the initial moderation of the Communists in Hangzhou and other southern cities as part of a revolutionary strategy necessitated by financial constraints, weak support for the CCP in urban centers, and a lack of qualified staff. He does not see it as representing a wholly different strategy from the subsequent more radical practices and campaigns against the intellectuals, bourgeoisie, and capitalists who made up significant components of Hangzhou's population

[5] Gao, *The Communist Takeover of Hangzhou*.

infrastructure and qualified teachers, and a desire to achieve the goals of universal education and literacy as soon as possible.

Schools served as important sites of interaction between the state and the people during this transitional period. The practical necessities involved in universalizing primary school in these two cities meant that although the state wanted to make a clean break with Nationalist educational practices, local officials and educators had no choice but to rely on Nationalist and Japanese occupation-era staff, infrastructure, and material, including private schools. The CCP prioritized expanding access to the educational system over changing the political nature and content of the education in already existing schools. Furthermore, although state authorities wanted to create a uniform educational system, locational differences shaped that system and in turn were exacerbated by it. Even within the administrative boundaries of cities such as Shanghai and Tianjin, different educational policies and goals for urban and rural schools perpetuated differences in educational quality.[6] This difference was exacerbated by the lack of resources available to the state, but also at times mitigated by the demands and efforts of parents who wanted more and better education for their children, regardless of state goals.

Legacies of War

[6] Billie L.C. Lo, "Primary Education in China: A Two-Track System for Dual Tasks," in *Contemporary Chinese Education*, ed. Ruth Hayhoe (Armonk, NY: M.E. Sharpe, 1984), 47–64.

Shanghai and Tianjin both had been occupied by the Japanese from 1937 to 1945. Much of the educational infrastructure and staff in China was located in cities on the east coast. According to John Cleverley, "over 80 per cent of educational institutions were located in the Japanese occupation zones."[7] This figure changed soon after the occupation, as many schools at all levels fled to the interior of China, out of Japanese control. It is unclear what effect that had on Shanghai and Tianjin, however, since these cities, and in particular their foreign concessions, were also destinations for refugees.

In Shanghai and Tianjin, although the overall percentage of school-age children enrolled in primary school decreased under the Japanese occupation, the number of schools and students had actually expanded during the War of Resistance and civil war as the population of both cities s swelled. According to accounts written by the CCP government in 1949, Tianjin's population increased rapidly with refugees trying to escape Japan's harsh war strategy.[8] The "Three Alls" campaign—Kill All, Burn All, Loot All—in rural areas outside the city forced rural residents to flee to Tianjin bginning in 1940. The city's population was 1,080,000 in 1937, but had ballooned to 1,770,000 in 1943.[9] The school system continued to function well

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[7] John F. Cleverley, *The Schooling of China: Tradition and Modernity in Chinese Education*, 2nd ed (Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 1991), 65.
[8] TMA, File: X198-Y-136-2, "Tongzhi yanjiu taolun xiaoxue jiaoyu zhongxin wenti sanxiang" [A notice about research and discussion of three central problems in primary school education], April 18, 1949.
[9] Tianjin shi difangzhi bianxiu weiyuanhui, *Tianjin tongzhi: jichu jiaoyu zhi* [Tianjin annals: elementary education gazetteer] (Tianjin: Tianjin Academy of Social Sciences Publishing House, 2000), 7.

enough to expand and accept some of the influx of refugees, even if the overall percentage of children in school was dropping. Schools were also growing more crowded as the school system admitted as many students as possible. In 1938, there were 160 primary schools in Tianjin, with a citywide average of 246 students per school. In 1945, there were 194 primary schools, with an average student body of close to 300 per school, meaning that the schools' student populations had expanded by an average of 20 percent.[10] New schools were not being established as fast as the population of school-age children was growing, so schools instead accepted greater numbers of students. Even with the expansion and overcrowding in many schools, in 1946, only about half of the approximately 200,000 school-age children in the urban districts of Tianjin were enrolled in school, and this number continued to drop during the civil war. By 1948, only one-third of Tianjin's children were in school.[11] The schools that remained open suffered during the civil war. Grace Liu, an American woman married to Chinese engineer Fu-Chi Liu, was living in Tianjin at this time. In 1948, she writes in her memoir:

> School conditions deteriorated. With inflation changing the value of money daily, the schools required students to pay tuition with sacks of flour. On the first day of school, [her children] Ellen and William had to take a rickshaw in

[10] Tianjin shi difangzhi bianxiu weiyuanhui, 7.
[11] Tianjin shi difangzhi bianxiu weiyuanhui, 8.

order to carry the sacks of flour. Facilities were inadequate and resources dwindled as the year progressed.[12]

Shanghai, and in particular its foreign concessions, was also an important destination for refugees during the War of Resistance. The influx of refugees compelled many of the communities in the foreign concessions to open private primary schools to accommodate these children. Many primary schools from surrounding Jiangsu and Zhejiang provinces, both of which were relatively well-off coastal regions with a large number of schools, also relocated to Shanghai. As of 1948, 341,500 children in Shanghai were enrolled in primary school.[13] With a population of approximately five million, this likely meant that no more than half of Shanghai's school-age population was enrolled in school.[14]

During the War of Resistance, some two million children were orphaned, countless others had at least one parent among the war dead, some had volunteered or were conscripted into the Nationalist (GMD) Youth Corps, and many more were underfed, under-clothed, and undereducated. Thus the post-World War II era in China was characterized by serious concerns about children who had been displaced—both literally by war, colonialism, and poverty and figuratively from their proper place within the family and society. These displacements added new facets to an already

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[12] Eleanor Cooper and William Liu, *Grace in China: An American Woman Beyond the Great Wall, 1934-1974* (Montgomery, AL: River City Publishing, 2000), 168.
[13] Lu Xingwei, ed., *Shanghai putong jiaoyushi, 1949-1989* [A history of general education in Shanghai, 1949-1989] (Shanghai: Shanghai Education Press, 1994), 10.
[14] Xiao-bin Ji, ed., *Facts about China* (New York: H.W. Wilson, 2003), 48.

complex discussion in the prewar 1930s and World War II period about the proper place of children and the form of an ideal childhood.[15]

By the end of the War of Resistance in 1949, the educational system in Shanghai and Tianjin had been hurt by inflation, overcrowding, and city governments with limited budgets and governing capabilities. This was the situation that the Communists faced when they arrived. On January 15, 1949, the Communists took control of Tianjin. They found a functioning school system, albeit one that did not serve most children in the city. Tianjin badly needed a massive infusion of staff and resources, and while urban schools were operating with an average of thirty students to every teacher, in the surrounding rural counties the ratio was fifty to one.[16]

In the weeks following the Communist arrival in Tianjin, three main groups interacted as they worked out administration of the city. The newly arrived Communists were mostly from rural backgrounds. They joined Tianjin's underground Party members who had long prepared for the takeover but who had not been involved in the primary school system. Lastly, there were the city's Nationalist bureaucrats and administrators who had local experience but did not share the Communists' political vision.[17] The underground Party members and old-hand bureaucrats and administrators had little in common politically. But both groups

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[15] Melissa A. Brzycki, "Children and the Trauma of War: The Place of Children in Mainland China, 1945-1953" (M.A. essay, University of California, Santa Cruz, 2014).
[16] Tianjin shi difangzhi bianxiu weiyuanhui, *Tianjin tongzhi: jichu jiaoyu zhi* [Tianjin annals: elementary education gazetteer], 348.
[17] Jeremy Brown, *City Versus Countryside in Mao's China: Negotiating the Divide* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 17.

were often at loggerheads with the newly arrived rural cadres, who generally had little experience with urban culture, much less urban administration. The rural cadres similarly distrusted the underground Party members and old-hand bureaucrats and administrators. Underground Party members who had remained in the occupied city were often regarded by the newly arrived rural Communists as "hidden traitors," or secret Nationalists who had hedged their bets or were serving as double agents, while the political ideology and loyalty of old-hand bureaucrats was even more suspect. The outsiders were numerically superior—5,389 newly arrived Party members as compared with 1,564 underground Party members. Despite this, the underground Party members soon became leaders of the takeover, since their insider knowledge about the administration of the city could not be supplanted by the politically reliable but mostly rural outsiders.[18]

The transition was similar in Shanghai. In May 1949, five months after entering Tianjin, the CCP took control of Shanghai. Many of the cadres who helped with the takeover were from the same pool of experienced rural cadres, many of them from Shandong, that also helped take over Tianjin. Not all the cadres considered the posting a desirable one, given the challenges and discomforts—operating in a place where people spoke a different dialect, overcoming the stereotypes of and prejudices against rural people on the part of many urbanites, different food, and different climate.[19] Many of them found themselves even more out of place in Shanghai than

[18] Brown, *City versus Countryside in Mao's China*. 18-19.
[19] Wakeman, "'Cleanup': The New Order in Shanghai," 23–24.

their counterparts who tried to administer urban Tianjin. Their discipline was a boon, however, and the takeover was relatively calm and stable. One hundred and seventy-three people were tasked with managing the transition in the educational sector in Shanghai. The majority of these workers were experienced, rural cadres from previously Liberated areas, with large groups also of underground cadres and current students.[20]

The transition was not without challenges, including the presence of entrenched gangs and secret societies, most of whom had ties to the Nationalists. Another source of instability was the arrival of hundreds of thousands of refugees during the summer, after serious flooding in Jiangsu, Anhui, and Shandong.[21] According to the CCP's own account of the school system in pre-Liberation Shanghai, it was relatively well developed when compared to other areas of China, with lively debates about theories and practices in education.[22]

What sort of experience and vision for these cities, and their systems of education, did each group bring with them in 1949? The old-hand bureaucrats and educators had been part of a school system with ambitious goals but much less follow-through. Nationally, the GMD had promoted an ideal child who was healthy, happy, materially comfortable, and enrolled in school fulltime. The Nationalists had

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[20] Lu Xingwei, *Shanghai putong jiaoyushi, 1949-1989* [A history of general education in Shanghai, 1949-1989], 23.
[21] Wakeman, "'Cleanup': The New Order in Shanghai," 52–53.
[22] Lu Xingwei, *Shanghai putong jiaoyushi, 1949-1989* [A history of general education in Shanghai, 1949-1989], 22.

tried to establish universal, compulsory primary school, to little effect. In 1930, the GMD set a goal of universal education by 1940. In 1935, the goal for that education was set at one year of schooling.[23] Again, in the Constitution of 1947, the Nationalists reaffirmed their goal of providing universal education, stating that all children between the ages of six and twelve should be in school, although as of 1949, only a minority of primary-school age children was attending school.[24]

While the GMD may have idealized the cared-for, schooled child, its accomplishments were often limited to providing bare subsistence conditions for most children under its rule.[25] Its educational policy emphasized morality and politics, but in practice education reform efforts were heavily influenced by foreign missionaries and progressive Chinese educators, many of whom had been educated in the U.S., such as Tao Xingzhi and Chen Heqin. Many promoted an idea of education derived from the work of Columbia educator John Dewey: practical, locally based, and democratic.[26] However, in reality, most children did not attend school, and most schools were focused on literacy,; practical and technical education were rare.[27]

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[23] Cleverley, *The Schooling of China*, 61.
[24] Cleverley, 68–69.
[25] Editorials in the *Shen bao* in 1946 called for good food for children, since many had become malnourished after eight years of war, or for proper food to support their mental health ("Shi'yu ertong xinli jiankang" ['Food] and Children's Mental Health], May 2, 1946). Another article from December of 1946 boasted that 200 refugee children had been saved from the cold ("Liumang er dele jiu" [Street children received aid], Dec. 9, 1946).
[26] Cleverley, *The Schooling of China*, 50–52.
[27] Cleverley, 68–69.

The underground Party members had been working on plans for a better educational system during the period of preparation for the Communist takeover, although primary schools had not been their focus. When preparing to take control of Tianjin in early 1948, about 200 high-level underground Party members attended an academic-committee training course in Po Village outside Tianjin. In August, the Tianjin Underground Academic Committee was founded.[28]

The newly arriving rural cadres had more experience with primary schools than the underground cadres did, but not much, and not in urban areas. With headquarters at Yan'an, and a number of other geographically dispersed base areas, the Communists had controlled and administered areas of rural North China since the mid-1930s. They had accumulated a large body of knowledge about how to administer rural villages, but relatively little of it had to do with educating children. While they were fighting the War of Resistance and the civil war against the Nationalists in the 1940s, the CCP set forth a general policy of promoting adult over child education, given that they could see direct benefits for the war and production efforts that way.[29]

The challenges involved in maintaining and expanding a school system were somewhat familiar to rural CCP cadres, although the Party had not directly

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[28] Tianjin shi difangzhi bianxiu weiyuanhui, *Tianjin tongzhi: jichu jiaoyu zhi* [Tianjin annals: elementary education gazetteer], 43.
[29] Peter J. Seybolt, ed., "On Regulations and Curriculum in General Education," in *Revolutionary Education in China: Documents and Commentary* (White Plains, NY: International Arts and Sciences Press, 1973), 358.

administered most schools under its purview. From 1936 to 1939 in the CCP border regions, the expansion of basic primary education was prioritized over quality and content of the schools. From 1940 to 1944, the CCP border region government pulled back, and began instead promoting higher quality, but fewer, schools.[30] Finally, in 1944, the government resumed expansion of the school system, with an emphasis on community-run (*minban*) schools. Under the community management system, each community would establish a school and curriculum best suited to the local masses' needs.[31] Mao Zedong, Chairman of the CCP, had advocated for education that was directly applicable to the students' actual lives and labor. Mao thought that in rural areas, rather than expanding "the urban modern school into the countryside," peasants should determine for themselves what kind of education they needed.[32] The CCP thus did not directly run most schools within its area of control. These policy changes were related to broader shifts in CCP priorities and its interactions with the local population.

The promotion of community-run schools did not mean that the CCP abdicated any control or influence over these schools. Rather, these schools were

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[30] The number of primary schools in the border region dropped from 1,341 in 1940 to 752 in 1943 as a result of this policy. Suzanne Pepper, *Radicalism and Education Reform in 20th-Century China: The Search for an Ideal Development Model* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 131.

[31] During the rectification campaign in 1942 and 1943, the border region government had begun a policy of turning control of economic and administrative institutions to the people, and by 1944 the CCP looked to apply the successes of this policy to the school system. Selden, *The Yenan Way in Revolutionary China*, 269.

[32] Cleverley, *The Schooling of China*, 94.

intended to run according to the policy "community run, government assistance" (*minban gongzhu*). Government assistance might include financial support, teaching materials, pedagogical guidance, and overall leadership.[33] However, "basic responsibility for financing, staffing, and defining a course of study shifted from the education ministry and professional teachers to local activists and village leaders." Villages sometimes shared teachers, with a "'little teacher,' usually an outstanding student," filling in while the teacher was away.[34]

The schools in Communist base areas that remained open or were established during the wars generally did their best to support the priorities of the government, such as aiding the land reform campaign by propagating land reform education and propaganda.[35] The educational system allowed the local CCP government to pull children into political projects. They also tested out after-school programs to organize the children to sing revolutionary songs, do folk dances, and participate in parade propaganda, which supported the CCP's goal of mobilizing the masses to participate in military and war efforts.[36] Many schools organized Children's Corps (*ertong tuan*), which ostensibly channeled children into more military-oriented activities, such as

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[33] Peter J. Seybolt, "Border Region Government Directive on Promoting the Study of Model Schools and on Experimentation with Popular-Management Primary Schools," in *Revolutionary Education in China: Documents and Commentary* (White Plains, NY: International Arts and Sciences Press, 1973), 369.
[34] Selden, *The Yenan Way in Revolutionary China*, 271.
[35] Tianjin shi difangzhi bianxiu weiyuanhui, *Tianjin tongzhi: jichu jiaoyu zhi* [Tianjin annals: elementary education gazetteer], 222.
[36] Tianjin shi difangzhi bianxiu weiyuanhui, 223.

standing guard, raising the alarm if necessary, searching for bandits, fighting landlords, and delivering intelligence information.[37]

The Communists learned from earlier attempts at increasing primary school access that rural residents wanted control over what their children were taught. They had abandoned early attempts at universal primary school when peasants protested that it was not suitable for their lives as agricultural workers, both in "content and timetabling."[38] With villages running their own schools, they could form their own curriculum. A village could decide to have its school only teach the basic skills of reading, writing, and arithmetic. CCP leaders decided that political content and classes were not strictly necessary, as the CCP hoped that children would learn about politics and production "in the course of their daily life in the villages." In sum, in advocating community-management schools in villages, "no single rule [applied]" to all schools.[39]

Yet primary and secondary schools were still an important part of Maoist educational initiatives and policy at this time, particularly expanding educational access and promoting literacy.[40] The popularization of basic education was an

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[37] Tianjin shi difangzhi bianxiu weiyuanhui, 223.
[38] Ruth Hayhoe, "The Evolution of Modern Educational Institutions," in *Contemporary Chinese Education*, ed. Ruth Hayhoe (Armonk, NY: M.E. Sharpe, 1984), 33.
[39] Seybolt, "Border Region Government Directive on Promoting the Study of Model Schools and on Experimentation with Popular-Management Primary Schools," 369.
[40] According to Theodore Chen, primary and secondary schools in Yan'an "were not systematically planned and there was no clear pattern of development." Theodore Hsi-en Chen, *The Maoist Educational Revolution*, Praeger Special Studies in International Economics and Development (New York: Praeger, 1974), 10.

overwhelming task, and the CCP struggled to find a balance between quality and quantity, skills and politics, peasant desires and Communist goals.

The education system in the Communist-controlled base areas expanded rapidly, with approximately 29,500 children in primary school in 1944, up from 5,600 children in 1936.[41] The CCP's experiences with the growing pains of a rapidly expanding school system taught education officials and cadres that rapid expansion of educational access often led to low-quality staff and education and a mismatch between the curricula and existing local needs, but that attempts at regularization and raising quality inevitably favored larger, more densely populated areas and elites.[42] The CCP also learned that expanding the educational system would requiresubstantial resources, and that education must suit the needs of the masses, or they would not send their children to school.

The experience in the liberated areas just outside of Tianjin was similar to the CCP's overall experience. The number of schools and staff were inadequate to serve the population, and these problems were exacerbated by the needs of the wartime government, both during the War of Resistance and the civil war. The border region government had set forth its priorities for education--that it serve the needs of military victory, revolution, and production--and so the education system in the liberated areas outside of Tianjin followed these priorities. Some schools in the liberated border

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[41] Stig Thøgersen, *A County of Culture: Twentieth-Century China Seen from the Village Schools of Zouping, Shandong* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2002), 127.
[42] Pepper, *Radicalism and Education Reform in 20th-Century China*, 129–32.

regions and their staff were temporarily converted into service organizations, such as propaganda and medical teams.[43] Additionally, many primary school teachers left their posts as educators for work for the nascent government.[44]

The ability of the education systems to serve the populations in these rural counties outside Tianjin was uneven. We can see this variation in two different counties outside Tianjin. In Jixian, the number of primary schools and students fell, from 376 schools in 1946, to only 260 by 1949. In Wuqing, however, the situation was reversed. The educational system rapidly expanded during the years prior to Liberation, with 346 primary schools in 1945, and 568 in 1949.[45] Just as the situation and experiences in the rural areas outside Tianjin varied tremendously, so did different urban areas within Tianjin and Shanghai. Given the lack of national control and stability prior to 1949, the CCP was encountering areas with very unevenly distributed resources and infrastructure.

The basic assumption that allowed for a system that utilized community-run schools—that children would learn about politics and production in their daily lives outside of school—did not apply in the urban areas that the CCP began to rule in 1949. As we will see in the next section, although the educational systems were more developed in urban areas like Shanghai and Tianjin, as far as the CCP was concerned, these urban spaces posed new problems in the rearing of socialist children.

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[43] Tianjin shi difangzhi bianxiu weiyuanhui, *Tianjin tongzhi: jichu jiaoyu zhi* [Tianjin annals: elementary education gazetteer], 222.
[44] Tianjin shi difangzhi bianxiu weiyuanhui, 221.
[45] Tianjin shi difangzhi bianxiu weiyuanhui, 224.

Taking Charge of the Schools

The Communists were trying to establish political and social order in the largest urban environment they had ever controlled, and one of the major parts of that project was providing structure to children's lives. Getting children off the streets was one of the most important components in that project. In the rural areas that the Communists had administered prior to 1949, if children were not in schools, they were generally busy working at home. The situation was quite different in urban areas. Some children who did not attend school were working, often doing household domestic labor or helping produce goods that their parents could sell at the markets. However, many of the children who were not in school were not working, either. Children ran loose in the streets, sometimes under the supervision of mothers or grandparents, but other times without any adult supervision.

The streets of Tianjin or Shanghai were not like the countryside. The Communists feared that instead of spending their time among hard-working peasants who were working in the fields, transporting produce, or doing other productive labor, children in the cities might encounter petit-bourgeois peddlers, fortunetellers, prostitutes, gambling den operators, and other bad influences, figures who had the potential to impart their own lumpenproletarian, petty capitalist, or superstitious world views to children.[46] The Communists were in the process of eliminating these

[46] The CCP suspicion of urban areas dates back years, since the 1927 Shanghai Massacre, during which the GMD, which had previously allied itself with the CCP in the First United Front, turned on the Communists and executed all and Communist sympathizers that they could find. The massacre began in Shanghai, but was also

bad influences, but the process was a long one, and the Communists could reasonably expect that most children running loose on the streets would encounter these figures at some point.[47]

The CCP faced many obstacles in trying to expand access to primary school education. Despite having better-developed educational systems than most other areas of China, both Shanghai and Tianjin had little to offer to realize the new government's goals of creating a socialist educational system and widespread basic education. Tianjin, in particular, suffered from terrible inflation and other problems that arose as a byproduct of war, and so there were major logistical problems in maintaining, improving, and expanding the school system. The city lacked the teachers, classrooms, schools, basic equipment such as desks and chairs, and

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carried out in the other cities controlled by the Nationalists. Surviving CCP members fled to rural areas, and did not again have a strong presence in urban areas in China until the civil war. The international Communist movement too was wary of urban areas, with their strong capitalist presence. As a 1923 pamphlet from the Young Communists International put it, urban streets were a "'great foul gutter thru which passes all the scum of capitalist society.'" Paul C. Mishler, *Raising Reds: The Young Pioneers, Radical Summer Camps, and Communist Political Culture in the United States* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1999), 23.

[47] The CCP quickly began organizing, regulating, and reforming these groups upon taking control of urban areas, but none was completely removed immediately, and many groups, such as street peddlers, never disappeared from the streets. See Wakeman, "'Cleanup': The New Order in Shanghai"; Gail Hershatter, *Dangerous Pleasures: Prostitution and Modernity in Twentieth-Century Shanghai* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997), 304–24, http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&scope=site&db=nlebk&db=nlabk&AN=6907; Hanchao Lu, *Street Criers: A Cultural History of Chinese Beggars* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2005).

textbooks and other teaching materials necessary to create a universal primary school system.

One of the most pressing problems was that of the teachers' livelihood. Many teachers were underpaid and in desperate need of necessities such as food, especially after inflation had made money unreliable. One of the first acts of the new military commission of Tianjin was to distribute 100,000 *jin*[48] of grain to university and secondary teachers on January 21, 1949. Primary school teachers are not mentioned, but during the first Tianjin Primary and Secondary Teachers' Representative General Assembly in April, the Department of Education assured teachers that they had the support of the government, and that the government guaranteed their livelihood. In May 1950, the government distributed 76 million *jin* of corn to the city's primary school teachers, amounting to about 100-150 *jin* per person.[49] The outlay of grain to educators was huge; from February through December of 1949, outlays of rice to teachers constituted about 20 percent of the total grain distributed by the city (*quanshi jiaoyu jingfei gongzhichu xiaomi* 246447724 *jin, zhan quanshi zongzhichu* 20% *zuoyou*).[50] Keeping teachers well-fed and compensated enough to stay at their posts was evidently a priority for the CCP.

Besides the dearth of necessary staff and infrastructure necessary to enroll all of Tianjin's children in school, many of the existing school materials did not impart

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[48] A *jin* is a unit of weight roughly equivalent to one pound.
[49] Tianjin shi difangzhi bianxiu weiyuanhui, *Tianjin tongzhi: jichu jiaoyu zhi* [Tianjin annals: elementary education gazetteer], 44–45.
[50] Tianjin shi difangzhi bianxiu weiyuanhui, 45.

the socialist values that the Communist party wanted to transmit to the people. Teachers were not necessarily sympathetic to the Communist project, and the schools in operation included religious schools run by foreigners and schools with close ties to the Nationalists. A 1949 Tianjin Department of Education work report characterized the city's privately run schools as founded by "imperialists [with the intent] to implement slave education," "feudal groups and gangs, to conserve their backwards thinking," "fallen literati or dilettante intellectuals to make a living," and commercial businesses to "oppress and squeeze money from students." As for public schools, all "are roughly of the same background and situation, and are downright miniatures of the GMD-controlled government." In the city's 121 public primary schools, "there was not even one whose equipment and facilities are sufficient."[51]

The CCP may have been dissatisfied with the existing school system, and saw serious problems, but it lacked the resources to tackle them, nor did it have much time to make major changes. The city had barely come under the control of the CCP when the spring semester in 1949 began. The new government could not expand educational opportunities at the same time as making serious changes to the educational style and content. In fact, the Party-state could not expect to do even one of those well. Therefore, the government decided to focus on maintaining and expanding the current system.

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[51] TMA, File: X198-Y-135-1, "Tianjin shi renmin zhengfu jiaoyuju di er ke, jiefang yilai gongzuo baogao" [A report on work since liberation by the Tianjin Municipal People's Government Department of Education, 2nd dept.], May, 1949.

The military commission, in conjunction with the people's government, put forth a guiding slogan for educational work: "maintain the current situation, quickly resume classes, and steadily reform."[52] The city Department of Education created an eight-point plan for school reform that would make the school system less "feudal" and more appropriate to the city's current situation. The plan was mostly practical and restrained, focused on editing textbooks and educational materials to delete mentions of GMD-backed initiatives such as the Boy Scouts.[53] According to the city's Department of Education, run at this time by Lin Ziming, a veteran of the base areas who had also received his doctorate from Yenching University in Beijing,[54] the schools in CCP liberated zones had produced teaching materials, but because the CCP's base of power had been rural areas, "most stressed the countryside, and weren't appropriate for the city's situation."[55] Therefore, the city had little choice but to keep existing materials for teachers and students. It was not until later that materials began to use rural contexts for the education of urban children.

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[52] Tianjin shi difangzhi bianxiu weiyuanhui, *Tianjin tongzhi: jichu jiaoyu zhi* [Tianjin annals: elementary education gazetteer], 8.

[53] For more information on the scouting movement in China, see Margaret Tillman, "Engendering Children of the Resistance: Models for Gender and Scouting in China, 1919-1937," *Cross-Currents E-Journal* 13 (December 2014): 134–73.

[54] Tianjin shi difangzhi bianxiu weiyuanhui, *Tianjin tongzhi: jichu jiaoyu zhi [Tianjin annals: elementary education gazetteer]*, 44. Lin Zimeng remained the Director of Tianjin's Department of Education until the end of May, at which time he was made Deputy Director.

[55] TMA, File: X198-Y-135-1, "Tianjin shi renmin zhengfu jiaoyuju di er ke, jiefang yilai gongzuo baogao" [A report on work since Liberation by the Tianjin Municipal People's Government Department of Education, 2nd dept.], May, 1949.

Furthermore, the lack of printing equipment and resources limited the government's ability to create new materials for students. During the War of Resistance, the border government had created a set of primary school materials, including an eight-volume series for language learning and six volumes of mathematics textbooks. However, the government had limited resources for printing, and so the lithographs for printing were sent to every county to print the number of copies they needed, after which they were sent to the districts for the same process to be repeated. Printing capabilities and resources varied, and there were never enough materials, not even if simpler mimeograph technology was used. Many schools continued to use materials that were hand-copied by the teachers.[56] Not much had changed by the time that the CCP added Tianjin to the areas under its control. The CCP lacked the time and resources to create and print a large amount of new material, so they had to continue using the old teaching materials, with revisions and corrections. Some existing materials were completely deleted from the curriculum because they contained praise for the dynastic system, emperors, GMD leaders, and other historical movements and figures to which the Communists objected. Schools

[56] Michael Schoenhals, "China's 'Great Proletarian Information Revolution' of 1966-1967," in *Maoism at the Grassroots*, ed. Jeremy Brown and Matthew D. Johnson (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2015), 247. According to Schoenhals, a mimeograph could only be used to make approximately 400 copies before becoming too dull to produce legible results.

improvised the curriculum for these subjects by creating their own materials or using newspapers, political textbooks, or other "progressive" (*jinbu*) materials.[57]

The efforts during the 1949 spring term were minimal, and it was clear that new resources and policies were needed. In spring 1949, the Tianjin Department of Education put forward a plan for the 1949 primary school fall term in an effort to fix some of the ongoing problems plaguing the school system, by gathering necessary equipment for schools, founding kindergartens, and improving the quality of teaching staff.

The process went more smoothly and quickly in Shanghai. Within a month of Liberation, the city's educators at every level—primary, secondary, and tertiary education—were called together for an assembly at which the mayor and vice mayor gave speeches. A week later, private schools were assured they would not be taken over by the state, and by August the municipal Department of Education was established, led by Dai Botao.[58] As of November 26, 1949, the policies and finances of every city school, public and private, were supposed to be directly controlled by the Department of Education.[59]

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[57] TMA, File: X198-Y-135-1, "Tianjin shi renmin zhengfu jiaoyuju di er ke, jiefang yilai gongzuo baogao" [A report on work since Liberation by the Tianjin Municipal People's Government Department of Education, 2nd dept.], May, 1949.
[58] Lu Xingwei, *Shanghai putong jiaoyushi, 1949-1989* [A history of general education in Shanghai, 1949-1989], 24, 579–80.
[59] This only applied to the urban areas of Shanghai. The rural suburbs and counties were administered by their own offices of education, although any relevant policies and plans from the city Department of Education were supposed to be implemented in those areas. Lu Xingwei, 24–25.

With respect to textbooks, Shanghai had the advantage of the number of publishing houses located there. While teachers in Tianjin had to make do with old textbooks, supplemented with newspapers and other makeshift materials, in Shanghai the Department of Education called on a range of publishing houses—educational and non-educational, public and private—to print a set of temporary textbooks. These publishers formed a joint publishing organization that was able to publish over nine million volumes of provisional primary and secondary school textbooks before the 1949 fall term started.[60]

There was a serious shortage of teachers in both Shanghai and Tianjin. Many schools, public and private, urgently needed to hire new teachers, as well as other school staff, including principals and janitors. There had been a large amount of turnover among staff during the end of the civil war.[61] Some educators had health issues or had family matters to attend to, while others found working outside the home too dangerous during wartime. Zhao Huijuan, a first-grade primary school teacher, resumed work in 1949. She had quit during the War of Resistance because,

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[60] Song Yuanfang and Sun Yong, eds., *Shanghai chuban zhi* [Shanghai publishing gazetteer] (Shanghai: Shanghai Academy of Social Sciences Press, 2000), 489.

[61] TMA, File: X198-C-9-9, "Wei chengqing benxiao xin ren jiaoyuan Zhao Jusheng, Wen Mei yi yu 9 yue 14 ri daozhi qing bei'an you" [Submitting a record of Zhao Jusheng and Wen Mei have already arrived for work as new educators on Sept. 14], Sept. 15, 1949; File: X198-C-10-9, "Wei xiao zhong gongzuo fenpei kunnan reng qingcha zhao qian an tianpai jiaoyuan err en yili jiaoxue you" [In order to divide up the burden of work at the school, a request to additionally hire two teachers for the benefit of teaching], June 2, 1949; File: X198-C-9-3, "Wei benxiao zeng ban zengpin jiaoyuan si ren chengqing bei'an you" [A report of a request for our school to add more classes and hire four more teachers] Aug. 15, 1949.

as she wrote in her biographical description, she was in danger when walking on the streets to and from work "given the amount of artillery fire."[62] Others left as part of the cohort of southbound cadres sent to help with the Communist transition in southern cities.[63] Schools that suffered from particularly acute staffing shortages took whatever measures necessary to fill posts. For example, at Yiwu Primary School in Tianjin, when they found themselves without a principal, the teacher in charge of the first grade was temporarily appointed to the position, but could hardly manage the workload of both jobs. The school pleaded for approval—and perhaps implicitly, funding—to hire a new first-grade teacher.[64] Schools had been making do with the staff and resources at hand, but this often involved an extraordinarily heavy workload for teachers.

During this early period, logistical and material necessities took priority over both politics and quality. Teachers and school staff were occasionally fired because of bad political background, poor work performance, or both, but this was uncommon given the shortage of qualified personnel.[65] The Tianjin Department of Education's

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[62] TMA, File: X198-Y-140-12, "Zizhuan" [Autobiographies], 1949.
[63] The source does not specify if these people had been members of the CCP before Liberation, or if they were recruited after CCP takeover. TMA, File: X198-C-9-38, "Wei chengqing shi yi qu xiaofenxiao jiaoyuan Zhao Wenlan qingqiu zhuandiao baqu you" [A request for the transfer of Zhao Wenlan of the No. 1 District Primary School to No. 8 District], Nov. 13, 1949; File: X198-C-9-53, "Wei benxiao jiaoyuan" [For this school's educators], June 10, 1949.
[64] TMA, File: X198-C-9-58, "Guanyu pinqing Shihui jiren yi nianji jiren de qing" [A request to hire Shihui to be in charge of the first grade], Nov. 30, 1949.
[65] TMA, File: X198-C-9-51, "Wei chengbao jiepin tiyu jiaoyuan Zhang Chengguang bing jiangming liyou tuiqing" [A report about dismissing PE teacher Zhang Chengguang and explaining the reasons for his dismissal], July 25, 1949.

plans from spring 1949 specifically noted that aside from "a few reactionaries" (*gebie fandong fenzi*), "all teachers maintained their posts" (*yilü zhaocheng gongzhi*). The most that Department of Education officials could do to effect change in the teaching style and perspective of teachers was to encourage teachers to engage in "self-study."[66] For the most part, aside from changes to management style and slight curricular additions and deletions, overall the school system, its staff, and their use of pre-1949 materials continued intact under CCP rule.

In one rare example of the dismissal of an education worker, in November 1949, the school administration at Tianjin's No. 1 District Central Primary School requested permission to fire their office clerk Li Yunru. Although the school was in an urban district of Tianjin, Li's family background was classified as landlord, and she had gotten the job through a personal relationship with the previous principal. She was described as intentionally lazy and obstructive of the school's work.[67] It is unclear if both her background and her work were equal factors, or if one preceded the other. Her class background could have been a factor in her dismissal, but it is also possible that her landlord background was used to bolster a request to dismiss a sub-par employee at a time when the educational system generally could not spare anyone.

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[66] Tianjin shi difangzhi bianxiu weiyuanhui, *Tianjin tongzhi: jichu jiaoyu zhi* [Tianjin annals: elementary education gazetteer], 8.

[67] TMA, File: X198-C-9-13, "Wei chengbao wo fenxiao yi kaike pin Liu Hai wei zhuren xin zengshe ke renjiaoyuan gongyou keren yi daozhi qing qianhe bei'an you" [Submitting a report about our school, which has already started classes, hired Liu Hai as director of the newly created classes and teaching staff, and they have already reported for duty], Nov. 2, 1949.

Many teachers, given their level of education, came from relatively well-to-do families.[68] Despite this, teachers were considered part of the working class, according to remarks given by Mayor Huang at the first Tianjin Municipal Representative Assembly of Primary and Secondary School Educators.[69]

During the summer of 1949, the CCP set in motion a more centralized and urban-appropriate plan for primary school education. In June, the North China People's Government (*Huabei renmin zhengfu*), the precursor to the PRC Central Government, announced the Temporary Steps and Methods for North China Area Primary School Education (*Huabei qu xiaoxue jiaoyu zanxing shishi banfa*). These guidelines were to apply to all of China under Communist control, and so they guided Tianjin's and Shanghai's Departments of Education in the fall of 1949.[70] The guidelines temporarily set the goal for universal primary school education at four years of lower primary school for both urban and rural areas. This excluded the last two years of higher primary school, which were rare offerings in rural areas anyway.

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[68] This was especially true in secondary schools. "In 1947, 60 percent of the secondary school faculty and staff in Shanghai were university graduates." See Eddy U, "Leninist Reforms, Workplace Cleavages, and Teachers in the Chinese Cultural Revolution," *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 47, no. 1 (January 2005): 112, https://doi.org/10.1017/S0010417505000058. It was also true for most rural schools, where "many of the people who were qualified to teach belonged to families classified as either rich peasants or landlords." Thøgersen, *A County of Culture*, 156.

[69] Tianjin shi difangzhi bianxiu weiyuanhui, *Tianjin tongzhi: jichu jiaoyu zhi* [Tianjin annals: elementary education gazetteer], 46.

[70] TMA, File: X198-Y-313-1, "Guanyu Tianjin zhigangchang di er fen sheli zhigong zidi xiaoxue de youguan wenti de pifu" [Regulations for the establishment of the Tianjin No. 2 Steel Mill School for worker's children], March 31, 1950.

Primary school students were also not supposed to pay any school fees.[71] While free schooling may have been the goal, in practice most schools needed to charge fees to survive financially. In Shanghai, the new Department of Education announced that at least one quarter of every school's students should come from families poor enough to be exempt from all fees, that those not poor enough to qualify for free tuition but still impoverished be allowed to pay their fees in installments, and that regular school tuition be set at 9,000 *RMB* for primary school.[72] This might not have been a high fee, given postwar inflation before the PRC instituted currency reform. At one point in 1945, U.S. $1 was worth between 1,500 and 2,000 yuan in Shanghai.[73]

In Shanghai, the school administration of larger schools was also rearranged to reflect the CCP's goal of "new democratic education" (*xin minzhu zhuyi jiaoyu*). All primary schools with at least eight classes or twelve educators were supposed to hold elections, in which students and educators would each elect representatives to the school's new school board (*xiaowu weiyuanhui*). The number of teacher representatives depended on the size of the school, but the number of student representatives was set at two. In a surprising move considering the CCP's stated solidarity with manual workers, janitors and other service staff did not get regular

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[71] "Huabei qu xiaoxue jiaoyu zanxing shishi banfa" [Temporary methods for implementing primary school education in North China], *Renmin ribao* [People's Daily], July 15, 1949.
[72] "Measures to Help Poor Students Here," *North China Daily News*, September 5, 1949.
[73] Jonathan D Spence, *The Search for Modern China*, 3rd ed. (New York: W.W. Norton, 2013), 435.

representation, but could send a non-voting representative if the school board was discussing issues that related to them.[74] This school board structure, with elections for student and teacher representations for a new school board, seems quite democratic, although it is unclear how quick, widespread, and to-the-letter compliance was.

The CCP had different concerns for public and private schools. CCP members were understandably worried that public schools "reflected the priorities of the Nationalists." To eradicate that influence, the CCP required that all primary schools discontinue previous civics, military training, and English-language courses, and add politics classes. All schools were also instructed to stop GMD party and youth league (*sanqingtuan*) activities.[75] As laid out in a September, 1949 directive, politics classes for primary school students should introduce them to Marxism, materialism, and a historical-materialist perspective. The classes were also supposed to emphasize patriotism and a love for the people, labor, science, and public property.[76] The CCP attempted to mold the city's public schools, replacing the old Nationalist version of nationalism with its new, socialist version.

Private schools would be allowed to continue, at least temporarily, without being nationalized. Schools that were funded or subsidized by foreign funds,

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[74] Lu Xingwei, *Shanghai putong jiaoyushi, 1949-1989* [A history of general education in Shanghai, 1949-1989], 26.
[75] Lu Xingwei, 29, 31; For a discussion of civics education in secondary schools during the Republican era, see Robert Joseph Culp, *Articulating Citizenship: Civic Education and Student Politics in Southeastern China, 1912-1940* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Asia Center: Distributed by Harvard University Press, 2007).
[76] Lu Xingwei, *Shanghai putong jiaoyushi, 1949-1989* [A history of general education in Shanghai, 1949-1989], 61.

especially religious schools, were treated with much greater suspicion than Chinese-funded private schools. All schools were supposed to stop religious education, although the CCP was aware that some schools continued to have religious classes and activities.[77] Those schools would be among the first to be taken over in 1951, in the context of China's entry into the Korean War against the United States. Even in 1949, however, CCP did attempt to exert some measure of control over their operations, including how they recruited students and collected fees.[78]

This was part of the PRC's overall plan to enroll more children of workers and peasants in school, articulated in a speech in December, 1949 by Ma Xulun, the head of the national Department of Education.[79] All schools were supposed to prioritize the enrollment of the children of workers and peasants. The Department of Education encouraged schools to take measures to encourage the enrollment of the children of workers and peasants, including a state-mandated reduction in the price of textbooks.[80] Foreign-funded private schools in Shanghai were specifically required to reduce their fees by 25% and enroll children of financially struggling workers and peasants.[81] These kinds of directives accomplished two purposes: they helped CCP officials boost enrollment of workers and peasants; they also put the financial burden of doing

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[77] Lu Xingwei, 35.
[78] Lu Xingwei, 32.
[79] Lu Xingwei, 39.
[80] "School Textbook Prices to Be Reduced," *North China Daily News*, September 13, 1950.
[81] Lu Xingwei, *Shanghai putong jiaoyushi, 1949-1989* [A history of general education in Shanghai, 1949-1989], 40.

so disproportionately on foreign-funded schools, which the state distrusted and would soon take over anyway. In Tianjin, the Department of Education also focused on expanding lower-primary schools and increasing the number of students for whom fees had been waived.[82]

Given the lack of schools and infrastructure, more efforts were needed to reach the children of workers and peasants. Some schools offered seasonal academic terms—often the winter, when there was less agricultural work to be done—and "rotating schools" (*xunhui xuexiao*), when a teacher would rotate between different areas without schools, teaching classes to the local children. These strategies were more common in rural areas, where a lack of teaching staff and infrastructure was often compounded by difficult transportation, families' need for children to work in the fields, or both. In urban areas, the two main strategies were the two-shift school system, and evening classes for working children and youth.[83] Enrolling these children in school was generally referred to as "rescuing" (*jiuji*) them, a signal of the importance state officials and concerned citizens attached to education.[84]

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[82] "Huabei qu xiaoxue jiaoyu zanxing shishi banfa" [Temporary methods for implementing primary school education in North China], *Renmin ribao* [People's Daily], July 15, 1949.
[83] "Jiaoyuting jueding shangbannian jihua" [The Department of Education decided on a plan for the first half of the year], *Renmin ribao* [People's Daily], Jan. 6, 1950.
[84] TMA, File: X198-C-10-6, "Wei ni zeng yi nianji erbuzhi yiban bing qing zeng jiaoyuan yi ren you" [A plan to add a two-shift, half-day first grade and also to hire an additional teacher], April 5, 1949; File: X198-Y-135-1, "Tianjin shi Renmin Zhengfu Jiaoyu Ju di er ke, jiefang yilai gongzuo baogao" [A report on the work of the no. 2 department of the Tianjin Municipal People's Government's Dept. of Education since Liberation], May 1949.

"Evening classes for children" (*ertong wanban*) were encouraged in these first few years. They targeted children of primary-school age, seven to fifteen, who were poor and in danger of missing out of school, and whose households needed their productive labor. The evening classes were envisioned as relatively rigorous and intensive classes that could give children a full lower-primary school education, from grades one through four. Students were supposed to attend the evening classes for at least three hours per night, at least 110 days a year, or about twenty-two weeks.[85]

Another way that the school system enrolled more students was through the use of the two-shift school system, first introduced in China in 1934. There were many variations of this system, including having three classes share two classrooms, but most primary schools seemed to have used the two-shift system, under which half of a school's students would attend school in the morning, and the other half in the afternoon, and every other week the two classes would switch shifts.[86] This system, and the new problems that it created, are discussed in Chapter Two. The Shanghai municipal government also prioritized building schools in working-class areas where schools were particularly scarce. By 1952, the percentage of working-class children in Shanghai's primary schools had gone from 36.4% of the total school population in 1949 to 45.2% in 1952.[87] It is unclear, however, if that included only regular primary

[85] Lu Xingwei, *Shanghai putong jiaoyushi, 1949-1989* [A history of general education in Shanghai, 1949-1989], 41.
[86] Lu Xingwei, 184.
[87] Lu Xingwei, 45.

schools, or if it also included children enrolled in programs such as the "evening classes for children."

The expansion of educational opportunities to include working-class and poor children was one of the biggest changes to the school system in 1949, although it was perhaps more effective when measured in terms of quantity than quality. The Temporary Steps and Methods for North China Area Primary School Education instructed schools to "open their doors" to the children of workers and peasants by reducing tuition and miscellaneous fees, increasing their number of students with tuition waivers, and setting up "people's subsidy scholarships." According to the CCP's own records, the enrollment drive and reduction in tuition and fees allowed Tianjin's schools to add 11,000 new students to its first-grade classes in 1949.[88] However, the number of schools declined, from 2,293 to 2,266. These overcrowded schools were also likely not providing a high quality of education, and the number of students who graduated from primary school in Tianjin went down in 1950 despite the absolute increase in the number of students. The number of graduates continued to rise in absolute numbers for every year thereafter, but did not regain the pre-Liberation graduation rate until 1955.[89] More children were going to school under Communist rule, but at least in Tianjin's schools they were not necessarily progressing through even the first four years of the lower-primary school system.

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[88] Tianjin shi difangzhi bianxiu weiyuanhui, *Tianjin tongzhi: jichu jiaoyu zhi* [Tianjin annals: elementary education gazetteer], 8.

[89] Bureau of Statistics, *Tianjin wushinian, 1949-1999* [Fifty years in Tianjin, 1949-1999] (Beijing: China Statistics Publishing House, 1999), 388.

Schools as Site of Interaction between the State and the Grassroots

While the state did not endeavor to change much about the daily operations of the school systems in Tianjin and Shanghai, any amount of control required the establishment of new relationships with teachers and school administrators. Furthermore, the state was also in the process of establishing a relationship with the people it now governed. Many of the campaigns carried out concurrently with the 1949 takeover and the first few years—land reform and marriage reform in particular—involved the creation of a new relationship with the masses.

Schools and the expansion of educational access also served to bolster this new, direct relationship between the state and the people. Before Liberation, only a minority of children in China, generally those in urban locations or from well-off families, could reasonably expect to attend even primary school. Now, the CCP was trying to bring as many children as possibly into schools, especially in urban areas, which both created new expectations on the part of the people, as well as furthered the state's efforts to have a direct relationship with every citizen, children included. Schools were an important avenue to reach children and their parents. The takeover of private, community-run schools also brought them into new contact with the new state, which had ambitions to be much more effective and intrusive than its predecessors.

The Communists had come to power partly by promising to improve the lives of the Chinese people, even though they did not always have the resources to deliver on their promises. Education had long been an important avenue for social and

economic mobility,[90] so once the war had ended, many people "began to have cultural requirements," that is, demanding an education, particularly for their children.[91] In Tianjin, some night schools for adult workers were converted into primary schools. For example, the private Minde No. Three Evening School, formerly a night school for illiterate women, was converted into a primary school because, as school administrator Feng Shao writes, "many adults have already devoted themselves to increasing production and now come here to demand that scholars be more concerned with children. Those registering to enroll in school were growing by the day."[92] In Meifeng Alley, a working-class neighborhood in Putuo district in Shanghai, one of the signs that Shanghai had been "cleaned up" was the increase in the number of children going to school from twenty before Liberation to more than one hundred afterwards.[93]

The demand for schooling was particularly intense because there were many older children who had not attended school regularly or at all during the occupation and wartime. When schools opened in 1949, each grade often included a wide age

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[90] As Stig Thøgersen notes, the demand for education in rural areas "also showed that the CCP raised new expectations among the rural population by promising entry to the futuristic world of socialism in which members of the bottom social strata would become 'masters of the country.' Being educated was an inalienable part of being a 'master.'" See Thøgersen, *A County of Culture*, 141–42.

[91] TMA, File: X198-Y-136-2, "Tongzhi yanjiu taolun xiaoxue jiaoyu zhongxin wenti sanxiang" [A notice about research and discussion of three central problems in primary school education], April 18, 1949.

[92] TMA, File: X198-Y-140-17, "Wei qingshi kefou gai buxi xuexiao wei zhengshi xiaoxue you" [A request to change an evening study school into an official primary school], April 27, 1949.

[93] Wakeman, "'Cleanup': The New Order in Shanghai," 57.

range. At Jianji Primary School in Tianjin, the first grade included children ranging from six to fifteen. The fourth-grade class, the most advanced offered at this school, included children age twelve to seventeen.[94] The gender ratio also varied greatly. Jianji Primary School, for example, had far more boys than girls enrolled at every grade level, including the first.[95] At another, a school for workers' children, the first-grade class in 1950 had forty one children age six to sixteen, with girls outnumbering boys by more than two to one.[96] It is also possible, even likely, that changes in the understanding of who should receive an education had been changing over the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, but that war had disrupted families' abilities to send their children to school. Different families surely had different reasons, but the overall number of girls going to school, particularly in urban areas, was rising.

Given the Communist support for expanded educational access as well as the efforts to bring education under official control, there was a great deal of confusion over the fate of private schools. Such was the case with Jianji Primary School, which had been founded by the local community in a rural area of Tianjin's No. Five

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[94] TMA, File: X198-Y-264-14, "Tianjin shi sili Jianji Xiaoxue jiaju yijiao qingce" [A Detailed List of Furniture to be Transferred to Tianjin's private Jianji Primary School], May 10, 1949.

[95] TMA, File: X198-Y-264-14, "Tianjin shi sili Jianji Xiaoxue jiaju yijiao qingce" [A Detailed List of Furniture to be Transferred to Tianjin's private Jianji Primary School], May 10, 1949.

[96] TMA, File: X198-Y-313-12, "Guanyu chengbao Huabei Huaxue Gongye Gongsi Tianjin Gongchang Tianjin Zhigang Chang di yi fen chang heban zhigong zidi xiaoxue geng gai xiaoming de pifu" [An official reply about the request to change the name of the primary school for workers' children, jointly managed by the Huabei Chemistry Industrial Company, Tianjin Factory, and Tianjin No. 1 Steel Mill], Nov. 20, 1950.

District in 1945. It was specifically created to help poor, under-schooled children. The villagers banded together to form the privately run school, housed in a local temple, with a local vegetable oil factory providing half of the funds.[97] According to Communist educational directives, private schools like Jianji needed to register with the state for approval to keep operating, and possibly to be nationalized and converted into state schools.[98] Some private school administrators petitioned the government not only to register and be allowed to continue operating, but also to ask for material support for community-run efforts. Unfortunately, in 1948 there were high rates of inflation and fluctuations in commodity prices, so the funds from the factory were not sufficient to continue running the school. They needed state financial support. Exactly two weeks after Tianjin was liberated, a group of young adults who worked at the school petitioned the Tianjin Department of Education Chief Mr. Lin to support their establishment of the privately-run school in the outskirts of Tianjin, writing:

> Dear Department of Education Chief Mr. Lin,
>
> For the past few days, words have been pent up in our hearts, and now we want to tell you. We hope you will be able to better understand and help us.

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[97] TMA, File: X198-Y-264-2, "Wei wuqu shisibao sili jianji xiaoxue yin jingfei kunnan wuli kaixue qingqiu jieguan you" [A request to have the No. 5 District, 14th Bao privately-run Jianji Primary School be taken over because it currently cannot open for classes due to lack of funds], Feb. 27, 1949.

[98] TMA, File: X198-Y-135-1, "Tianjin shi renmin zhengfu jiaoyuju di er ke, jiefang yilai gongzuo baogao" [A report on work since Liberation by the Tianjin Municipal People's Government Department of Education, 2nd dept.], May, 1949.

We are youth who are ardently love the truth, but in our situation, we have little relationship with society, no capital (*zicai*), no encouraging companions, nothing .... [*Ellipsis in the original document*.] We have seen countless children of poor families, with no ability to pay private primary school fees, nor any relatives in a distinguished position to introduce them to enter the private primary schools, so they were unable to go to school. The nation failed them. Therefore, we resolve to do the utmost with our energy to make up for this deficiency, and so we started this school. Because at least we have the boldness of vision to advance courageously and a fearless spirit to transform the school system according to our ideals and change the content of the classes, even though there haven't been any results (*chenggong*) yet, there has been change in the spirit and traditions.

This school has grown up during hardship, because it is located in a relatively remote location, therefore the children who get education there are all relatively poor. Because of this, we realized that education is not only a high-level national ornament, but rather it must be integrated with the people's lives. Therefore, we cast aside the past traditions of the cramming style of education and instead use the integration of labor and knowledge. After students graduate, they not only can go up to secondary school, but also must be able to use this level of knowledge to serve the

society. In this way, it's important that extracurricular education and work can accompany this.[99]

The petitioners shrewdly noted the failure of the GMD to establish an adequate primary school system, particularly for poor rural children—"the nation failed them," and they hoped that this new, as yet unofficial, nation would not do the same. They used the rhetoric of the CCP and its goals of serving the people and improving the lives of its poor rural population, writing that the Communists "will be able to *better* understand and help us," expecting the Department of Education to support their new primary school. Unsurprisingly, given the CCP's intent to maintain the operation of as many already existing schools as possible, the youths' petition in 1949 on behalf of the school to convert it into a public institution was successful. The school was converted into the No. Five District Fourteenth Street Primary School, with financial support from the city government making it possible to continue classes.[100]

This practice of writing a letter to the department of education for support for community-run schools seems to have been somewhat common. Peiyu Primary School was founded by private individuals, with private funding, in the summer of 1949 in order to serve children who had lost the opportunity for schooling during the

[99] TMA, File: X198-Y-264-3, "Wei chengbao benxiao ainan jixu kaiban yuanyin ji gaishan banfa qingqiu shiyou" [To report on the origins of our school's difficulties in continuing to run and a request for a way to improve matters], Jan. 29, 1949.
[100] TMA, File: X198-Y-135-1, "Tianjin shi renmin zhengfu jiaoyuju di er ke, jiefang yilai gongzuo baogao" [A report on work since liberation by the Tianjin Municipal People's Government Department of Education, 2nd dept.], May 1949.

war years. The founders also wrote a letter to the city Department of Education to register their school, acknowledging that the state hoped to "popularize education by government decree," but that it was clear that with "the government's limited material… and personnel abilities," it could not establish a universal public school system.[101] Thus, they said, they had taken it upon themselves to start a school. Private school administrators understood the new government's limited capacity to carry out its objectives, but were also likely nervous about how the new government would treat them, despite claims that private schools would be allowed to continue to operate, so long as they registered with the state and followed new directives.

The state's efforts to enroll more poor and working class children often involved the extension of material benefits such as subsidized school fees and extra food rations. We saw above that sending grain rations to teachers was one of the new government's first priorities. By trying to expand educational access, schools became part of the state's efforts provide material benefits to its citizens and incentivize cooperation with state initiatives. In 1950, the Tianjin government gave assistance in the form of grain to the city's poor primary school students. Students in grades 1-2 received 12 *jin* of rice, grades 3-4 got 15 *jin*, and grades 5-6 got 20 for a total of 241,780,000 *jin*.[102] This allowed the city to make good on its promises to help the poor and workers, while also encouraging school attendance. This was part of a larger

[101] TMA, File: X198-Y-140-17, "Wei qingshi kefou gai buxi xuexiao wei zhengshi xiaoxue you" [A request to change an evening study school into an official primary school], April 27, 1949.
[102] Tianjin shi difangzhi bianxiu weiyuanhui, *Tianjin tongzhi: jichu jiaoyu zhi* [Tianjin annals: elementary education gazetteer], 45.

effort that linked "foodstuffs together with mobilization" through the municipal Department of Public Security. According to Frederic Wakeman, Jr., during the takeover of Shanghai, the Department of Public Security "inherited the Nationalists' urban *baojia* system of police-supervised household registration, keeping it intact, while adding two important new ingredients: food ration cards and mass participation."[103]

Not only did this make the school into a site of interaction between the state and its citizens, but it also contributed to state information gathering and surveillance. In order for the state to provide education and other benefits to its citizens, officials needed more information about the population. For example, the state subsidized school fees, both for private and public schools, for primary school students whose families could not afford them. In order to decide which students should receive this subsidy, schools relied on the local police force to help them verify students' backgrounds. In a survey done of one private school in Tianjin in December 1949, out of eighty-two students, only seven were paying the entire school fee. All other students had at least 20 percent of their fees subsidized by the government, or were still undergoing verification of their families' financial situation by the local police station.[104] Through their interaction with the people, police officers also were sometimes able to identify areas of need. According to a primary school teacher at this school, once a survey by the local police station found that there were more than

[103] Wakeman, "'Cleanup': The New Order in Shanghai," 43.
[104] TMA, File: X198-Y-146-12, "Wei chengbao kaixue hou qingxing you" [Report on the conditions since starting classes], Dec. 20, 1949.

400 children in her home district who needed schooling, an official primary school was organized.[105] Thus, expanding the educational system also relied on police interaction with and surveillance over the urban population.

These efforts were part of larger a larger state goal to "reintegrate the state vertically in a form recognizably 'modern,' strong and revolutionary" during the early years of the PRC, according to Julia Strauss.[106] They became much more intense and deliberate in urban areas by the time of the 1951 Campaign to Suppress Counterrevolutionaries, which "led directly to the expansion of the state in terms of its numbers of agents, and to the beginnings of its direct intrusion on the everyday workings of the work place."[107] This intrusion was as yet minimal, but would increase during the 1950s, as we will see in Chapter Two.

Conclusion

This chapter suggests that the moderation of the New Democracy policies in cities was necessitated by the precarious economic situation in Tianjin and Shanghai. In this context, the state had to rely on staff and infrastructure from the Republican period and Japanese occupation, and the takeover was gradual and cautious, with an emphasis on stability and the quickest possible resumption of normal functioning and classes. Nini Liu, an American-Chinese girl living in Tianjin at the time, describes the

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[105] TMA, File: X198-Y-140-12, "Zizhuan" [Autobiographies], 1949.
[106] Julia Strauss, "Morality, Coercion and State Building by Campaign in the Early PRC: Regime Consolidation and After, 1949-56," *China Quarterly* 188 (December 2006): 893.
[107] Strauss, 906.

changeover in the schools as a situation in which "'nothing changed, and everything changed. The outside was the same, but the essence changed. The teachers were the same but we were taught completely differently than before.'"[108] The changes in educational content, if not staff or infrastructure, fit with the larger picture we get of the school system in Shanghai and Tianjin during this time.

This chapter demonstrates that the Communists relied on staff and infrastructure from the pre-Liberation era when they took control of Tianjin and Shanghai in 1949. Schools, whether public or private, generally retained the same teachers, who were most often given professional rather than political re-education, and at least in Tianjin, continued to use the many of the same materials from before 1949. The biggest change in 1949 was the expansion of educational access, which was driven by the postwar stability, the CCP's top-down drive for universal primary school education, as well as some demands from parents who wanted an education for their children now that the war was over. The economic, geographical, and overall strategic importance of these two cities to the CCP possibly constrained the revolutionary nature of the CCP transition.

Despite all the challenges of expanding educational access in the first few years of the PRC, the state significantly increased the number of children in primary school. By 1952, nationally, approximately 60 percent of primary-school age children were attending school, which means tens of millions more children were attending

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[108] Eleanor Cooper and William Liu, *Grace in China: An American Woman Beyond the Great Wall, 1934-1974* (Montgomery, AL: River City Publishing, 2000), 208.

school in 1952 in comparison to 1949, when only about 25 percent of children were in school.[109] Chapter Two will look at the goals that state actors had for children, how they tried to achieve those goals and bring parents into that project, and how children were used to bolster the state's legitimacy and win the support of the domestic population.

[109] Cleverley, *The Schooling of China*.

Chapter Two

The New Child, 1949-1956

Following the establishment of the PRC in 1949, both domestic and international Chinese media portrayed children as lavishly cared for by the new Chinese state. These children were meant to serve as evidence of the success of Chinese socialism. While the Nationalists (GMD) were in power, there had been a large gap between the state and its representations of an ideal childhood and the material reality of children's lives. This gap contributed to popular perceptions of failure to protect children during World War II and the civil war, which contributed to the delegitimation of the GMD state's rule during those times. After 1949, the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) attempted to rhetorically and literally fix children into their newly proper role as happy, healthy, patriotic citizens who could be proud of their country rather than shaming it with the presence of their ill-clothed, empty-bellied bodies. The emblem of China was no longer "Bloody Saturday" – a widely circulated photograph of a lone toddler crying in the ruins of the bombed-out Shanghai South Railway Station in 1937– but rather a smiling child proudly wearing a Young Pioneer red scarf.[1] During the Korean War (1950-1953) in particular, not only did the Communist state promote its own efforts to protect and take care of its children, but it was also able to unambiguously point to the harm the imperialist

[1] Thomas Patrick Doherty, *Projections of War: Hollywood, American Culture, and World War II* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1999), 105.

actions of the U.S. were causing both Korean and Chinese children. This chapter will focus on the state's messages about childhood aimed at three distinct groups: society at large, children, and parents. It will also give background to the political situation that often had a direct influence on how children were imagined and deployed.

Socialist Childhood

Children played an important role in this normative appeal to society. Julia Strauss has argued that part of the PRC's success in governing China in the early 1950s was "a distinctive blend of coercion and normative appeals it applied to both the implementing agents of the state (cadres) and society at large."[2] For example, Strauss notes that children, along with the elderly and women, were often "specially chosen for the degree to which they would be likely to engage the emotions of the crowd" as speakers at large public accusation meetings during the Campaign to Suppress Counterrevolutionaries in 1950.[3] Images of and performances by children were also used in other campaigns, including the Resist America, Aid Korea campaign and the Three and Five Antis.

One of the main challenges that state officials faced in 1949 was formulating and implementing a new kind of socialist childhood, one more appropriate for a stable country ruled by a Communist government, rather than a disunified nation fighting Japanese imperialists and a civil war. Before 1949, the CCP had had little time and money to devote to efforts that did not offer immediate and direct support for the anti-

[2] Strauss, "Morality, Coercion and State Building by Campaign in the Early PRC: Regime Consolidation and After, 1949-56," 893.
[3] Strauss, 908.

Japanese and later the anti-Nationalist war effort. Once the CCP had established some measure of control in 1949, city and national education officials could begin thinking about what kind of socialist child they wanted to create. How would a Chinese socialist child behave? What role would a socialist child play in the revolution and in New China?

For most of the 1930s and 1940s, the idealized child in CCP-produced materials was not at a school or on the receiving end of state material aid, but rather on the battlefield for political control of China. During wartime, the CCP praised children for taking an active role in revolution. One article from the *People's Daily* in 1946 commended four children, both girls and boys, who had responded to the CCP's call to prevent GMD spies from doing damage and to bolster the defense of liberated areas. The children found a GMD spy with packets of poison and successfully thwarted this plan of attack.[4] A few months later, the *People's Daily* reported that "white-haired" men, women and even children were scrambling to join the army to fight the GMD or rushing to join the fight on the front lines.[5] As Party officials emphasized to education cadres during a 1946 conference outside of Tianjin, "education should rear students to become strong revolutionary fighters who are both

[4] "Gaoyi sunjiazhuang ertong cha tewu" [Children Investigate Spy Activity in Gaoyi, Sunjiazhang], *Renmin ribao* [People's Daily], Aug. 16, 1946.
[5] "Zhengwu quanmian dikang shengli quanqu shiwan qingnian canjun laotou funü ertong relie zheng shang qianxian" [Strive to All-out Successfully Resist, the Entire Region's Ten Thousand Youth Enlisted, Old Men, Women and Children Enthusiastically Contend on the Front Lines], *Renmin ribao* [People's Daily], Nov. 10, 1946.

aware and educated."[6] Regardless of whether or not children (and white-haired old men and women) were actually spying for the CCP or enlisting in the PLA in droves, active and direct contributions to the war effort were acceptable, even desired, for children, and the front lines were an acceptable place for them. These activities were part of a powerful narrative that the CCP told about the participation of children in its revolutionary project.[7]

In these accounts, children in CCP-controlled areas were brave, patriotic participants in the revolution. The passive children in need of saving and schooling seemed to only exist in GMD-controlled areas. In a critique of the GMD and Chiang Kai-shek, a *People's Daily* article from November 1946 recounts how people fled the "tyranny" of Chiang Kaishek's army. In Liaoning, formerly part of Japanese-controlled Manchukuo and partly controlled by the CCP and partly controlled by the GMD for most of 1946-1949, the *People's Daily* not only reported the massive flight of refugees into CCP-controlled areas of the province, but also noted that 60,000 children in Shenyang, the capital of Liaoning, still controlled by the GMD in 1946,

[6] Tianjin shi difangzhi bianxiu weiyuanhui, *Tianjin tongzhi: jichu jiaoyu zhi* [Tianjin annals: elementary education gazetteer], 222.

[7] As Stephanie Donald points out, "children are doubly subjected:" they were called to participate in state projects, in addition to serving as models and rallying symbols for adults. See Stephanie Donald, "Children as Political Messengers: Art, Childhood, and Continuity," in *Picturing Power in the People's Republic of China: Posters of the Cultural Revolution*, ed. Harriet Evans and Stephanie Donald (Lanham, MD: Rowan & Littlefield, 1999), 83.

were without schooling because their schools were being occupied by the GMD army.[8]

Even though the CCP had promoted children as brave and patriotic participants in the revolution, this changed in 1949 once the CCP became the ruling party, especially in cities. The child-centered recovery efforts of the post-1949 period served to present the PRC as a state that could protect citizens in ways that the previous GMD state had not. After winning the civil war, the CCP continued the GMD's stated intention of getting all children into schools. The patriotic aspect of the ideal child remained, but the proper place of children, both literally and within state actions, had changed dramatically. Although many post-1949 documents still proclaimed the heroic efforts of children during wartime, once the War of Resistance and civil war were over, New Children (*xin ertong*)—in New China (*xin Zhongguo*)—were expected to admire these heroic forebears in essays written in class, but not to abandon the classroom for similar efforts.

Many prescriptions for a New (Communist) Child were not markedly different from those for the Nationalist modern child. According to a compilation of materials for primary school teachers entitled "How to Raise a New Child" published in 1949, the New Child should be patriotic, active, creative, independent, confident, knowledgeable, collectivist, resolute, and moral. For the GMD during the immediate

[8] "Jiang jun baonüe tongzhi xia min buliaosheng ben xi shimin xiangshuai taolai jiefangqu shenyang xuexiao bei qiangzhan liuwan ertong shixue" [People Who Can't Make a Living Under the Tyrannical Rule of Chiang Kaishek's Army Flee from Xi City One after Another into Liberated Areas, Shenyang School is Occupied and 60,000 Children are without School], *Renmin ribao* [People's Daily], Nov. 3, 1946.

post-World War II era, children's proper place had been literally in a school or relief institution, and figuratively at the receiving end of the state's benevolent care and protection. Articles in the *People's Daily* in 1949 noted with pride the children who were back in school post-Liberation.[9] Now, the goal was to create a socialist childhood, and the state's first, most foundational step in that process was to establish a universal system of education, an effort discussed in Chapter Three.

The socialist child was not static, even over the first few years of the PRC. The pivotal points in this era—the Korean War and the First Five Year Plan (1953-1957)—were also moments of change for how childhood was envisioned and structured. The major tension in educational policy and children's media was between children as obedient and active, between childlike and revolutionary.

During the early years of the PRC, state officials used the Soviet Union as a model for economic development and the establishment of socialism. Thus until the mid-1950s, the establishment of socialism in the PRC was a slow and steady process, prioritizing stability in urban areas and industrial development. According to Frederick C. Teiwes, "broad agreement existed within the CCP leadership on adopting the Soviet model of socialism," at least until the late 1950s.[10] During the first years of its rule, the CCP still struggled to maintain control of urban areas with

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[9] "Shandong huifu zhengdun xiaoxue jiaoyu" [Shandong Renews Reorganization of Primary School Education], *Renmin ribao* [People's Daily], Nov. 16, 1949.
[10] Frederick C. Teiwes, "Establishment and Consolidation of the New Regime," in *The People's Republic, Part I: The Emergence of Revolutionary China, 1949-1965*, ed. Denis Crispin Twitchett and John K. Fairbank, vol. 14, The Cambridge History of China (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 63–65.

limited manpower and experience, and so urban elites – politicians, bureaucrats, and business-owners – were generally allowed to maintain their positions in the hopes of establishing political and economic stability. The Soviet Union model carried over into children's educational policy, as stability and the continuation of services was prioritized above political ideology. ,

The Korean War began in June 1950, less than a year after the founding of the PRC. The U.S. and USSR occupied and divided the Korean peninsula after World War II, with the U.S. controlling the south and the USSR controlling the north. Although the partition was never meant to be permanent, by 1950, the U.S.-backed government in the south was holding elections only for the south, and it became clear that neither they nor the USSR had any intention of reunifying Korea in the near future. The newly minted Democratic People's Republic of Korea, or North Korea, ruled by the Workers' Party of Korea (WPK), responded by invading the new Republic of Korea, or South Korea. With United Nations backing, the U.S. responded by leading an intervention against North Korea. By October the Chinese state had also committed itself to joining the war to aid North Korea. According to Shu Guang Zhang, the Korean War was a way for China to prove its international standing. It allowed the PRC to stand up to a major foreign imperialist state and "prove to the Eastern world that the Chinese Communists were not nationalists but reliable comrades within the socialist camp."[11]

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[11] Shu Guang Zhang, *Mao's Military Romanticism: China and the Korean War, 1950-1953* (Lawrence, KS: University Press of Kansas, 1995), 10.

The Korean War was also an inconveniently timed reminder of China's own recent wars. PRC officials were focused on moving away from wartime and creating a stable peacetime, but the Korean War threatened that project. Although the Korean War was not fought on Chinese soil and was therefore much less destructive and disruptive for the Chinese population than the previous two wars that China had experienced, anxieties about the anti-Communist motivations of the U.S. and United Nations struck at the core of the newly founded PRC.

The PRC used the Korean War to showcase the situation of children—both in Korea and in the PRC—to prove its own success as a socialist power and the evils of imperialism. The "Resist America, Aid Korea" campaign, intended to mobilize the Chinese population's support for the PRC's efforts in the Korean War, relied heavily on media about and for children to emphasize its message. Propaganda from the large-scale popular Korean War campaign, "Resist America, Aid Korea," used children to simultaneously reassure the Chinese public of their safety and wellbeing as PRC citizens, while also reminding them of the need for increased vigilance, lest their children be drawn back into the crosshairs of violent conflicts.

Following the Korean War, the First Five Year Plan was implemented in 1953. At this point, the state controlled "70 to 80 percent of heavy industry and 40 percent of light industry," and had expanded its organizational structure to include most of the urban population, through neighborhood committees, work units, the Communist Youth League, and other organizations.[12] During the First Five Year Plan,

[12] Teiwes, "Establishment and Consolidation of the New Regime," 93–94.

most of the population, both urban and rural, children and adults, was brought under new "socialist forms of organization."[13] The First Five Year Plan marked the beginning of national economic planning, and "also deepened the impact of the Soviet model."[14]

By 1956, nearly all of China's agricultural producers were in cooperatives, and a slim majority—52 percent—of all school-age children were in school.[15] With these transformations having gone relatively successfully and smoothly, the central government felt confident enough to invite input and even criticism from intellectuals and other citizens.[16] The Hundred Flowers Campaign was launched in 1956, although the CCP quickly decided that the criticisms were out of control, and launched the Anti-Rightist Movement in 1957, ending this brief period of "blooming and contending."[17] These campaigns also showed divisions in the priorities that different actors had for children in the PRC. Some educators used the Hundred Flowers Movement to call for greater emphasis on academic quality, not just quantity, in national educational policy. They apparently thought that the Party's drive for universal primary school education had caused a decline in overall quality. This demand was quashed along with other criticisms during the Anti-Rightist campaign,

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[13] Teiwes, 110.
[14] Teiwes, 96.
[15] Suzanne Pepper, "Education for the New Order," in *The People's Republic, Part I: The Emergence of Revolutionary China, 1949-1965*, ed. Denis Crispin Twitchett and John K. Fairbank, vol. 14, The Cambridge History of China (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 214.
[16] Teiwes, "Establishment and Consolidation of the New Regime," 123.
[17] Teiwes, 138.

and by 1956, the state planned to achieve universal primary school education, including in rural areas, in the next twelve years.[18]

The opinions of different actors on how best to establish childhood in the PRC created many areas of tension during the 1950s. The state was aware of its divided population, and used rhetoric about, for, and featuring children to send different messages to different audiences. Children were used to provide evidence to society at large, including the international community, of the successes and beneficence of the PRC, whereas children themselves were taught to be obedient and studious. Parents were viewed with suspicion, and constantly reminded that they must take household education very seriously, and nurture their children while also not spoiling them. Overall, children were used as symbols to convey to all of these groups the message that the PRC and its construction of socialism was giving Chinese children a comfortable life and that children who grew up under its care were righteous and strong, and thus that the state could be trusted to rule China and serve as a leader in the international community.

Messages Aimed at Society

The state used children – both portrayals of children in media as well as actual children in public performances - to show society that the PRC had successfully established a stable and prosperous nation and that socialism was being built with ease and efficiency. Children were depicted as happy, healthy, and safe, but state

[18] Pepper, *Radicalism and Education Reform in 20th-Century China*, 220–21.

publications also conveyed the message that children were still vulnerable and thus society must rally around the goals of the state to support their protection.

In propaganda posters from the first several years of the PRC, scenes of happiness, success, and plenty often involved children. In one poster from 1951 titled, "The life of the peasants is good after Land Reform," a smiling family is surrounded by baskets of food, chickens, and a newly opened parcel of colorful fabric. Three healthy-looking children, each wearing at least one article of red clothing, fill out the scene, with the youngest waving the PRC flag.[19] Another poster from 1951 reads, "Welcome the year of victory" (*yingjie shengli nian*). The "year of victory" is illustrated with a scene of celebration, featuring banners, streamers, and a red lantern behind a smiling PLA soldier who holds two children in his arms, with another two looking over his shoulder and four more children in front of him, carrying on the celebration with musical instruments and flowers.[20] The children serve as rosy-cheeked, well-clothed symbols of success and abundance, part of a landscape of victory created by the new Party-state.

In Chinese media about other socialist states, such as the USSR, children were also portrayed as happy and healthy. In contrast, accounts of children in non-socialist nations, such as Great Britain and Germany, emphasized the poor conditions of

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[19] Jin Meisheng, *The Life of the Peasants Is Good after Land Reform*, 1951, 53x77 cm, 1951, BG E15/595 (Landsberger collection), Chineseposters.net, https://chineseposters.net/posters/e15-595.php.

[20] *Laodong yingxiong jia, yingjie shengli nian, hujimo junyong* [Labor Hero Family, Welcome the Year of Victory, Army-Supported Model Family], 1951, 53x77cm, 1951, No. 5106, Shanghai Propaganda Poster Art Center.

children's lives. We can see this in articles from the *North China Daily News*, an English-language newspaper based in Shanghai.[21] Although it was generally critical of the CCP prior to 1949, after Shanghai was taken over by the Communists in May 1949, the tone switched and the publication regularly featured articles praising the accomplishments of the CCP, and a few months later, the new PRC. The paper continued to publish until 1951. A November 1950 article cited a UNESCO report about European children who remained orphaned and destitute after World War II, in an attempt to show that European "politicians and statesmen" were focused more on political ambition than on the welfare of the children in their nations.[22]

These comments were accompanied by dark warnings in the official CCP press about the state of children in other countries, in particular those who were vulnerable to the American imperialists. These articles bolstered the CCP's legitimacy by showing that it was not only doing a better job caring for its children than the GMD had, but that it was also doing a better job than other contemporary states. One article from the *People's Daily* reported a survey carried out in Japan about the state of students' lives in 1950, during the American occupation. According to the survey results, 3 percent of primary school children and 7.2 percent of middle

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[21] The *North China Daily News* was the daily counterpart to the weekly *North China Herald*, founded in 1850. According to Xiaoqun Xu, it was the "most influential" foreign newspaper during the late Qing and Republican era. It continued to operate after Liberation, and did not cease publication until 1951. See Xu Xiaoqun, *Chinese Professionals and the Republican State: The Rise of Professional Associations in Shanghai, 1912-1937*, Cambridge Modern China Series (Cambridge, UK; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 45.

[22] "Suffering Children," *North China Daily News*, November 8, 1950.

school students were forced to work, and 182,620 school-age children didn't have the opportunity to go to school.[23] Another 1950 account in the *People's Daily* reported that U.S. schools were filled with an atmosphere of war, and that preparations for "nuclear doom" (*yuanzidan siwang*) were standard, both of which were filling American children with anxiety.[24]

Children in those places that served as battlegrounds between the capitalist and socialist world, such as Korea and Vietnam, were depicted as suffering and in need of socialist rescue. This narrative was particularly strong during the Korean War. With the advent of the Korean War in 1950, the Americans had become the villain in PRC discourse, harming children the world over. In China, these anxieties over American actions in Korea were paralleled by anxieties over American treatment of Chinese children within the PRC.

This anxiety over the American army's actions was not confined to actions in Korea. Qingdao, a city in northern China, is a good example of these fears. It had been a Germany colony from 1897-1914, and under Japanese rule from 1914-1922 and again from 1938-1945. Furthermore, after its liberation from the Japanese in 1945, Qingdao was an American naval base from 1945-1949. Its history of foreign occupation, proximity to Korea, and prime strategic location as a naval base formerly controlled by the U.S., stoked fears of the U.S. during the Korean War. Articles in the

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[23], "Riben ertong shenghuo ku" [Japanese children's bitter lives], *Renmin ribao* [People's Daily], June 9, 1950.
[24] "Meiguo xuexiao chongman zhanzheng qifen" [American schools are filled with the atmosphere of war], *Renmin ribao* [People's Daily], Nov. 26, 1950.

local Qingdao newspaper focused on the treachery of the imperialist Americans and other foreigners who harmed Korean children and Chinese children alike, implicitly playing on fears about imperialism and colonialism that were both part of Qingdao's recent past and a possible part of its future. U.S. military incursions into Chinese airspace near Qingdao during the early stages of the war did nothing to decrease these fears. Assessing the severity of the threats to Qingdao is difficult, but the city obviously felt threatened by the constant incursions.

The *Qingdao Daily* carried accounts of the crimes committed by the U.S. in Korea, as well as accounts of popular support for the PRC's actions in Korea, both of which often utilized representations of children. One article claimed proof had been found of U.S. attempts to trick Korean children into crossing into a neutral zone and spying for the American side.[25] Another praised the Juvenile and Children's Corps [in Qingdao?] (later renamed the Young Pioneers) for its statement protesting the U.S. invasion of Korea and its alleged use of germ warfare.[26]

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[25] "Meifang qitu xiupian chaoxian ertong songru zhongliqu jinxing tewu huodong de zuizheng" [Proof that the U.S. attempted to deceive North Korean children and send them into a neutral zone to carry out spy activity], *Qingdao ribao* [Qingdao Daily], Aug. 18, 1952.

[26] "Jiaoyu gonghui quanguo weihui, Zhongguo shaonian ertongdui deng fabiao shengming, kangyi qinlüe meijun sabu xijun de taotian zuixing" [National meeting of the Education Union: Chinese youth and children's team and others issues an announcement, protesting the invading U.S. Army's heinous crime of scattering germs], *Qingdao ribao* [Qingdao Daily], Feb. 28, 1952. Ruth Rogaski explores the 1952 germ warfare allegations and their connections to modernity and the recent history of near-continuous warfare in China. See Ruth Rogaski, "Nature, Annihilation, and Modernity: China's Korean War Germ-Warfare Experience Reconsidered," *The Journal of Asian Studies* 61, no. 2 (May 2002): 381–415.

The possibility of germ warfare motivated the PRC to initiate a national Patriotic Health Campaign in 1952. According to research on CCP reports on the use of germ warfare in the Korean War, CCP officials charged that contaminated weapons had reached as far as China's Northeast (Manchuria) and Qingdao.[27] Thus, fears about germ warfare were particularly resonant in Qingdao, given its proximity to Korea. Ruth Rogaski has shown that in Tianjin, also located in northern China, fears of germ warfare were also pervasive. Citizens were warned to be vigilant through newspaper articles and traveling exhibits about the methods and dangers of American germ warfare, to which groups of school children were often brought on field trips.[28] Posters about the campaign also featured children. One featured a stern, muscular peasant man rolling up the sleeve of his shirt to prepare for an inoculation, while in the distant background a nurse administered a vaccine to a child in his mother's arms.[29]

In publicizing dangers of germ warfare and the need for better public health, children were used as both motivation and models for the adults around them. The groups of school children brought to the exhibits as part of class field trips likely served as living reminders of the stakes of this campaign for other adults at the

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[27] Frank Dikötter, *The Tragedy of Liberation: A History of the Chinese Revolution, 1945-1957* (New York: Bloomsbury Press, 2013), 144.
[28] Rogaski, "Nature, Annihilation, and Modernity: China's Korean War Germ-Warfare Experience Reconsidered."
[29] Ye Shanlu, *Everybody Must Take Precautions against Epidemics to Smash the Germ Warfare of American Imperialism* [Renren fangyi, fensui mei diguo zhuyide xijunzhan], 1952, 77x53.5 cm, 1952, BG E13/964 (Landsberger collection), Chineseposters.net, https://chineseposters.net/posters/e13-964.php.

exhibit, as well as promoting the importance and educational quality of the exhibits within their own families and communities once they returned home. In the poster, the implicit message was that the Chinese people must protect their children, but also that if a child can receive a vaccine without fear or fuss, adults most certainly could too.

The effects of the Korean War on Koreans were emphasized both in China and abroad, often using children to bolster the message. One poster from 1950 shows U.S. General Douglas MacArthur stabbing a Korean woman and child with a bloody knife while U.S. warplanes drop bombs on Korean cities in the background.[30] Alrissa Oh notes that in the U.S., Korean War propaganda also featured children, especially displaced and orphaned children. In magazines and documentaries "about the Korean War, these 'waifs,' 'urchins,' and 'moppets' figured prominently. Korea was … 'a land of orphans.'"[31] In both cases, Korean children were the focal point for international concerns.

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[30] Xu Ling, *The Chinese People Absolutely Cannot Condone the Encroachment of Other Countries and Cannot Listen to Whatever Imperialist Who Thinks That It Can Wantonly Encroach Its Own Neighbours without Acting* [Zhongguo renmin jue bu neng rongren waiguode qinlüe, ye bu neng ting ren diguo zhuyizhe dui ziji linren sixing qinlüe er zhizhi buli], 1950, Poster, 77x106 cm, 1950, Chineseposters.net, https://chineseposters.net/posters/e27-169.php.

[31] In American media, Korean children were portrayed as either hapless casualties of unfortunate circumstances or the victims of North Korean and Chinese communists, whereas in China the U.S. was the enemy. Arissa H. Oh, *To Save the Children of Korea: The Cold War Origins of International Adoption* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2015), 22.

During the early 1950s, as part of both the Resist America, Aid Korea Campaign, the Campaign to Suppress Counterrevolutionaries, and the Three Anti Campaign, the PRC targeted foreign-run organizations for children as untrustworthy and dangerous. For example, foreign missionary-run schools were accused of being "centers of spying and sabotage activities."[32] However, the most striking use of children during this time was the campaign against foreign missionary-run orphanages. During the first years of the PRC, it seemed that privately run charitable organizations would be allowed to continue to operate indefinitely. As late as October 1950, there were state-backed proposals "to expand private institutions for orphans, the elderly, the disabled, and refugees."[33] However, in 1951, the Campaign to Suppress Counterrevolutionaries, foreign-run orphanages and other welfare institutions were targeted for state supervision, state takeover, or disbandment.[34]

This initiative was part of a larger effort to tie foreign missionaries to imperialism, most specifically American imperialism, an effort that overlapped with the "Resist American, Aid Korea" campaign. The Catholics in particular were thought to be serving as the spies for both the United States government and the Vatican.[35] In April 1951, the *People's Daily* published an article asserting a direct

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[32] Richard L. Walker, *China under Communism: The First Five Years* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1955), 191.
[33] Dillon, "New Democracy and the Demise of Private Charity in Shanghai," 87.
[34] Dillon, 89.
[35] Walker, *China under Communism: The First Five Years*, 191–92. This was an odd position, considering that anti-Catholic prejudice still persisted in the U.S. at that time. As late as 1960, then-presidential candidate John F. Kennedy had to publicly

connection between Christian missionaries and imperialism entitled "How Did Imperialism Use Religion for Aggression in China?" that signaled the official PRC line against foreign missionaries.[36] The subsequent focus on orphanages used stories involving children to fully demonstrate the ill intent of the missionaries. This campaign not only discredited the moral authority of foreign missionaries, but also bolstered the moral authority of the PRC by casting its own doctors, nurses, and cadres as the saviors of these young children.

In 1951, foreign-run orphanages were taken over, and the foreigners who ran them – mostly Catholic missionaries and nuns – were fired or arrested. These arrests and takeovers occurred in cities all over China, including Guangzhou, Nanjing, Beijing, Tianjin, Ganzhou, and Fuzhou.[37] The arrests were accompanied by allegations of abuse and killing of Chinese orphans in foreign-run missionary orphanages. Foreign-run orphanages were no longer appropriate places for Chinese children to receive care. During a public propaganda campaign against foreign-run orphanages in 1951, articles appeared in local and national newspapers making gruesome accusations directed at the missionaries, often of severe maltreatment and killing of orphans, but also of offenses including teaching the children "pro-American"

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affirm that, although Catholic, he would not take orders from the Vatican if he won the presidency.

[36] Walker, 191.

[37] Dikötter, *The Tragedy of Liberation: A History of the Chinese Revolution, 1945-1957*, 119–20.

ideology.[38] Some of the articles were even accompanied by graphic photographs of dead and maltreated children.[39]

All over China, a public campaign of outrage against the foreign missionaries played out in local and national media. For example, in Guangzhou in March 1951, the Immaculate Conception Canadian Convent's orphanage was "taken over by the Chinese people's relief committee." According to a *North-China Daily News* article: "the mortality rate of infants taken in by this orphanage in the past year was over 97 per cent, resulting from extreme ill treatment. The nuns used the orphanage as a means of extortion and swindling."[40] In April, the *Qingdao Daily* published an article about the "long-term killing through abuse" of Chinese orphans at a Catholic orphanage in Ganzhou, a city in Jiangxi province. Also in Qingdao in August 1951,

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[38] Dikötter positions the campaign against foreign-run orphanages as part of a wider anti-foreign official position that began before 1949. Furthermore, he argues that the accusations of abuse and murder were false, having arisen because so many "severely ill children" were brought to the orphanages, and not all could be saved. See *The Tragedy of Liberation*, 119.

[39] See the following articles in the *Renmin ribao* [People's Daily]: "'Shengying yingyuan' canhai woguo ertong" [Shengying Orphanage is Hurting Our Country's Children], March 9, 1951; "Baowei zuguo ke'ai de ertong" [Defending the Motherland's Adorable Children], March 21, 1951; "Wei cansi zai diguozhuyi xueshou de ertong fuchou" [Revenge for Children Killed by the Bloody Hands of the Imperialists], Apr. 18, 1951; "Nanjing 'Shengxin Ertongyuan' jieguan qianhou" [Nanjing's 'Shengxin Children's Home' Before and After Taking over Management], May 31, 1951; see also "Ganzhou Tianzhutang Gu'eryuan, changqi nüesha Zhongguo ertong" [The Ganzhou Catholic Orphanage was Killing through Abuse Chinese Children over a Long Period of Time], *Qingdao Ribao* [Qingdao Daily], Apr. 13, 1951.

[40] "Canton Orphanage Taken Over: Five Nuns Held," *North China Daily News*, March 26, 1951.

twenty-seven members of a Catholic order, the Society of the Divine, were arrested and jailed for two years before being deported.[41]

The resuscitation of this narrative of foreign-missionary abuse of Chinese children in 1951 drew on the already existing anti-foreigner, anti-missionary strains within the Chinese popular imagination, allowing for further mobilization of the Chinese public for the "Resist America, Aid Korea" campaign. Accusations of mistreatment of Chinese children have a long history in China, and throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, they were used by many different groups to serve larger political goals.[42] Following the First Opium War (1839-1842), infanticide became seen as a specifically "Chinese" practice by Westerners seeking to demonstrate the inferiority of Chinese civilization. By the early twentieth century, Chinese reformers had also adopted this view of female infanticide as specifically Chinese, and they began to rail against it in as part of their efforts to save the Chinese nation and race.[43] At the same time, native Chinese resentment against foreign missionaries, as well as competition between Chinese foundling homes and Christian orphanages, led to rumors that foreign missionaries were killing Chinese children. This tense, rumor-filled situation led to events such as the Tianjin Massacre of 1870.

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[41] Dikötter, *The Tragedy of Liberation: A History of the Chinese Revolution, 1945-1957*, 118.

[42] Michelle King finds that discourses decrying the mistreatment of children, specifically female infanticide, had long existed in China, beginning with elite male Chinese literati condemned female infanticide during imperial China without any real experience of the practice. See Michelle Tien King, *Between Birth and Death: Female Infanticide in Nineteenth-Century China* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2014), 8.

[43] King, 150.

The French Sisters of Mercy, a Catholic women's organization, had set up an orphanage in Tianjin. They were suspected of mistreating and killing children in their orphanage, and in 1870, a French consul, tired of the accusations, shot at the Chinese magistrate, killing a bystander. In response, a group of Chinese locals killed dozens associated with the orphanage, including nuns, a priest, French officials, foreign bystanders, and local Chinese Christian converts.[44]

One of the surprising aspects of the 1951 anti-missionary articles and arrests is that there were still foreign-run orphanages left in the PRC. Many foreigners left China after 1949, including most Protestant missionaries. However, the Vatican directed Catholic missionaries to stay, including those who were running orphanages.[45] In 1950, coinciding with China's entrance into the Korean War, pressure on foreign missionaries grew, including mass arrests. Most of the remaining Protestants left, but the Catholics were ordered by Apostolic Nuncio Antonio Riberi, a diplomatic representative of the Catholic Church, to China, to "resist at all costs" and stay.[46] The Catholic Church was extremely anti-Communist, and a year prior to the PRC's takeover of foreign orphanages, the Vatican had forbidden Catholic youth from joining the Young Pioneers, or Catholic teachers from teaching about

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[44] King, 151–58; Johanna S. Ransmeier, *Sold People: Traffickers and Family Life in North China* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2017), 70–77; Spence, *The Search for Modern China*, 196.
[45] Creighton Lacy, "The Missionary Exodus from China," *Pacific Affairs* 28, no. 4 (1955): 301, https://doi.org/10.2307/3035315.
[46] Dikötter, *The Tragedy of Liberation: A History of the Chinese Revolution, 1945-1957*, 117.

Communism.[47] This decree no doubt increased rancor between the new Chinese Communist state and the Catholic Church.

In the case of the campaign against abusive foreign-run orphanages, images of wronged Chinese children helped drum up support for the "Resist America, Aid Korea" campaign. The Chinese government of the early 1950s, in contrast with that of the World War II-era GMD government, no longer accepted foreign-run institutions as an acceptable place for Chinese children. The Three-Anti Campaign of 1951-1952 finished this state takeover, and by 1953, private and foreign-run charitable organizations—with the two exceptions of the Red Cross and the China Welfare Institute—were all under state control or close supervision, or disbanded.[48]

Once the Korean War was over and the First Five Year Plan was being promoted, children's roles in domestic propaganda changed little. They were still generally symbols of the success of the state. In early 1950s propaganda posters, they were used as symbols of the success of land reform or the benefits of socialism, as we saw above. By 1953, images of children were used in posters promoting the benefits of the First Five Year Plan, including cooperativization, collectivization, and industrialization. Posters such as "Goods have been Delivered to the Cooperative" and "Move towards Collectivization, Happiness Forever" depict scenes of adults

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[47] "Catholic Children Not to Join Communist Youth," *North China Daily News,* July 31, 1950.

[48] Dillon, "New Democracy and the Demise of Private Charity in Shanghai," 97–98. According to Dillon, the elimination of these privately run organizations "in the early 1950s represents one of the most fundamental differences between the Chinese Nationalist and Communist regimes" (81).

holding and surrounded by abundant material goods and colorfully dressed young children.[49]

In most media aimed at the general population, children served primarily as props, although beginning around 1953, they were occasionally given new and slightly more active roles, generally as students. For example, in a poster promoting industrialization from the early 1950s, an industrial worker with a hard hat puts his arm around a boy wearing a red scarf and holding a book. The red scarf and book both convey the boy's status as a student, implying slight differences in the way that different generations must work to "create our eternal happiness": the worker must build up China's industry, while the boy must study hard.[50] This emphasis on the importance of children's studies can also be seen in posters encouraging children to teach their parents how to read, discussed below. In another poster promoting cooperativization and collectivization from 1956, "Take the Road of Co-operation," a group composed entirely of youth and children leads a triumphant procession with

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[49] Zhang Yuqing, *Goods Have Been Delivered in the Cooperative* [Hezuoshe songhuo lai la], November 1954, 53.5x77.5 cm, November 1954, PC-1954-004 (Private collection), Chineseposters.net, https://chineseposters.net/posters/pc-1954-004.php; Zhao Zhenghui, *Move towards Collectivization, Happiness Forever* [Zou xiang jitihua xingfu wanwan nian], October 1954, 38.5x53.5 cm, October 1954, PC-1954-s-004 (Private collection), Chineseposters.net, https://chineseposters.net/posters/pc-1954-s-004.php.

[50] Chen Xinghua, *Create Our Eternal Happiness!* [Chuangzao women yongyuande xingfu], Early 1950s, 77x54 cm, Early 1950s, BG E15/302 (Landsberger collection), Chineseposters.net, https://chineseposters.net/posters/e15-302.php.

abundant food and livestock. There are no older adults shown; young people lead the way.[51]

Furthermore, messages aimed at society using children continued to reflect changes in international affairs. After fighting broke out between North Vietnam and South Vietnam in 1955—generally called the Vietnam War in the U.S., posters in support of North Vietnam often featured children. One poster from 1956 that emphasized the close relationship between the PRC and North Vietnam showed Mao Zedong and Ho Chi Minh being greeted by two young children—a boy and a girl, both wearing red scarves—bearing flowers. Images of children were used as "ambassadors" for China, sending a message to outsiders about the success of the Chinese Communist state in taking care of even its most vulnerable members. Also in 1955, the PRC sent a delegation led by Zhou Enlai to the Afro-Asian Conference, better known as the Bandung Conference. At the conference, Third World nations in Africa and Asia primarily discussed their role in the Cold War and how to handle imperialism from both the West, and to some extent, the USSR. The PRC was a major player. During the mid-1950s, the PRC emphasized its close relationship with other Third World and socialist powers using images of children, from North Korea to the USSR, although the relationship with the latter was already deteriorating, especially given the somewhat anti-Soviet sentiment of the Bandung Conference.[52]

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[51] Yang Furu, *Zou hezuohua de daolu* [Take the road of co-operation], 1956, 53x77cm, 1956, No. 56029, Shanghai Propaganda Poster Art Center.
[52] Ding Yunqu, *The Power of the People of China and (North) Korea Is Great* [Zhong Chao renmin liliang da], 1955, 77x53cm, 1955, BG E13/920 (Landsberger

These messages were aimed both at Chinese domestic society as well as the international community, to bolster China's legitimacy as an international power.

Messages Aimed at Children

Before the PRC was founded in 1949, the GMD and CCP had given children very different ideals to aspire to in their behavior. During the War of Resistance and civil war, GMD-backed newspapers and periodicals showed that children's proper place was literally in a school or relief institution, and figuratively at the receiving end of the state's benevolent care and protection. Boys were encouraged to behave in a more militaristic fashion in contexts such as the Boy Scouts, but this was generally perceived as training for future military contributions as an adult, not for participation in combat as a child.[53] For the CCP, during this same period, the proper place of a child was in the battle against the Japanese and the GMD, whether literally at the front lines or figuratively by helping the CCP root out and thwart Japanese and GMD spies. Communist-produced children's textbooks from this time featured didactic poems about how to thwart the Japanese and offered children models such as Wen

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collection), https://chineseposters.net/posters/e13-920.php; Zhao Yannian, *Chinese Young Pioneers in the Soviet Union* [Zhongguo shaoxiandui zai Sulian], 1956, 53.5x77.5 cm, 1956, PC-1956-011 (Private collection), Chineseposters.net, https://chineseposters.net/posters/pc-1956-011.php.

[53] For a discussion of the developmentalist connection between the child and the nation during the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, see Jones, *Developmental Fairy Tales: Evolutionary Thinking and Modern Chinese Culture*. For further information on how children were envisioned as contributing to the development of the nation as laborers and soldiers during the Republican Era and children's participation in scouting, see Plum, "Lost Childhoods in a New China"; Tillman, "Engendering Children of the Resistance: Models of Gender and Scouting in China, 1919–1937."

Sanyu, who refused to give up information about CCP hideouts to the Japanese and had five fingers cut off as a result. Wen was valorized as a model of how children should behave and contribute to the Communist war effort, even sacrificing their bodies if necessary.[54]

In contrast to earlier exhortations to participate in revolutionary conflicts and battles, state-produced media between 1949 and 1956 generally idealized obedient children. Following the cessation of fighting in the civil war in 1949, the CCP adopted the GMD ideal in many ways, placing children in schools, parks, camps, and other state-run institutions that could produce an educated, materially comfortable child who received state care rather than helping to take care of the embattled, would-be CCP state. Now children were called to disciplined study, cheerful obedience, and grateful admiration of the CCP and the PLA. During the Korean War in particular, children were portrayed as having a special relationship with soldiers. They did not need to take on the role of soldiers fighting on the front lines anymore, but state-produced media exhorted them to admire and support the soldiers from their safe position at home.

Newspaper articles during the Korean War emphasized children's figurative placement into an educated and grateful role. Children used their education to express support for the Korean War in the form of letters isupporting the People's Volunteer

[54] Kyle E. David, "Models, Martyrs, and Miscreants: The Making of Communist China's 'New Child,' 1938-1948" (Intimate States: Family, Domestic Space, and the State, University of California at Santa Cruz, April 7, 2018).

Army, as those members of the People's Liberation Army who fought in the Korean War were called, or to voice opposition to U.S. practices in Korea.[55] These letters were often mentioned in conjunction with school attendance, and the children writing the letters were often referred to as students, so it is possible that the letter-writing campaigns were organized by teachers within schools. During the Korean War, there were no accounts of young children rushing to enlist, as in the civil war. In the early 1950s, childhood was more properly portrayed as an educated, playful experience, not an actively militant one. Before, it had been accounts of the patriotism and courage of children in the revolution that were intended to motivate the masses, but now it was the healthy, happy state of children under the care of the PRC that was meant to mobilize support for the Korean War. One PVA soldier wrote a letter to the *People's Daily* in March of 1951, in which he declared that "the happy life of children in New China increases my resolve to resist America and support Korea."[56]

Just after National Day in 1953, the *People's Daily* published a letter written to the People's Volunteer Army soldiers stationed in Korea by the Party secretary of Huangtugang, a village outside Beijing. In the letter, Secretary An updated the soldiers on life in the village, including how well children were doing. According to Secretary An, the village government had established a primary school with seven classes, and nearly all the school-age children attended. Secretary An assured the

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[55] "Weiwen Zhongguo renmin yuanchao zhiyuanjun yi ge shisi sui ertong de xin" [A letter supporting the PVA in the Korean War, written by a fourteen *sui* child], *Renmin ribao* [People's Daily], Nov. 20, 1950.
[56] "Jigei gurou xianglian de zuguo ertong" [Sending flesh and bones to connect to the motherland's children] *Renmin ribao* [People's Daily], March 23, 1951.

soldiers that the children "all know their People's Volunteer Army uncles," and that last year on National Day, they had all written many letters to the PVA soldiers asking to be their friends. The soldiers wrote back, and the children regularly wrote letters and even sent their pictures to the soldiers.[57] Accounts like these portrayed children as having a personal relationship with soldiers fighting in the People's Volunteer Army in Korea. The soldiers' letters served as a reminder to Chinese children that adults had sacrificed, and continued to sacrifice, on their behalf, and thus they must be properly grateful and strive to make their own contributions to the success of the PRC. In addition to publishing letters from PVA soldiers to Chinese children, children's magazines such as the *New Child* reprinted letters that children wrote to North Korean children to encourage them in the war.[58]

Non-fiction children's book series were published to educate children about the reasons behind the war, the valor and compassion of the Chinese soldiers, as well as the evil committed by the Americans. One children's book, entirely about the treatment of prisoners of war, was first published in 1951, and by 1953 was on its seventh edition. *The People's Liberation Army Shows Hospitality to the Prisoners of War* (Zhiyuanjun kuandai fulu) details the humane and even cordial treatment given to American prisoners of war. The book features photographs of the prisoners at their camp barracks. The prisoners are all shown happily learning to love labor and

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[57] "Zanxiang de Yin Weichen tongzhi qukan nimen le" [Comrade Yin Weichen from our village went to see you all], *Renmin ribao* [People's Daily], Oct. 12, 1953.
[58] "Nimen yiding hui shengli" [You all will certainly win], *Xin Ertong* [New child], Tianjin: Tianjin New Child Publishing House, August 16, 1950.

enjoying life in the camp. The black prisoners are depicted as particularly grateful for their treatment. One black soldier is quoted as saying, ""This is the first time in my whole life that I felt I've been treated with humanity."[59] The same publishing company published a counterpart book to this one, *The American Army's Atrocities in Korea and American Prisoners*, which contrasted the humane treatment given to American prisoners with photographs and descriptions of atrocities committed by the American army in Korea.[60]

We can see what children were supposed to be doing, as far as state officials were concerned, by looking at model children. During the PRC, models were used as important pedagogical tools not only for children but also for the entire population.[61] Newspapers published stories of model workers, l teachers, and students, as well as model factories, farms oil rigs, and schools. During the course of their childhood,

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[59] "Zhiyuanjun kuandai fulu" [The People's Liberation Army shows hospitality to the prisoners of war], Chenguang Publishing Company, 1953. Cotsen Children's Library: 75101, Pams/NR 20/Chinese-Box 83.

[60] "Meijun zai Chao de baoxing he Meifu" [The American Army's atrocities in Korea and American prisoners], Chenguang Publishing Company, 1952. Cotsen Children's Library: 75134, Pams/NR 20/Chinese/Box 81.

[61] In the 1950s, PRC officials drew on this system, but quickly transitioned away from the competitive Soviet model to a more holistic vision of what a model could be. In the case of a model worker, that meant a person "chosen for their productivity, but also for moral values and political activism." See Betty Burch, "Models as Agents of Change," in *Value Change in Chinese Society*, ed. Richard W. Wilson, Amy Auerbacher Wilson, and Sidney L. Greenblatt, Praeger Special Studies (New York: Praeger, 1979), 126. For a discussion of women labor models in the PRC, see Hershatter, *The Gender of Memory*, 210–35. The history of models stretches back to the Soviet Union. Beginning with the model miner Alexey Stakhanov in the mid-1930s, the Soviet Union used exceptionally productive workers as models for others. FOr a further discussion of Stakhanov and Stakhanovism, see Lewis H. Siegelbaum, *Stakhanovism and the Politics of Productivity in the USSR, 1935-1941*, Soviet and East European Studies (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988).

children might have attended a model kindergarten or primary school, been taught by a model teacher, been chosen as an "exemplary" Young Pioneer, and read model essays written by their peers. Models were everywhere in the PRC, and they were important tools for the state to communicate its goals for individuals, units of production, and society in a way that often did not necessitate any level of literacy. Model individuals often went on tours to tell their story and teach their skills, although it does not seem that children did the same. This interpersonal style of communication made them particularly well suited to groups with high rates of illiteracy, namely peasants, women, workers, and children.

Exemplary Young Pioneers seemed to be a primary designation for children whose behavior fulfilled educational and state expectations. At the age of eight, all children were eligible to join the Young Pioneers, sometimes also called the "Red Scarves" after the red scarves they wore around their shirt collar every day. Almost all children were invited to participate in the Young Pioneers, and so if a child was engaging in bad behavior of any sort—nneglecting homework, talking in class, or exhibiting a poor attitude—participation in the Young Pioneers could be used as an incentive for a child to improve behavior.[62]

Among the Young Pioneers, a few were recognized as "Exemplary Young Pioneers" for their outstanding behavior at both school and home. For example, in 1955 Zhang Genfa, a fourteen-year-old boy in the sixth grade, was recognized as an Exemplary Young Pioneer by the Tilan Bridge District in Shanghai. Zhang had

[62] Interview with Luo Suwen, 11.18.2015.

excellent grades, with marks averaging around 90 percent, and he also helped classmates who were struggling to keep up with their schoolwork. At home, he pulled weeds in his family garden, helped his parents do housework, and participated in activities organized by the neighborhood committee.[63] Zhang exhibited many of the traits that the Chinese state was trying to instill in children: he was studious but not individualistic, as evidenced by helping out his classmates; he participated in labor in the form of household chores; and he used his time outside of school in constructive ways, either helping his parents or participating in state-organized activities. In Hongkou District, a thirteen-year-old girl named Xu Guiying was chosen as an Exemplary Young Pioneer in 1960. Xu was praised for her studiousness, her love of labor, and her collective attitude. Every day she came to school early to clean the classroom and prepare materials for her teacher, and at home she helped her parents with housework and taking care of her younger siblings. She also helped her elderly neighbor shop for and cook her food.

In a poignant series of anecdotes, the report described how Xu assisted a paralyzed classmate with household chores and getting to and from school, including carrying the girl home from school on her back during a rainstorm. Xu's entire day was taken up by her studies and her labor done for others. An exemplary model of a young socialist, she was portrayed as always thinking about and working for the

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[63] SMA, File: C21-2-740, "Qingniantuan Shanghai shi gongwei guanyu youxiu shaoxiandui de shijibiao" [The Shanghai Communist Youth League's Work committee's list of achievements of exemplary young pioneers], July 1955.

collective, and was constantly engaged in constructive activities, leaving no time for bad influences or misbehavior.[64]

These model children served as examples for their peers as well as tangible evidence of the state's success in molding good socialist children. Being chosen as an Exemplary Young Pioneer was a coveted status, and children were sometimes quite discouraged when they were not chosen.[65] Exemplary Young Pioneers were also more likely to be chosen as Young Pioneer cadres, and more likely to be chosen to join the Communist Youth League, a more selective organization for those age fourteen to twenty-eight.

The model method of education also included model essays and the portrayal of model individuals in movies. These forms could be widely disseminated, expanding the influence of a model individual. Teachers chose particularly good essays written by children to submit in city, provincial, and national competitions. The chosen model essays would be published in children's magazines such as Tianjin's *The New Child*, and the national *Youth Literature* and *Children's Era*. Entire edited volumes of children's model essays were also published. These essays are also one of the few sources that we have for children's voices during this era, curated and edited though they necessarily were.

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[64] SMA, File: C21-2-2253-98, "Gongqingtuan Shanghai shiwei shaonianbu 1963 nian 'Liu Yi' jie biaoyang de youxiu shaoxiandui jiti he shaoxianduiyuan de cailiao (hongkou)" [Shanghai municipal committee of the Communist Youth League's youth department's materials on outstanding young pioneer groups and young pioneer members for the 1963 Children's Day (Hongkou District)], 1963.
[65] Interview with Luo Suwen, 11.18.2015.

Model children's essays often centered on a clear lesson or example. In an essay by nine-year-old Hu Jingzhuo, the message is clearly stated at the end: "a person must only do good for the people, and then everyone will respect him or her." Hu used the story of a paralyzed scientist named Gao Shiqi to illustrate this point. One Sunday afternoon, Hu visited his local Youth Palace where Gao was giving a speech about his impairment, quadriplegia, and how it had not stopped him from continuing his research on germs.[66] Hu's essay accomplished a few important things. It demonstrated how one should learn from another model, in this case how Hu learned from Gao, as well as the importance of giving one's all to the people and the revolution. Furthermore, Hu's essay illustrates the value of engaging in state-organized programs and institutions outside of school, in his case, the Youth Palace outing he took on a Sunday afternoon.

The schooled, playful child may have become the dominant representation of the ideal child during the early years of the PRC, but representations of children were certainly not monolithic. If we look at films about and for children, we can see the complex range of ideals circulating at the time, which still included militant and martyred children. Throughout the early 1950s, entertainment media aimed at children continued to praise and propagate the image of the militant child. In 1950, the film *Liu Hulan* told the story of a young peasant girl who joined the CCP in 1946, fought against the GMD, and ultimately chose to sacrifice her life rather than

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[66] Jingzhuo Hu, "Wo jiandao le Gao Shiqu Bobo [I saw Uncle Gao Shiqi]," *Children's Era [Ertong Shidai]*, June 16, 1957.

denounce the Communists in 1947.[67] Stories from the early 1950s about Liu emphasized that her "role as a daughter is to educate her elders and to rebel against them if they refuse to understand the correctness of the CCP's campaign."[68] In 1954, the film adaptation of *Chicken Feather Letters* praised children who helped convey military messages during World War II.[69]

Ultimately, the theme informing all of these representations from the early PRC was that of total patriotism, whether a child was grateful to New China for the opportunity to be educated, or was willing to sacrifice her body for military success, against either the Japanese or the GMD. In all cases, the Communist motherland was paramount.

Furthermore, the films depicted the contrast between the situation of children before and after 1949. Before 1949, during both World War II and the civil war, children were expected to sacrifice their physical safety and bodies for the good of the nation. After 1949, children under Chinese socialism had the leisure time to watch movies about such activities, and were no longer expected to sacrifice their bodies. Now children were expected to receive an education, and live out healthy, happy lives. Alhough there was a progressive narrative here, and the happy childhood of children after 1949 was implicitly celebrated, there was also the absence of

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[67] Feng Bailu, *Liu Hulan*, 1950.
[68] Liu Hulan joined the CCP as a teenager and was killed by the Nationalists in Wenshui, Shanxi province in 1947. Different sources list her age at death between 14 and 17. Louise P. Edwards, *Women Warriors and Wartime Spies of China* (Cambridge, New York: Cambridge University Press, 2016), 190.
[69] Stephanie Hemelryk Donald, "Children's Feature Film," ed. Edward L. Davis, *Encyclopedia of Contemporary Chinese Culture* (New York: Routledge, 2005), 122.

opportunity for children to play the active, heroic roles of the pre-1949 years. These films contained a degree of nostalgia for these times, showing that the ideal of the militant child had not been entirely discarded.

During the period immediately after Liberation a vast amount of print media was aimed at children. Although there was only one national magazine for children in 1949, *China's Children* (Zhongguo shaonian ertong)—renamed *China's Young People* (Zhongguo shaonianbao) in 1951, by 1956 there were ten more, including age-specific magazines such as *Little Friends* (Xiao pengyou) for first and second grade students and *Children's Epoch (Ertong shidai)* for third and fourth graders.[70] Although revolutionary childhood literature with a Marxist perspective was officially promoted, the control over content in children's magazines and storybooks was relatively lax, and authors who had been popular among mainstream audiences before 1949, such as Ye Shengtao and Zhang Leping, remained top authors in the field.[71]

As discussed earlier, children were important conveyors of propaganda, a way for the PRC to show its citizens the success of the regime. In 1954, the national People's Education Press republished the 1949 Higher Primary School Language Textbook—intended for use in grades five and six—that contained two separate essays about the significance of seeing Chairman Mao, titled "Quick, go see Chairman Mao" and "I've seen Chairman Mao." These stories illustrate the power of Chairman Mao, using children as avatars. Through the characters in the story,

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[70] Mary Ann Farquhar, *Children's Literature in China: From Lu Xun to Mao Zedong* (Armonk, NY: M.E. Sharpe, 1999), 252.
[71] Farquhar, 252.

children are supposed to learn how important Chairman Mao is, and about the personal relationship they have with him, and by proxy, the state. Children then presumably could model this relationship for the adults around them.[72]

In the first story, a child's life is saved by having been brought to see Chairman Mao, illustrating his almost mythical beneficence and power. In the story, a little girl sees Chairman Mao, and runs home to tell her mother and call her out to see him. Although she only appears in the first few lines of the story, she is the only named character, Jinhua, and her words form the title of the piece. Her mother is at home taking care of Jinhua's seriously ill younger brother, but she decides to go see Chairman Mao anyway and takes her sick son along. Chairman Mao sees the sick young boy and calls for him to be sent to the Central Hospital for immediate treatment, saving the boy's life.

The other story is told by a worker who is invited to a banquet in Beijing celebrating Romania's liberation by the USSR. While honored at being invited to an international gathering, the worker is most excited to see Chairman Mao. After Mao gives a speech, the guests watch a movie of Stalin accepting flowers from a grateful

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[72] The importance of seeing and being seen by a leader can also be observed in modernization and nation-building efforts in Meiji Japan. Takashi Fujitani has shown that during the late nineteenth century, the emperor went on "imperial progresses" throughout the countryside in which the people could observe and be observed by the emperor. Fujitani uses Foucault's theories on the importance of surveillance in the construction of internally disciplined subject-citizens. Takashi Fujitani, *Splendid Monarchy Power and Pageantry in Modern Japan* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996), http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&scope=site&db=nlebk&db=nlabk&AN=10007.

child. Glancing over at Chairman Mao during the film, the worker realizes that Chairman Mao also works hard for the next generation.[73] In this story, the image of grateful children serves to remind the adult protagonist of his own gratefulness to Chairman Mao. This first-person essay is, of course, in a children's textbook, so the real message is to young people, reminding them of their proper role as grateful subjects, both as a means of enacting their proper relationship to the state and its actors, and as public models for others.

Another way for the new state to communicate with children was through public holidays such as Children's Day, celebrated in the PRC every June 1, but first introduced by the GMD in 1932. On that day, children were treated to public performances; reduced entrance fees at parks, observatories, and other spaces for entertainment; and special issues of national children's magazines. Newspapers and periodicals for adults, and women in particular, since women were persistently linked to children and assumed to be the primary caregivers within a family, featured articles about children and children's issues. Some aspects of Children's Day after Liberation were similar to those of pre-1949 celebrations. For example, monitoring and judging children's bodies and health was an important component of the celebratory activities before Oct. 1, 1949. In this respect, Children's Day celebrations had not changed much with the founding of the PRC. When Children's Day was celebrated in 1947 in

[73]"Gaoji xiaoxue yuwen keben, di er ce" [Higher primary school language textbook, second volume], People's Education Press, 1954. Cotsen Children's Library: 96556, Pams/NR 20/Chinese/Box 223.

Shanghai—on April 4, the day the GMD had designated as Children's Day--it was also accompanied by a health contest judged by the mayor.[74] In April 1949, before the CCP took control of Shanghai, Children's Day was also celebrated with a health contest held by the Health Bureau, in addition to a speech competition and an exhibit about a popular comic strip about a curious and resilient homeless child named Sanmao.[75]

In the month leading up to the first International Children's Day after the PRC was founded, June 1, 1950, the Shanghai-based *North-China Daily News* reported on the preparatory activities.[76] Plans included live performances and film screenings for children, discounts for children at entertainment venues, special issues of children's and women's magazines, and a health drive that involved "physical examinations for children, and epidemic prevention work."[77] The goals of Children's Day that year were to publicize the new government's efforts at taking care of children; produce fun activities and shows for children; change adult habits around child-rearing, including

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[74] "Children's Day Health Contest," *The North-China Daily News*, April 3, 1947.
[75] "Children's Day Observed Today," *The North-China Daily News*, April 4, 1949.
[76] The first Children's Day in China was celebrated in China in 1932 (Jones, *Developmental Fairy Tales: Evolutionary Thinking and Modern Chinese Culture*, 23). International Children's Week originated in Germany in 1921 and was first celebrated in the USSR in 1924 Kelly, *Children's World*, 61, 77. According to International Institute of Social History, "International Children's Day had its origins in the 'World Conference for the Well Being of Children', held in Geneva, Switzerland in 1925" ("International Children's Day," International Institute of Social Hisory, accessed May 29, 2018, https://socialhistory.org/en/today/06-01.).
[77] "Children's Day Celebration on June 1," *North China Daily News*, May 11, 1950; "City Prepares to Mark Children's Day, June 1," *North China Daily News*, May 22, 1950.

a national campaign to convince adults not to physically hit or verbally abuse children; and promote a signature campaign for the anti-nuclear Stockholm Peace Appeal.[78]

Multiple state priorities – children's happiness, children's health, adult and children's education, and China's status in the international community--converged on this one day. Many of these priorities overlapped: the campaign to stop adults from hitting children was evidence of the PRC's care for both children's bodies and the ideological perspective of its adult citizens. The signature campaign for the Stockholm Peace Appeal, linked to Children's Day, explicitly aimed to protect children all over the world from the damages of nuclear war while implicitly making a moral argument for China's role as a compassionate and pragmatic leader in the international community.

On the actual Children's Day that year in Shanghai, monitoring children's bodies and health dominated the activities. There was a PLA review of the Juvenile and Children's Corps; celebratory rallies with speeches from various organizations, including the Women's Federation; film screenings; special opera performances for children; free health examinations run by the Public Health Bureau at local clinics; and a health contest for babies and children ages five and younger.[79] In conjunction

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[78] "Children's Day Celebration on June 1," *North China Daily News,* May 11, 1950; "China to Celebrate Int'l Children's Day on June 1," *North China Daily News,* May 31, 1950.

[79] "City to Observe First Children's Day Today," *North China Daily News,* June 1, 1950; "International Children's Day Celebrated Here," *North China Daily News,* June 2, 1950.

with Children's Day, the *North-China Daily News* publicized the establishment of more nurseries in urban areas such as Shanghai. According to the article, these nurseries improved the health of the children they served, which could be "gauged from their weight charts and the roses that bloom on their cheeks."[80]

It should be noted that the focus on children's health was not simply propaganda. As the CCP worked on establishing a new government, Shanghai continued to be afflicted by high inflation that made staple foods expensive, fake milk scares, and epidemics of infectious diseases.[81] As an article from one week after Children's Day in 1950 noted, "whooping cough has continued to rage unabated."[82] Media publicized state efforts to improve children's health – free health examinations, healthy babies at new nurseries – but the public health problems Chinese children faced had not been eradicated with the founding of the PRC and the establishment of a stable government, as noted in Chapter One.

By the mid-1950s, we can see a shift in the portrayal of children, evidenced by special Children's Day issues published in children's magazines such as *Children's Epoch* every year. These special issues show a change in priorities. By that point, the PRC had helped push American troops out of North Korea, urban areas were stabilized, and earlier, severe public health issues were generally under control. Portrayals of children also shifted, away from emphasizing children's healthy bodies

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[80] "More Nurseries for Chinese Children," *North China Daily News,* June 1, 1950.
[81] "Price Hike" and "Peddler Held for Sale of Fake Milk," *North China Daily News,* Jan. 22, 1950.
[82] "Whooping Cough Still Rages Unabated," *North China Daily News,* June 6, 1950.

and grateful attitudes. Children were often given more active roles within the revolution and nation-state. Now, Children's Day messages showcased new institutions and roles for children. In contrast to the new nurseries publicized in 1950, which took care of children's basic needs, in 1954 Shanghai children were shown enjoying the China Welfare Society's Youth Palace, going to summer camp, and playing in the dedicated Children's Playground at the People's Park. Children were portrayed as extravagantly taken care of by a generous state.

The shift from the first several years of the PRC to the post-Korean War period of the First Five Year Plan period involved more than an augmentation of the state's capability to take care of its children, however. The shift around 1953 also included new instructions on how to be good socialist children. Children were not only to admire the PLA and the CCP's efforts on their behalf, but should also actively participate in state efforts, albeit within a circumscribed set of circumstances: within the labor norms for their gender, under the supervision of adults, and in safe situations.

That 1954 Children's Day issue of *Children's Epoch* contained five pages of essays submitted by children about their good deeds, as part of a series called "What Kinds of Things Should We Do for the Motherland?". One group of fourth and fifth-grade boys from Beigu Primary School in Yangjiang, Guangdong province, put out a fire in a public park on their way home from school. A nine-year-old from Beijing helped fix his home's roof, and an eleven-year-old girl from Hunan organized her classmates to clean up a pile of trash "the size of a water buffalo" on the road near her

home.[83] These children's stories showcased a range of possibilities for children to help the motherland. In almost all the examples, the children are perfectly safe while performing these good deeds, and even in the case of the children who put out the fire, the potential harm was minimized in the essay, as the boys describe exceedingly minor bodily harm: sore hands from holding the branches they used to extinguish the fire, singed clothing, and "a bit" (*dian*) of "minor injury" (*qingshang*). Any serious danger that the boys faced to their lives and health is left unacknowledged. Perhaps most important, the boys are not without adult supervision for long, as one of their group finds the local People's Militia leaders and brings them to help. The one accompanying illustration for this story shows adults rushing to the boys' sides as they fight the fire. The presence of an adult shows the expectation in the mid-1950s that children be constantly supervised and guided by adult authority figures, rather than acting independently.

It is also significant that all the children involved in the firefighting were boys. Boys are more often shown risking bodily harm in stories during this period, even those that portray earlier wartime eras, whereas girls are often shown teaching, cleaning, or engaging in other tasks traditionally reserved for women, with some exceptions such as Liu Hulan. In the Children's Day issue in 1955, the thematic selection of children's essays about their good deeds for the motherland showcased an essay by a fifth-grade girl who took care of a younger schoolmate who fell down and

[83] "Zheng wen" [Essays], *Ertong shidai* [Children's Epoch,] June 1, 1954. Cotsen Children's Library: 35519.

in the process bloodied his handkerchief. She comforted him and washed his handkerchief for him, displaying proficiency in both childcare and laundry, two pursuits that remained firmly the responsibility of girls and women at this time.[84] This sort of gendered division of labor persisted in mid-1950s materials aimed at children, and did not shift to a more universally masculine, aggressively revolutionary ideal until the early 1960s, as shown in chapter four.

Instructions for how children should behave within their families also varied by gender. Children with illiterate family members were exhorted to become "little teachers" and teach their parents or other relatives how to read. Stories praising children who successfully taught their parents almost always involved girls and women in both roles: the child doing the teaching was most often a girl, and the relative-turned-student was generally a woman. For example, in "Little Teacher," published in *The New Child* in 1950, a little girl teaches her mother how to read. The girl's teacher had encouraged all the students to teach their parents how to read, but the aptly named Li Xue (her given name means "learning,") does not initiate the process until she hears her mother complaining about how difficult it is to buy goods at the market without being able to read. Li decides to teach her mother, who turns out to be quite eager to learn. Li's mother models ideal student behavior, studying diligently every day.[85]

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[84] "Yi kuai hua shoupa" [A colored handkerchief], *Ertong shidai* [Children's Epoch,] June 1, 1955. Cotsen Children's Library: 35519.
[85] "Xiao laoshi" [Little teacher], *New Child* [Xin Ertong], No. 38: Nov. 1, 1950. Shanghai Municipal Library.

It is true that women were more likely than men to be illiterate, but even in New China where children could be conceived of as teachers for the adults in their family, for a girl child to take on the respected teacher-role for her father or grandfather was still not possible. In the few examples of men being taught by a child, that child was generally a boy.[86]

In these situations, children performed multiple functions. They served as agents of the state's agenda within the family unit – in this case, the eradication of illiteracy. They also modeled the correct attitude and behavior of a good citizen for the children and adults around them by carrying out the goals of the state even in in their personal life. Children served an important function as models, especially for the adults around them.

Messages Aimed at Parents

The state encouraged parents to focus on child-rearing, but in specific ways. After the PRC was founded, one of the state priorities was to create and stabilize family units. Women who had worked as sex workers or who had been concubines before Liberation were enjoined—and in the case of sex workers, sometimes offered no other choice—to marry a man and start a nuclear family unit.[87] The Marriage Law of 1950 destabilized family units by allowing divorce and rearranging families that

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[86] Zhu Peilin, *Daddy, This is How You Write This Character* [Baba, zheige zi shi zheiyang xiede], November 1954, 77.5x53.5 cm, November 1954, BG E13/710 (Landsberger collection), Chineseposters.net, https://chineseposters.net/posters/e13-710.php.

[87] See Hershatter, *Dangerous Pleasures: Prostitution and Modernity in Twentieth-Century Shanghai*, 304–24.

included concubines, but in general the law encouraged the creation and maintenance of stable family units. The family unit then served as the basis for the state to mobilize all people, and women in particular, to work outside the home for the establishment of socialism. This created a tension between the state's promotion of people's duty to their family unit and duty to leave the family unit to work for the nation-state. This tension was also reflected in how the family-child relationship was imagined. Children were supposed to be productive and helpful members of their family, and parents were responsible for their development, but the state also distrusted the family unit, and only considered children to be in a trustworthy environment when they were taking part in state-organized activities.

Thus, the drive to fix women into nuclear family units did not necessarily extend to children as well. In fact, literature depicting children often suggested that they were better off in the care of the state rather than the family, either for some portion of their day, or in more extreme cases, their whole lives. In the story, "Now I Have a Dear Mother," published in *The New Child* in 1950, the narrator recalls his bitter, pre-Liberation childhood with his father, stepmother, and little brother. His stepmother had borne his little brother, and treated him preferentially. He recounts how his little brother and his mother ate better food, such as bread and sesame candy, while the narrator subsisted on coarse biscuits (*mabing*). His stepmother also gave his little brother nice warm clothing, whereas the narrator wore old rags. The narrator depicted himself as a virtuous martyr, taking meticulous care of his little brother while enduring suffering and abuse. When the narrator was sick, his stepmother

accused him of faking the illness, and refused him food and water. According to the story, he lived "like a beast of burden" (*niumashenghuo*) until his father sent him to work for the army, which turned out to be the Communist 8th Route Army. There the soldiers doted on him, acting kindly, feeding him, and giving him lessons and books to read. When he fell ill, the soldiers came to visit him with treats, and after his teacher, Ms. Wang, gave him sesame candy, he began crying because he realized that the 8th Route Army was his family, and that they were all his "new mother" (*nimen jiu shi wo de xin mama*.)[88]

In this story, the narrator's nuclear family is a toxic social unit in which the adults' behavior is exaggeratedly selfish. His stepmother's disregard for anyone but her husband and her biological child dramatized the problems with only caring for one's own family unit, rather than the larger community or nation. The PLA is depicted as caring for every member of the Chinese nation like a family; they are a model for the ideal function of families in stories such as these.

Furthermore, the Party's assumption of the role of family complicated gender roles for caregivers, as discussed in Chapter Two. The narrator's stepmother is not portrayed with any innate capacity for nurture and affection towards children in general, and once the narrator left his nuclear family, it was not only his female teacher whom he thought of as his mother, but the male soldiers too became his "new mother[s]." In this story, although the boy's stepmother is the clear villain,

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[88] "Wo youle qin'ai de mama" [Now I have a dear mother], *New Child* [Xin Ertong], No. 35: Sept. 16, 1950. Shanghai Municipal Library.

nonetheless the label of "mother" was deployed as a potent sign of the care and attentiveness of the Party.

While the state did not consider parents and family units to be entirely reliable environments for properly rearing good socialist children, they were nonetheless a necessary evil, given the resources and abilities of the new state. The state seems to have seen most parents as educable, and campaigns such as the anti-abuse campaign during the 1950 Children's Day demonstrate that possibility. The *New Child* Children's Day issue from 1950 reiterated this promise to children: that in New China, children would enjoy better lives, including a cessation of corporal punishment and abuse at home.[89] Given that this promise appeared in a children's magazine, it was perhaps not directly aimed at parents. However, the education of parents on the correct methods of child-rearing were obviously high priorities for the state, and integral to its future, given the reiteration that these "new children" – who should be raised in happy comfortable households – were "masters of the future society" (*jianglai shehui de zhurenweng*).

In popular media, the "household education" (*jiating jiaoyu*) one received during childhood determined one's ideology as an adult. In 1949, the *People's Daily* featured articles about people who had learned bad habits such as individualism and the drive to become rich from their families.[90] The *People's Daily* profiled a former

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[89] "Yinggai lizhi zuo ge xin ertong" [Must resolutely become a new child], *New Child* [Xin Ertong], No. 28: June 1, 1950. Shanghai Municipal Library.
[90] "Juexin xiaomie wode gerenzhuyi yu yingxiongzhuyi" [Resolutely extinguishing my individualism and heroism], *Renmin ribao* [People's Daily], Aug. 10, 1949.

supporter of the GMD named Hu Changlin who grew up in a "feudal household" in which his parents "did not take the education of their children seriously." He was apprenticed in his early teen years to a paint shop, where he was treated like a slave, "but because of the influence of his family background and household education" on his thinking, he did not resist but instead climbed to the top to perpetuate the apprenticeship system. It was not until Hu was grown and had witnessed firsthand atrocities committed by the GMD that he renounced them and began to change his political perspective.[91]

The CCP obviously considered household education to be an integral part of a child's education, an important influence on one's political ideology. Another article from November 1953 declared that "in order to implement the new educational policies, school education and the household must establish a close relationship."[92] Furthermore, as education officials had to regularly remind education-minded parents, most children could only expect to receive primary school education before graduating and joining the workforce.[93] Depending on the area and the year, this generally meant 4-6 years of schooling, and perhaps not even fulltime schooling during those years. Thus the amount of time that most children spent in formal

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[91] "Hu Changlin," *Renmin ribao* [People's Daily], Aug. 13, 1949.
[92] "Yidian tixing, jiudian shouhuo," [Wake up at one o'clock, harvest at nine o'clock], *Renmin ribao* [People's Daily], Nov. 17, 1949.
[93] "Xiang xuesheng jiazhan jiji jinxing laodong guangrong de jiaoyu" [Actively Carry out the glorious labor education for parents of students], *Renmin ribao* [People's Daily], July 11, 1954.

schooling was extremely minimal, making household education all the more important.

So what was household education to look like? A series of posters from 1952 educated parents on the best ways to rear their children. According to these posters, good parents did not spoil their children or deprive them of love, never used corporal punishment, encouraged their children to be brave and not to fear heights or the dark, nurtured their children's imaginations, and helped them to love labor.[94] The conception of a good childhood was balanced here between creating a nurturing and loving environment in which children could explore imaginative pursuits, and preparing children for a future as brave revolutionaries and productive workers. Furthermore, this task was shown to be nearly exclusively the responsibility of women. In all posters but one, only mothers were shown parenting the children. In the only poster that featured a man, he was shown with a boy and a girl on his lap, with the caption that he gives equal attention to his sons and daughters.

These messages continued into the mid-1950s, including the exhortations not to abuse one's children, the assumption that mothers were the primary parents, and reminders of the great importance of household education. Unsurprisingly, with the heavy Soviet influence on the First Five Year Plan, Soviet information and experts can be found in tutorials about household education. On Children's Day in 1953, the

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[94] Covell Meyskens, "Parenting Posters from 1952," *Everyday Life in Maoist China* (blog), October 16, 2015, https://everydaylifeinmaoistchina.org/2015/10/16/parenting-posters-from-1952/.

People's Daily quoted Nadezhda Krupskaya, former Deputy Minister of Education in the USSR and Vladimir Lenin's wife, that "mothers were 'natural teachers'" for their children.[95] Part of these exhortations for good parents not only included parenting techniques but also reminders that parents must serve as constant models of good socialist behavior, for "children's keen eyes are always watching you." Thus, even young children were in a way portrayed as agents of the state within the family unit.

In a poster from 1951 promoting the suppression of counter-revolutionaries, a woman points out a counter-revolutionary while holding a baby. The poster exhorts its viewer to help suppress counter-revolutionaries in order to "safeguard good circumstances." The baby in her arms seems to be an implicit stand-in for what "good circumstances" might mean.[96] In this instance, the duty of the parent was to participate in the revolution to safeguard both their present situation: a stable living environment in which they can raise their children, and their future, in which their children would live.

The class background of a family was often acknowledged as a factor in children's development, but it was not generally singled out as the most determinative factor, nor did many articles specifically target parents of a certain class. In a 1954 article about children with bad habits, education officials admonished parents for

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[95] "Genghao de peiyang women de xin yidai" [Better nurture our next generation], *Renmin ribao* [People's Daily], June 1, 1953.
[96] Wang Shoumu, *Suppress Counter Revolutionaries, Safeguard Good Circumstances!* [Zhenya fangeming, baozheng hao guangjing!], August 1951, 77x53 cm, August 1951, BG E16/351 (IISH collection), Chineseposters.net, https://chineseposters.net/posters/e16-351.php.

spoiling their children by focusing only on providing them with a comfortable life and never disciplining them. While the article claimed that this was "commonplace in bourgeois families," it also admitted that this sort of erroneous child-rearing technique could be found in families of all class backgrounds.[97] For the most part, parenting advice was given without explicit references to class, although parenting advice from the first few years of the PRC sometimes implied that educated people from bourgeois backgrounds might actually be better parents, since they could impart a love of learning and some basic knowledge of reading and writing.

According to a November 1949 article in the *People's Daily*, part of a parent's responsibility included cooperating with schools in supporting their children in the "work" [*gongzuo*] of studying. However, being a good socialist parent required more than just a willingness to send one's child to school. One also needed a high enough level of literacy to read newspapers and books, and also had to make these materials around to entice children into developing an interest in reading and writing by the time they started primary school (at approximately seven years old), as well as help their children do their homework correctly.[98] This assumed that the children who were attending school in 1949 would have parents who had also had the opportunity to attend school, despite low rates of school enrollment nationally prior to the foundation of the PRC. Even having a relatively high level of education and

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[97] "Jiazhang dui zinü daode jiaoyu de zeren" [Parents' responsibility for chidlren's moral education], *Renmin ribao* [People's Daily], Nov. 28, 1954.
[98] "Fumu ruhe bangzhu yinianji xiaoxuesheng" [How fathers and mothers can help first-grade students], *Renmin ribao* [People's Daily], Nov. 10, 1949.

disposable income was not enough, however, for good socialist parents should recognize that they lacked specific training in childhood psychology, and therefore should consult regularly with professionals – their children's teachers.

These prescriptions for how to be a good socialist parent came from the USSR, whose educational methods the PRC imported en masse during this time, for both children and adults. According to this view, good socialist parents were well-educated and had the time and resources to help their children with their schoolwork, as well as recognizing their own limitations and deficiencies as non-professionals. This hierarchy persisted in other scenarios as well, in which parents – mothers especially – were considered to be far less desirable for educating and raising children than trained teachers or even (mostly male) workers and veterans, a point discussed in Chapter Three.

Conclusion

In the early years of the PRC, there was an effort to fix children into their proper place and give them a very specific type of childhood, one that included an education and a safe, materially comfortable living situation. This vision of childhood was partially reactive to the Korean War, to provide a model of happy, healthy children under socialism that could be a weapon in the propaganda war against the U.S. It also articulated long-held hopes for this type of childhood that had originated in the Republican era. This was all part of an ambitious vision of childhood, however, and not necessarily the reality.

Chapter Three

The Institutionalization of Childhood, 1949-1957

During the 1950s, the problem of getting children off the streets became particularly acute. First, the resource-strapped state instituted a two-shift school system, enabling it to increase the number of children receiving an education. While this system eased the problem of educational access, it also expanded the amount of free time students had outside of school before or after their shift. Second, the state placed increasing demands on the time of working adults, and in particular, mobilized women to work outside the home, so the family members most likely to be responsible for young people were no longer home during the day. State officials saw children's time outside of school as perilously unstructured, leaving children open to the unsavory influences of an urban environment, including street peddlers, gambling, and other feudal and capitalist phenomena. Urban residents were also concerned, often for more practical reasons. Many disliked the disruptions involved in having children run around unsupervised in their community all day.

Thus, different state goals—educating as many children as possible, eradicating illiteracy, mobilizing women to work outside the home and educators to participate in production and political movements, and changing the political ideology of its citizens—overlapped in unexpected ways.[1] District officials who

[1] That officials in charge of the education system and mobilizing women for labor were not talking to each other is a bit surprising, given the pre-Liberation emphasis in

organized neighborhood committees focused on local control and stabilization when they established the neighborhood committees. Women's Federation cadres focused on getting women out of the house into jobs. Adult educators focused on teaching adult workers basic literacy. Education officials had competing priorities within the school system: While the secondary and tertiary education system was focused on creating experts, outside of a few elite primary schools in urban areas, most lower-level primary schools were focused on literacy, basic skills, and getting as many children into school as possible. Furthermore, state and Party officials often pulled teachers, who generally had far more formal education than the rest of the population, out of the classroom to support other political goals. These actors, each with goals that aligned with some priority of the state, had no official channels of communication between them, and their initiatives often collided, creating new

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the base areas on expanding the kindergarten system with the explicit goal of helping to liberate women to work outside the home. Similar to post-Liberation efforts to mobilize women, the CCP tried to mobilize women for the war effort during the War of Resistance. For example, during the 1940s, in CCP-occupied areas like Jiangxi, women were asked not only to do extra domestic work, but also to work in the fields because of the lack of male labor. Also similar to post-Liberation efforts, the push for women to work outside the home was ideological, as work outside the home was seen as one important component of the Party's efforts to raise the status of women. With the pressures of war forcing a focus on adult labor, early childhood education quickly became an auxiliary part of the labor system, rather than a foundational step in the education system. [check this for overlap with your earlier chapter. No reason to go into great detail about things you have said already.] However, this wartime connection between kindergartens and the mobilization of women did not translate into increased communication between officials tasked with primary school education and women's labor after 1949. There were efforts to establish nurseries to give women with young children more ease leaving their home, but the education of children after the age of seven was viewed as a project with its own motivations and raison d'être. Little, if any, effort was made to coordinate with other state organizations like the Women's Federation.

problems. Despite expanding the school system, many children still spent the majority of their time outside of school, in their homes, neighborhoods, or the larger community. Viewing children's time outside of school as dangerously disorganized, state officials established institutions including universal primary school education, summer camps, Youth Palaces, activity centers, and children's libraries.

The state also had very different policies and goals for different levels of schooling, and these caused other problems. The national educational policy at this time was heavily influenced by the Soviet Union, with emphases on regularization, centralization, and the education of experts who could contribute to industrialization, especially in secondary and tertiary education. However, the popularization of lower-level primary school was most influenced by the state's efforts to reduce the divide between urban and rural areas and to promote literacy.[2] The disjunction between the policies governing different stages of education created serious problems for education officials. As lower-level primary schools became much more common, the demand for upper-level primary schools and secondary schooling grew. The state had competing priorities for its educational system: providing some education to everybody, and sufficient training for a limited number of experts needed for rapid industrialization.

The emphasis on universal education in lower-level primary school created unusually large cohorts of educated young teens and their families who now saw education as their right, even though there were scant opportunities for most lower-

[2] Thøgersen, *A County of Culture*, 150–51.

primary school graduates to attend upper-level primary schools, much less secondary schools and universities. Because there were far fewer upper-primary and secondary schools than lower-primary schools, students often needed to pass an exam to gain entrance into upper-primary school and later, secondary school.[3] This created a bottleneck, and a serious headache for education officials as they dealt with demands for greater access to post-fourth-grade education that the state and educational system were not capable of fulfilling.

Challenges for Promoting Education

A great deal of instability and chaos characterized the school system in the 1950s, some of it resulting from outside pressures, as the state tried to maintain and expand the school system and create a socialist childhood. Despite the resources concentrated in Shanghai, the challenges facing the new PRC inevitably affected the city's school system. The same sorts of problems that had plagued the wartime period—food shortages, fake milk scares, the spread of infectious diseases—persisted after Liberation.[4] In the first few years after the establishment of the PRC, the GMD continued to conduct military actions against the mainland, and on February 6, 1950,

[3] "Zhongyang renmin zhengfu zhengwuyuan guanyu gaige xuezhi de jueding" [The Government Administration Council of the Central People's Government's decision about reforming the education system], *Renmin jiaoyu* [People's education], November, 1951.

[4] "Powdered Milk, Egg to Be Made Here Soon," *North China Daily News*, September 9, 1949; "More Rice Stocks to Arrive from Outports," *North China Daily News*, January 22, 1950; "Many Children Inoculated Against TB," *North China Daily News*, September 21, 1950.

GMD planes bombed Shanghai, killing over 1400 people, including students.[5] This atmosphere of peril grew with the advent of the Korean War, as discussed in Chapter Two. In December 1950, representatives from the primary and secondary schools in the city met to develop a "program for patriotic actions" as part of the Resist America, Aid Korea campaign. These external conflicts were compounded by continuing internal struggle, including the land reform movement. During the summer of 1951, over 500 teachers from primary schools and worker-peasant schools in Shanghai's suburbs were mobilized to help with land reform efforts.[6]

In schools, students sometimes took advantage of the instability to press their own demands. For example, according to a Tianjin Department of Education work report, after the Communists took over in 1949, some students tried to minimize the number of classes they needed to take. Citing the Eighth Route Army as their example, they eschewed class in favor of work, claiming, "The Eighth Route Army schools didn't focus on classes, but often held meetings and did productive labor." Other students took advantage of this early, uncertain period to ignore their teachers' directives and expectations, calling it "democracy":

> [Students] wanted to completely overturn the school regulations, and they paid no attention to whether or not their teachers' words were correct, and in

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[5] Xiaoming Zhang, *Red Wings Over the Yalu: China, the Soviet Union, and the Air War in Korea* (College Station, TX: Texas A&M University Press, 2003), 79; Lu Xingwei, *Shanghai putong jiaoyushi, 1949-1989* [A history of general education in Shanghai, 1949-1989], 580.

[6] Lu Xingwei, *Shanghai putong jiaoyushi, 1949-1989* [A history of general education in Shanghai, 1949-1989], 581.

> general did not comply. For example: they didn't go to class at the regular time, came as they pleased, came late, left early, or just did not come at all. They talked as they liked in the classroom. At private schools, they thought that they could not pay fees and still attend school.[7]

Similarly, according to an interview conducted by John Cleverley with a student at a Catholic secondary school, in the period after Liberation, students compelled the teachers to stop using corporal punishment, stop teaching English, and discontinue baseball.[8]

Students may have been using the buzzwords of the time—Eighth Route Army, democracy—to justify their normal antics, including skipping school or talking with friends during class. Some, such as the students who thought that they would no longer need to pay fees at their private schools, might have displayed common misunderstandings among their families and the community about what rule by a Communist party would mean for their daily lives. Maintenance and expansion of the school system suffered from the same problems as other national goals: a lack of staff and infrastructure, as well as the fact that educational growth was taking place at the same time as so many other state initiatives. Neil Diamant has documented the confusion and "policy blending" that often resulted from Communist efforts to educate the populace and conduct campaigns during the hectic first few years of the

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[7] TMA, File: X198-Y-135-1, "Tianjin shi renmin zhengfu jiaoyuju di er ke, jiefang yilai gongzuo baogao" [A report on work since Liberation by the Tianjin Municipal People's Government Department of Education, 2nd dept.], May, 1949.
[8] Cleverley, *The Schooling of China*, 113–14.

PRC.[9] Diamant looked at the interaction between early-1950s political campaigns, including land reform, marriage reform, and debate around the 1954 Constitution, and found that because of a lack of well-trained staff, underdeveloped infrastructure, and the cramming of so many revolutionary aims into such a short time, "even at the time that policies were being enforced, words, concepts, phrases, and political methods from one campaign were copied, misinterpreted and applied to subsequent ones."[10] The unruly behavior of students could have also been directly related to the upheaval of the recent years, for if teaching staff and school availability were unstable, students could hardly be expected to be fully compliant with the daily discipline of attending classes. However, this behavior on the part of students also showed that they too heard the rhetoric of the state, and sometimes found it useful for pursuing their interests. According to the 1949 Tianjin Department of Education work report, as politics classes were added, gradually students understood the "true" meaning of democracy and freedom, one that did not include coming to class late or skipping it entirely.[11]

These challenges from within and without, coupled with efforts to expand the school system's enrollment, were creating the same kinds of problems seen elsewhere

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[9] Neil Diamant, "Policy Blending, Fuzzy Chronology, and Local Understandings of National Initiatives in Early 1950s China," *Frontiers of History in China* 9, no. 1 (January 2014): 83–101.
[10] Diamant, 84.
[11] TMA, File: X198-Y-135-1, "Tianjin shi renmin zhengfu jiaoyuju di er ke, jiefang yilai gongzuo baogao" [A report on work since Liberation by the Tianjin Municipal People's Government Department of Education, 2nd dept.], May, 1949.

in China: the harried and rushed phenomenon (*mangluan xianxiang*) that was evident by 1953, issues with the number and quality of the teaching staff, and a bottleneck of primary school graduates who wanted further education, nicknamed the "educational advancement shock wave" in (*shengxue chongjibo*) in Shanghai.[12]

The "harried and rushed phenomenon" was largely a problem of staff shortages and teachers having too many demands on their time. One account summarized the problems in Shanghai in 1953 as the "Five Excesses": too many responsibilities, organizations, people filling multiple roles in their workplace, meetings, and official forms. For example, in 1953, at the Shanghai West Secondary School, there were 58 organizations at the school. At the Yucai Secondary School, 186 members of the staff held two different positions, and twenty-six staff members held three.[13] A blossoming bureaucracy that was the result of state attempts to intervene and control schools collided with staffing shortages and overcrowded two-shift schools to create serious workload problems for teachers and school administrators. The Shanghai Department of Education and the Youth League tried to come up with solutions to the problem, including having extracurricular organizations sign up to hold events on a shared calendar so that there would not be too many. However, the problem generally persisted, and sometimes became worse, through the 1950s.

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[12] Lu Xingwei, *Shanghai putong jiaoyushi, 1949-1989* [A history of general education in Shanghai, 1949-1989], 89, 582.
[13] Lu Xingwei, 89–90.

Furthermore, state-dictated policies on education changed significantly during the 1950s. Given the serious financial and material constraints on the Communist state when it took power in 1949, education officials did not begin serious reform until 1951. On National Day in 1951, Zhou Enlai announced the "Decision on the Reformation of the Educational System." According to the Decision, one of the biggest problems in the educational system was that primary school education was split into two levels, lower and upper, and this made it difficult for the children of "working people" (*laodong renmin*) to receive a complete primary school education. A new system of primary schools was laid out, in which lower and upper primary school should be consolidated into one five-year stage. For most schools, the reforms would not entail consolidation, but rather addition, since "only 10 per cent of China's primary schools in 1951 provided a full six year elementary programme."[14] The age at which children could enroll in primary school was set at seven *zusui*, or seven "actual years," as opposed to seven *sui*. Upon graduating, students could either take supplemental classes (*buxi ban*), seek professional training (*zhuanye xunlian ban*), or take an exam to try to gain entry into a secondary school.[15]

Other scholars have come to the conclusion that the 1951 reforms "reflected a desire to bring about centralization and uniformity at all levels of education, with

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[14] Cleverley, *The Schooling of China*, 115.
[15] He Dongchang, *Zhonghua Renmin Gonghe Guo Zhongyao Jiaoyu Wenxian [Important Educational Documents from the People's Republic of China]*, vol. 1: 1949-1975 (Hainan Chubanshe [Hainan Publishing Company], 1997), 105.

political-ideological education firmly imbedded in every niche of the system."[16] Also in 1951, the national Department of Education promulgated an "authorized selections" of texts that primary and secondary schools were to use. Other changes included the conversion of all remaining private schools to public schools. In 1952, 8,925 private primary schools remained, all of which were converted by 1956.[17]

The 1951 reforms to the education system were influenced both by CCP experiences in Yan'an and by Soviet practices. The five-year system was based on the organization of primary schools in Yan'an. One of its aims was to eliminate differences between opportunities for urban and rural students, since few higher-primary schools existed in rural areas. According to Suzanne Pepper, during the first decade of the PRC, the state followed the Soviet model and focused on a centralized and uniform education system, which put rural areas with scarce resources and few qualified teaching staff at a disadvantage. The centralization drive was also intertwined with the "expert" drive—state officials wanted to give a select number of students a rigorous education in the arts, humanities, and science, so that they would become experts who could contribute to national development. The Soviet-influenced school system in the PRC was "highly centralized, hierarchical, and meritocratic," especially above lower-level primary education, and it "was designed to quickly train

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[16] Fredric M. Kaplan, Julian M. Sobin, and Stephen Andors, *Encyclopedia of China Today* (Fair Lawn, NJ: Eurasia Press, 1979), 220.
[17] Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, *Information China: The Comprehensive and Authoritative Reference Source of New China Vol. 3 Vol. 3*, ed. Caradog Vaughan James, trans. The China Social Sciences Publishing House, vol. 3 (Oxford: Pergamon Press, 1989), 941.

a large corps of technical experts to aid in the Communist industrialization drive."[18] The primary school system, on the other hand, was designed to create widespread basic literacy.

These two priorities, providing education to all of China's school-age children and regularizing the school system, proved difficult to reconcile. The consolidation of primary school into five years was particularly hard to accomplish, as all existing teaching materials were designed for six years of primary school education, and the addition of politics classes added extra content that made covering six years of material in five more difficult. Implementation of the five-year system would have also meant very different changes in urban and rural areas. Full primary schools were much more common in urban areas. In rural areas, however, primary schools rarely offered grades five and six, and thus a five-year unified system may have been more difficult to implement in rural areas. Because of these problems, the system was not widely adopted.[19]

This effort only lasted a year before the policy was reversed in 1953, and the primary school system was changed back to six years, with two stages.[20] The abandonment of the five-year primary school system, which coincided with the advent of the First Five Year Plan in 1953, signaled a backing away from the effort to

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[18] Joel Andreas, *Rise of the Red Engineers: The Cultural Revolution and the Origins of China's New Class* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2009), 43.
[19] Theodore Hsi-en Chen, "Elementary Education in Communist China," *The China Quarterly*, no. 10 (June 1962): 99.
[20] Pepper, *Radicalism and Education Reform in 20th-Century China*, 194–96.

standardize education in rural and urban areas, although the two-shift school system, discussed below, was widely implemented as a way of popularizing education.[21] Chinese authorities instead focused on following the Soviet model, with centralized, uniform schools that ultimately prioritized the education of experts over egalitarian educational opportunities.[22] The effort to universalize full primary school — upper and lower level — was not revived until 1956, when China began to deviate significantly from Soviet prescriptions for development.

In primary schools in Shanghai, from 1953-1957 Soviet influence could be seen in pedagogy, materials and content used in primary school classrooms.[23] Materials for teachers, such as articles in the *People's Education* journal, had long featured translations of Soviet thinkers.[24] Indeed, according to Shanghai Dept. of Education materials from 1956, one of the criteria for being chosen as an "exemplary teacher's group" included studying the USSR.[25] Materials for children also sometimes featured translated material from the Soviet Union. Stories and poems from the USSR were published in translation, such as *The American Boss* (1953) and *Six Parts, One*

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[21] Lu Xingwei, *Shanghai putong jiaoyushi, 1949-1989* [A history of general education in Shanghai, 1949-1989], 178.
[22] Pepper, *Radicalism and Education Reform in 20th-Century China*, 212.
[23] Lu Xingwei, 89.
[24] "Jiating jiaoyu de yiban tiaojian" [A general situation of household education], *Renmin jiaoyu* [People's education], May 1950.
[25] SMA, File: X198-C-938-1, "Guanyu zai xuexiao nei jinxing zongjie jingyan pingxuan youxiu jiaoshi wei tongzhi" [A notice about carrying out the summarization of the experiences of electing exemplary teachers in schools], April 7, 1956.

Piece (1955) by the popular Soviet children's author Samuil Marshak.[26] Works by famous Russian authors such as Mikhail Lermontov and Leo Tolstoy were also translated for Chinese children.[27]

The Two-Shift School System

The PRC in the 1950s lacked most resources necessary for a universal school system. There were shortages of schools, classrooms, and teachers. Even before the PRC was founded in October 1949, the two-shift school system was one of the work-arounds that CCP education officials discussed. The two-shift school system's implementation in China traced back to at least 1934, when Chen Heqin, an educator and reformer, began advocating for its use after returning from an international education conference. The system was being used by the USSR, and Chen thought it would help expand educational access in China.[28] Under this system, a grade or school's student population was split into two groups. One of the groups attended school in the morning, the other group in the afternoon. Some schools were entirely run on the two-shift system, while others only used it for lower grades, for which

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[26] "Meiguo da laobao" [American boss], Shanghai: Juvenile and Children's Publishing House, 1954. Cotsen Children's Library, 154322, Pams/NR/Chinese/Box 280/Item 36. "Liu ge yi fen" [Six points], Shanghai: Juvenile and Children's Publishing House, 1956. Cotsen Children's Library, 154322, Pams/NR/Chinese/Box 280/Item 54.

[27] "Gaojiasuo de fulu" [Prisoner of the Caucusas], Shanghai: Juvenile and Children's Publishing House, 1957. Cotsen Children's Library, 154322, Pams/NR/Chinese/Box 280/Item 34. "Geshou Kailibu" [Singer Kailibu], Shanghai: Juvenile and Children's Publishing House, 1953. Cotsen Children's Library, 68586, Pams/NR 20/Chinese/Box 60.

[28] "Chen Heqin (1892-1982)," Shanghai shi difangzhi bangongshi [Shanghai gazetteer office], February 26, 2007, http://www.shtong.gov.cn/newsite/node2/node2245/node74226/node74244/node74282/node74285/userobject1ai89216.html.

enrollment was the highest—for example, just for the first grade. This enabled the resource-strapped state to increase the number of children receiving an education without needing to hire new teachers or build new schools.

In the summer of 1949, the North China People's Government had held a conference on primary school education. According to articles in the *People's Daily* about the conference, two-shift lower-primary schools were one of the solutions the conference attendees recommended to encourage production but also allow the children of poor (*pinku*) workers and peasants to attend school.[29] Although articles in the *People's Daily* repeatedly cited a desire on the part of state officials to facilitate enrollment of the children of poor workers and peasants as the reason for the implementation of the two-shift school system, the demands of urban parents also drove its use.[30] According to another article from September 1949, parents in cities in North China including Harbin, Jilin City, and Shenyang, were demanding the expansion of the school system. These cities had all been liberated between 1946 and 1948, and in the time since the establishment Communist control, residents featured in the article professed to have attained better standards of living – enough food to eat and clothes to wear – but thought that the school system was still lagging. Many urban parents expected that their children should go to school, and enrollment applications surged. To meet demand, some schools began using a two-shift school

[29] "Huabei xiaoxue jiaoyu huiyi bimu" [The North China Primary School Education Conference is over], *Renmin ribao* [People's Daily], June 5, 1949.
[30] "Huabeiqi xiaoxue zanxing shishi banfa" [Interim measures for primary school education in North China], *Renmin ribao* [People's Daily], June 15, 1949.

system, and in extreme cases even a "four-shift" system, in which children went to school for half a day, every other day.[31]

Shanghai residents were experiencing the same paucity of schools, and some parents alleged that primary school attendance was being determined by an exam system. It was common for entrance to secondary school to be determined by exam results, and supported by the state, but all children were supposed to have access to a primary school education. However, during the summer of 1950, parents in Shanghai complained that many of their children were being denied entry to primary school based on entrance examination scores. The article from the *North China Daily News* does not comment on the class background of the parents, but if entrance examinations were being given to children for primary school, the first time that most children experienced any formal schooling, it is possible that children with educated parents would have a better chance of passing an exam.[32] According to some parents, the competition was fierce, and only "one out of every thirty applicants" was admitted.[33] While one might be skeptical of a disgruntled parent's estimation, it is clear that some children were being denied access to primary school in these early years of the PRC, and that it may have been exacerbating the class divide. In 1949,

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[31] "Huabei xiaoxue jiaoyu gaikuang" [The state of primary school education in North China], *Renmin ribao* [People's Daily], Sept. 21, 1949.
[32] According to Joel Andreas, in the early 1950s, the "great majority" of graduates from secondary school were from pre-Liberation elite families. See Andreas, *Rise of the Red Engineers*, 43.
[33] "Extension of Primary School Facilities Planned," *North China Daily News*, August 29, 1950.

only 36.4 percent of Shanghai's primary school students were the children of workers and peasants—two grouped who together comprised the large majority of China's population-- and that number only rose to 40.1 percent by 1951.[34]

Aside from a lack of infrastructure, the main obstacle to expanding the school system was a lack of teachers. According to Theodore Chen, there was a thriving normal school system for training teachers in the 1950s, but not enough interested candidates. Those that did apply for admission often tried to use it as a platform from which to transfer to a regular secondary school or refused to teach upon graduation. Students did not see teaching as a good job, but rather as poorly paid and "monotonous." One normal school teacher told the *Guangming Daily* in 1952 that the reason few students wanted to become teachers was that "'there is no future for a teacher, the work is monotonous, the status is low, and the remuneration is inadequate.'"[35] One solution, as was true for many problems at this time, seems to have been political persuasion. Articles in newspapers and periodicals and school-wide meetings all endeavored to convince young soon-to-be graduates to enter normal school and work as a teacher.[36] The other solutions were to lower the standards for employment as a teacher—primary school teachers in particular were often literate but without formal training in education—and implement measures to allow

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[34] Lu Xingwei, *Shanghai putong jiaoyushi, 1949-1989* [A history of general education in Shanghai, 1949-1989], 45.
[35] Theodore Hsi-en Chen, *Teacher Training in Communist China* (Washington, DC: HEW, Division of International Education, 1965), 42–43.
[36] Chen, 44.

for expanded enrollment without necessarily hiring more staff, as with the two-shift school system.[37] As one might expect, the student-teacher ratio jumped over the 1950s, from a citywide average of twenty-eight primary school students per teacher in 1949 to thirty-six in 1952. By 1958, each primary-school teacher in Shanghai was in charge of forty-two students, an all-time high.[38]

Using the two-shift system for first grade was a particularly common strategy to enroll as many children as possible who had not been able to attend any school during the occupation and wartime. It quickly became the most popular way for urban areas in Northeast China to expand schooling. During the first few years after the establishment of the PRC, large and mid-sized cities in the north, including Xi'an, Beijing, and Tianjin, all of which had come under Communist control relatively early, were experimenting with widespread use of the two-shift school system, with evident success. By 1951, in Shenyang, a city in northeastern China that had was occupied by the CCP in 1948, all lower primary schools were running two sshift. The school system was still unable to meet the demand for schooling, and so some schools that lacked teachers established extra literacy classes for first and second graders, which were taught by "exemplary students" (*youxiu xuesheng*) from advanced-primary

[37] Chen, 46–47.
[38] Lu Xingwei, *Shanghai putong jiaoyushi, 1949-1989* [A history of general education in Shanghai, 1949-1989], 632.

school, grades five and six.[39] In Xi'an, by 1952 the majority of the city's first and second grade classes were also using the two-shift system.[40]

The same processes were happening in Tianjin, but at a slower pace. By 1952, 34.5% of the city's primary school students were part of the two-shift system.[41] It wasn't until 1956 that there was a push to expand the two-shift system so that the "vast majority" (*jueda bufen*) of primary and junior high schools were using it.[42] The records do not specify why Tianjin was relatively slow in implementing the two-shift school system, compared with other northern cities such as Shenyang and Xi'an.

The system was not without its detractors. Teachers in particular seemed unhappy with the system, since it often doubled their workload. For example, in Taiyuan, a city in Shanxi province, a fierce debate raged over the merits of the two-shift school system. State officials found it better than nothing in trying to make sure all children received at least some schooling, while some teachers argued it would be better to delay enrollment expansion until there were more "standard" (full-day) schools for children to attend.[43]

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[39] "Shenyang shi zenyang jiben xiaomie le xiaoxue biyesheng shixue de xianxiang?" [How can Shenyang fundamentally eradicate the phenomenon of primary school graduates missing out on schooling?], *Renmin ribao* [People's Daily], June 19, 1951.
[40] "Xi'an xiaoxue jiaoyuan He Jianyi gaijin jiaoxue banfa" [Xi'an primary-school teacher He Jianyi improved teaching methods], *Renmin ribao* [People's Daily], April 2, 1952.
[41] Tianjin shi difangzhi bianxiu weiyuanhui, *Tianjin tongzhi: jichu jiaoyu zhi* [Tianjin annals: elementary education gazetteer], 340.
[42] Tianjin shi difangzhi bianxiu weiyuanhui, 383.
[43] "Quxiao xiaoxue banri erbuzhi de guandian shi cuowu de" [The position advocating the elimination of the primary school half-day, two-shift school system is wrong], *Renmin ribao* [People's Daily], Dec. 29, 1951.

Indeed, schools were supposed to hire extra teachers when they implemented the two-shift system, but not all schools could find or afford to hire enough additional teachers.[44] With double the number of students, some teachers professed that they had more work than they could handle. While the 1951 *People's Daily* article acknowledged that primary school teachers were extremely hard-working, given that some teachers did not find the work unmanageable, the other teachers' complaint of overwork was dismissed as an example of unclear thinking (*sixiang butong*).[45] It is possible that efforts intended to address the teacher shortage such as the two-shift school system only exacerbated the problem, as it made teaching more difficult and time-consuming, and therefore less attractive to educated young people.

Parents too sometimes complained about the two-shift school system. Some thought that half a day of school was not long enough for their children to learn the necessary material and skills, while others complained that having children at home for half of every day could "annoy a person to death" (*naosiren*). A *People's Daily* article suggested that these parents be told that with extra teachers and good pedagogy, half a day of school could still allow students to learn reasonably well, and with homework and extracurricular activities, students' time outside of school could

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[44] "Women yao yong geming banfa fazhan xiaoxue jiaoyu" [We need to use revolutionary measures to expand primary school education], *Renmin ribao* [People's Daily], May 17, 1952.
[45] "Quxiao xiaoxue banri erbuzhi de guandian shi cuowu de" [The position advocating] eliminating the primary school half-day, two-shift school system is wrong], *Renmin ribao* [People's Daily], Dec. 29, 1951.

still be planned and organized.[46] City education officials saw the two-shift school system as the best option given contemporary circumstances, and they were not prepared to modify their policy to deal with teacher or parent complaints.

Parents found having their children around to be particularly troublesome because many adults were spending less time at home than before Liberation, particularly women. After 1949, the state attempted to raise the status of women by freeing them from household labor to work outside the home. Women's labor within the home did not fall under the Party-state's definition of "work," summarized by Lisa Rofel as "activity that produced surplus value for the state, acknowledged with a wage."[47] Even as it became clear that there were not enough jobs to employ all women outside the home, women were still encouraged to participate in activities outside the home, such as neighborhood committees.[48] As Xueping Zhong, who grew up in Shanghai in the 1950s and 1960s, wrote about her parents in a memoir: "they spent most of their waking hours at work."[49] The *North China Daily News* also noted an increase in the number of children who got lost on Shanghai's streets during 1950.

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[46] "Women yao yong geming banfa fazhan xiaoxue jiaoyu" [We need to use revolutionary measures to expand primary school education], *Renmin ribao* [People's Daily], May 17, 1952.
[47] Lisa Rofel, "Liberation Nostalgia and a Yearning for Modernity," in *Engendering China: Women, Culture, and the State*, ed. Christina Gilmartin et al. (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1994), 236.
[48] Delia Davin, *Woman-Work: Women and the Party in the Revolutionary China* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1976), 163.
[49] Xueping Zhong, "Between 'Lixiang' and Childhood Dreams: Back from the Future to the Nearly Forgotten Yesteryears," in *Some of Us: Chinese Women Growing Up in the Mao Era*, ed. Xueping Zhong, Wang Zheng, and Bai Di (New Brunswick, [N.J]: Rutgers University Press, 2001), 136.

According to the Department of Public Security, most of the people who were reported as lost were under the age of fifteen, and the mostly likely explanation was that their parents "did not have enough time to look after their children."[50] Children were quite literally being lost to the streets as a result of their busy parents.

Furthermore, both men and women faced new opportunities and demands on their time under CCP leadership. In many urban areas such as Shanghai and Tianjin, the city government created neighborhood committees, a grassroots-level organization, generally made up of a dozen or so residents, often women, tasked with "supervising the social service and welfare tasks of the residents," including nurseries, laundry stations, and other services available in well-developed urban neighborhoods.[51] These neighborhood committees also organized study and literacy groups for adult workers. Especially once the Korean War began in 1950, these neighborhood committees became important drivers of mass mobilization. In Shanghai, as a part of the Resist America, Aid Korea campaign, these committees "organized newspaper readings groups to publicize party policies, explain foreign affairs, broaden residents' horizons, and mobilize political enthusiasm."[52] Many workplaces also began offering night classes and meetings, to help workers learn to read and elevate their political consciousness. Adults were expected to attend many of

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[50] "More Women, Children Losing Way," *North China Daily News*, May 26, 1950.
[51] Janet Weitzner Salaff, "Urban Residential Communities in the Wake of the Cultural Revolution," in *The City in Communist China*, ed. John Wilson Lewis (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1971), 291.
[52] Wakeman, "'Cleanup': The New Order in Shanghai," 57.

these new meetings and classes, and were thus busier than ever. According to Delia Davin, "for ordinary workers the working week of 48 hours was frequently lengthened by an evening of political study or a meeting, and these were a regular feature of life for all cadres and teachers." Cadres were generally even busier.[53]

Urban teachers in particular were expected to take part in training and re-education, creating another divide between rural and urban schooling. As Anita Chen argues, "in what effectively became a bifurcation of China's education system, the state mounted a very concerted drive to transform the thinking and practices of urban teachers," while resource limitations in rural areas generally did not allow for much training or re-education for teachers.[54]

In a 1954 report about problems that arose from the two-shift system at the Tianjin No. 4 Secondary School, one can see that teacher and parent concerns were not unfounded. Although the report by the city Department of Education is about a secondary, rather than primary, school, the problems cited were not specific to secondary education, and were likely to be shared by other schools implementing the two-shift school system. Because the No. 4 Secondary School was split into two separate systems, "the whole school's teachers and students had a hard time finding a common time to hold collective meetings." Teachers in particular often ended up working during what would otherwise have been their afternoons off, and so there was little time for teacher meetings or training. Furthermore, city education officials

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[53] Davin, *Woman-Work*, 185.
[54] Anita Chan, *Children of Mao: Personality Development and Political Activism in the Red Guard Generation* (London: Macmillan, 1985), 12.

admitted, because students were only in school for half a day, they spent the rest of their day "loafing around" (*youdang*). Just as the 1951 *People's Daily* article stated, the report noted that household study groups could be organized to remedy this problem; however, the report acknowledged that "organizing household study small groups is also difficult to do, and the results are hard to see."[55] By the mid-1950s, it was clear that the two-shift system was not ideal, even if, as education officials felt, it was also the best option to increase educational access.

Shanghai had widely implemented the two-shift system in 1953 as part of the First Five Year Plan.[56] The city government had also been investing increasing amounts in the general education system, from 10 million yuan in 1950 to 23 million in 1953.[57] Even with all this extra investment, with 88 percent of primary schools and 80 percent of secondary schools in Shanghai were using the two-shift system by 1957, and not all children were enrolled in primary school.

Besides creating more time for children outside of school, the two-shift school system, and the expansion of primary school in general, created new expectations among students and their families. Having had access to primary school, many families now wanted their children to go to secondary school and have the chance to do intellectual, rather than manual labor. Education had long been an important

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[55] TMA, File: X198-Y-582-2, "Genggai shixing erbuzhi zuoxishijian de cankao yijian" [Reference comments on changing the implementation of the two-shift system daily schedule], Oct. 7, 1954.
[56] Lu Xingwei, *Shanghai putong jiaoyushi, 1949-1989* [A history of general education in Shanghai, 1949-1989], 178.
[57] Lu Xingwei, 633.

method for class mobility in China, and despite the PRC's pro-worker ideology and policies, many people strove to avoid life as a manual worker. During the mid-1950s, the secondary school system offered limited access and was primarily designed to train a small number of intellectuals, rather than raise the educational level of the wider populace. While growth in primary school access mushroomed, secondary schools did not keep pace. In 1950, 7.8 percent of school-age children graduated from full primary school, 2.1 percent graduated from junior high, and 0.7 percent graduated from secondary school. By 1956, 36.5 percent graduated from primary school, but only 7.1 percent graduated from junior high and 1.5 percent from secondary school.[58] The number of graduates from lower-level primary school was possibly much higher than 36.5 percent, as over half of all school-age children were enrolled in school by 1955.[59]

In Shanghai, the cohort of primary school and junior high graduates who wanted further schooling but were unable to gain entrance into a high school were called the "shockwave of further schooling" (*shengxue chongjibo*). This crisis became extremely visible in late summer 1953, when a large group of graduates and their parents went to the city Department of Education to petition the officials to resolve the problem. The Department received over 18,580 people in August and September, sometimes over a thousand in one day. Other petitioners mailed in letters, which

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[58] Joel Andreas, "Leveling the Little Pagoda: The Impact of College Examinations, and Their Elimination, on Rural Education in China," *Comparative Education Review* 48, no. 1 (2004): 18, https://doi.org/10.1086/379840.
[59] Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, *Information China*, 3:946.

totaled more than 4,400. These graduates and their parents were apparently very displeased to be denied access to secondary school. The Department of Education decided that the best solution was to educate these primarily school graduates to love labor.[60] As far as the Department of Education officials were concerned, the problem was not necessarily the lack of secondary schools. Only so many experts were needed to develop industry and build socialism. From the perspective of state officials, once most people were literate, the PRC educational system had done its job. The goal of expanding the PRC's primary schools was to create a literate labor force, not to produce a generation of people who disdained manual labor.

The demand for further schooling for lower-level and higher-level primary school graduates became so widespread that the Central Committee instituted guidelines for educational work on the issue from 1953 to 1954: "An outline for undertaking propaganda relating to upper-primary and junior-high graduates' productive labor." The propaganda work intended to convince these graduates to begin work rather than try to enter secondary school.[61] According to a 1954 *People's Education* article, the work brought together representatives from the Party, Communist Youth League, the government, mass organizations, and the schools themselves. They were not only trying to convince graduates to work instead of pursue further studies; other aims were to convince parents that they should not blame

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[60] Lu Xingwei, *Shanghai putong jiaoyushi, 1949-1989* [A history of general education in Shanghai, 1949-1989], 93–94.

[61] "Qunian jinxing laodong jiaoyu de jiben qingkuang he jingyan" [The basic situation and experiences from implementing labor education last year], *Renmin jiaoyu* [People's Education], May 1955.

(*maiyuan*) the government, teachers, or their children for not being able to continue their education, and to convince teachers that they should also support students in starting work and not continuing their education. The education work seemed to have been somewhat successful, at least among those whom the campaign reached. Three different counties in Anhui, Hebei, and Shandong cooperated to hold a meeting for representatives of primary and junior-high graduates. Three hundred and forty-three young people participated, and according to state records of the meeting, while only sixteen percent were "focused on labor" (*anxin laodong*) before the meeting, after undergoing education, ninety percent professed a focus on labor.[62] According to these state records, the education work had succeeded in persuading young people to align their personal goals with those of the state.

Extracurricular Organizations

In Shanghai, the "Outline of the Implementation of Extracurricular Activities" was released in 1950. It defined extracurricular activities as a part of the education that schools should provide, and stated that their goal should be the "integration of theory and practice."[63] Extracurricular activities were also to be strongly under the purview of students: students should participate voluntarily and freely organize and lead activities themselves, with the support of teachers. Although students were

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[62] "Dui gaoxiao biyesheng laodong shengchan he shengxue wenti jinxing shehui xuanchuan jiaoyu gongzuo de chubu jingyan" [Some preliminary experiences in the work of implementing social propaganda education about the problem of upper-primary school graduates' productive labor and further schooling], *Renmin jiaoyu* [People's Education], July, 1954.

[63] Lu Xingwei, *Shanghai putong jiaoyushi, 1949-1989* [A history of general education in Shanghai, 1949-1989], 59.

intended to take the initiative in planning and running activities, a new burden implicitly fell on teachers. They were expected to support the activities, give suggestions for content and activities, and help with the planning. The extracurricular activities would thus accomplish another goal: strengthening the bond between teachers and students.[64] According to these preliminary guidelines for Shanghai schools, it was assumed that teachers would be the responsible adults in charge of children's extracurricular activities, but as we will see below, that was not always the case.

The 1950 outline gave the Zhonghua Road No. 2 Primary School's Young Pioneers as an example of how extracurricular activities should be handled. There, the Young Pioneers organized productive activities in which students built a wide variety of tools and equipment for the school, including a steam engine, water motor, electric motor, and electric bell.[65] Thus the students at Zhonghua Road No. Two Primary School not only integrated theory (science education) with practice (actually making machine)s, they also contributed to production and building up the school's infrastructure with tools such as the electric bell.

One of the steps that the education bureau of Tianjin took to combat the haphazard response of schools and communities to the surplus of unsupervised children was the establishment of Children's Extracurricular Activity Committees in 1957. These committees were supposed to coordinate various institutions, including

[64] Lu Xingwei, 60.
[65] Lu Xingwei, 60.

local movie theaters and parks, the Young Pioneers, and neighborhood committees, to band together to organize children's new free time. Education officials asked that every school start small study groups for children after school, and that each study group be led by a counselor (*fudaoyuan,)* hopefully enthusiastic individuals with a fondness for children. Counselors were often teachers from nearby schools, or cadres with a political education background. If no formally educated individuals were available, parents with free time were to serve as their local group's counselors. However, it was candidly noted that parent-counselors would most likely have had no formal education.[66] These parent-counselors were most likely drawn from the ranks of housewives. The state considered such women to be politically unreliable, and required local cadres and education officials to closely monitor these after-school homework groups. This created a new problem: new supervisors had been found for the students, but the supervisors needed supervisors. The state distrusted uneducated maternal figures, but often ended up reluctantly relying on their time and labor to take care of children, creating a disconnect between rhetoric and practice that constantly worried education and political officials.

Through both inadvertent and purposeful policies, state efforts reduced the amount of time children spent with mothers and other female figures who did not have a certain degree of training in childhood education, and created a hierarchy of the adult figures best suited to influence children, with proletarian or veteran men at

[66] TMA, File: X0198-C-001014-006, "Shidao jianbao, zhisan" [Inspection bulletin, three]， 1957.

the top, and uneducated housewives at the bottom. Although many primary school teachers were women, education officials also recommended that after-school teachers be chosen from seasoned workers at nearby factories – most of whom would have been male, or PLA army "uncles." These men could supplement the formal education that children received from their teachers, who were usually women, with politically correct proletarian viewpoints. This new hierarchy of caregivers also moved the boundaries for gendered caregiving. For the most part, while women were being mobilized to take some responsibilities of men, i.e. working outside the home, men were not asked to share equally the responsibilities generally apportioned to women within the home. Whereas men were expected to support their wives if they worked outside the home, including picking up some slack around the home, this expectation did not extend to shouldering an equal burden of the domestic labor.[67] In this case, however, the masculine figures of worker and soldier were given a new responsibility for mentoring children and youth. Propaganda images of friendly PLA uncles surrounded by attentive children abounded. This new role reinforced men's role as leaders, but it also complicated the gendered dimensions of caregiving.

While neighborhoods bore some of the responsibility for children's increased free time, the Communist Youth League and Young Pioneers also needed to increase their after-school activities. In particular, the Tianjin Bureau of Education called on the Communist Youth League and Young Pioneers to integrate better with household

[67] Davin, *Woman-Work*, 183.

small study groups for which neighborhoods and parents were already taking responsibility.[68]

In Shanghai, the Young Pioneers—then still called the Juvenile and Children's Corps—was established in October 1949. The initial phase of establishing the Young Pioneers was limited, with only eight schools participating. Establishment of the Young Pioneers could only proceed at a school if teachers and the administration had some understanding of the Young Pioneer organization and goals, and if there were enough cadres in charge of youth and children's work available to support the establishment.[69] By January, 1950, 150 schools were participating, with 30,669 Young Pioneers. By 1953, there were 748 schools with 165,455 Young Pioneers.[70]

According to a 1949 draft charter for the Young Pioneers, then called the Juvenile and Children's Corps, counselors should be "progressive" (*jinbu*) primary and secondary school teachers.[71] As of the summer of 1952, for secondary schools, particularly politically progressive, morally upright, academically outstanding

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[68] TMA, File: X198-C-1014-1, "Guanyu gonggu tigao erbuzhi jiating zixue xiaozu he jinyibu gaijin erbuzhi gongzuo de tangzhi" [A notice about strengthening and improving self-study household groups for the two-shift system and further improve the two-shift system work], April 30, 1957.

[69] Lu Xingwei, *Shanghai putong jiaoyushi, 1949-1989* [A history of general education in Shanghai, 1949-1989], 72.

[70] Shen Gongling and Duan Zhen, eds., *Shanghai Shaoxiandui fazhanshi* [A history of the development of the Shanghai Young Pioneers] (Shanghai: Shanghai Education Press, 2010), 107.

[71] "Zhongguo Shaonian Ertong Dui zhangcheng cao'an" [A draft charter for the Juvenile and Children's Corps], *Renmin ribao* [People's Daily], Oct. 25, 1949.

students could be hired upon graduation as "political counselors" (*zhengzhi fudaoyuan*).[72]

Radio was also an important educational tool that could also be used to structure children's time. The GMD had operated radio stations in both Shanghai and Tianjin that were quickly taken over when the CCP arrived in both cities in 1949. The use of this equipment allowed the CCP to begin its own broadcasting programs almost immediately.[73] One of the longest running children's radio programs in Shanghai was the *The Children's Program* (later the *Youth and Children's Program*), first started in July 1949. It was jointly run by the Shanghai Radio Station and the Shanghai Department of Education. The primary audience was children in the fourth grade and older — essentially children with a minimum of lower-primary schooling. The time slot was shared with the women's program, and programs varied from twenty to sixty minutes. The program often organized primary school students to perform cultural programs or play guessing games on the air. Other segments included discussions of current events, suggestions of good books to read, and segments focused on school or the Young Pioneers.[74] The purpose of the program was both entertainment and education.

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[72] Lu Xingwei, *Shanghai putong jiaoyushi, 1949-1989* [A history of general education in Shanghai, 1949-1989], 73.
[73] He Dongchang, *Zhonghua renmin gonghe guo zhongyao jiaoyu wenxian* [Important Educational Documents from the People's Republic of China], 1: 1949-1975:34.
[74] Zhao Kai, ed., *Shanghai Guangbo Diantai Zhi* [The Shanghai Broadcasting Station Gazetteer] (Shanghai: Shanghai Academy of Social Sciences Press, 1999), 285.

The program also attempted to organize children's time, especially while they listened to the program. During the school term winter break, the program provided "supplemental lessons" (*buxi ke*), and also encouraged children to form distribution groups (*tongxun zu*) and listening groups (*shouting xiaozu*). Thus, even during winter break when children would not go to school, education officials encouraged them to organize their time in collective study. According to state records, by the beginning of winter of 1950, more than 40,000 primary school students in Shanghai were a part of listening groups.[75] These listening groups had become a popularly utilized method for organizing children when they could not go to school.

In 1950, Tianjin's local *New Child* magazine featured an article about an awards ceremony for the city's broadcasting groups (*guangbo xiaozu*). The children's Laboring Broadcast Group (*laodong guangbo zu*) was given the highest honor by being named the Mao Zedong Broadcasting Group. In his acceptance speech, the leader of the group discussed the process of convincing his classmates to participate and behave well. Eventually, he reported that not only did all the children listen and study the radio programs, but they established a literacy group, where they brought study materials to give to children who could not come to school. They all learned better attitudes and began doing good deeds around the community, including helping older people push carts, helping to collect spilled rice, or making sure that all their classmates ate regularly and that their young female classmates got home safely from

[75] Zhao Kai, 285.

school each day.[76] The radio broadcasts were not only an important tool for moral education, but were also used by education officials to organize and structure children's time outside of school, often enlisting children to supervise and help each other. When trying to come up with ways of occupying children's time outside of school, especially for children in the two-shift school system, Tianjin education officials listed listening to the radio, alongside reading, homework, and helping their parents with housework.[77] Children were supposed to be studying collectively, taking care of each other, and helping out within the community in their spare time, all under the guidance of state directives. Radio stations gave state actors the opportunity to issue directives and organize children without in-person adult intervention, reducing the workload of already taxed parents and the already scarce supply of trained educators.

Movies were another way of organizing children outside of school. Many children enjoyed going to see movies in their spare time as a leisure practice without any state encouragement or policy. Wang Zheng, born in Shanghai in the early 1950s, remembers going to her first movie when she was "four or five years old" with her older sister. She spent many weekends going to a local theater to see movies, and

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[76] "Mao Zedong xiaozu fajiang dahui" [The Mao Zedong group prize meeting], *New Child* [Xin Ertong], No. 26: April 1, 1950. Tianjin: Tianjin New Child Press. Shanghai Municipal Library.
[77] TMA, File: X198-C-1014-3, "Guanyu banhao erbuzhi de yixie cuoshi" [Some steps to handle the two-shift school system well], Feb. 11, 1957.

these films "constitute[d] a large part of [her] childhood memory."[78] While many children went to the movies unprompted, schools and Young Pioneers also often organized film showings, buying large blocks of seats and offering them to students and Pioneers at a discount, especially after 1957 when the two-shift system was widely implemented in urban areas such as Shanghai and Tianjin. Schools could schedule a film time, and send students who were not in classes. According to a directive from the Tianjin Cultural Bureau, theater workers were responsible for doing extra educational work with the children before and after the movie — introducing the movie, ensuring that children understood the movie, and running discussions of the lessons that children should draw from viewing it — although the directive did ask schools to send at least one staff member from the school to accompany children if possible.[79]

Sometimes adult efforts to mobilize children and structure their time became onerous. A report from the *People's Education*, a national education journal published by the Department of Education, lamented that "since the fall of 1949, between school and extracurricular activities, every minute is scheduled."[80] Many school administrations seem to have taken their responsibility to encourage student

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[78] Zheng Wang, "Call Me 'Qingnian' but Not 'Funu': A Maoist Youth in Retrospect," in *Some of Us: Chinese Women Growing Up in the Mao Era* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2001), 32–33.
[79] TMA, File: X198-C-1014-10, "Guanyu peihe erbuzhi xuexiao kaizhan ertong kewai huodong de tongzhi" [A notice about coordinating the development of children's extracurricular activities at two-shift schools], Feb. 28, 1957.
[80] Dong Chuncai, "Zhuyi Quanmian Fazhan, Zengjin Xuesheng Jiankang [Pay Attention to Holistic Development, Improve Students' Health]," *Renmin Jiaoyu* [People's Education], August 1951, 12.

involvement in extracurricular activities as an avenue to utilize student labor. For adult meetings, students were sometimes expected to arrange the meeting spaces, take notes, and put on performances. In some cases these tasks might have been unavoidable, as primary school students, especially upper-level students, might have been among few literate members of a community who could take notes. The responsibilities, however, often bordered on the extreme. The article gives as an example a school in Jilin in which students gave 139 performances over the span of one year. Other schools used children's labor not only for adult meetings, but in taking care of the everyday work involved in running a school, using physical education classes as an opportunity to have students engage in production or the work of "establishing the school."[81] Thus schools were able to ameliorate their resource and staff scarcity while also educating children according to state goals.

In a situation in which schools were expected to educate as many children as possible with few resources, labor was considered an important educational tool, and children's time outside of school was under the purview of education officials and teachers, it is perhaps inevitable that schools used students as a surplus labor supply. This allowed schools to fulfill state demands to structure children's time and give them a proletarian viewpoint, while also allowing the school to bolster its meager set of resources with which to accomplish its mandates.

A Preliminary Leap Forward, 1956-1957

[81] Dong Chuncai, 13.

The goal of universalizing primary school for all children, urban and rural, received serious state attention again in 1956, when the PRC's education department set a goal of universal primary school within twelve years. This new plan in 1956 included the use of *minban*, or community-run schools (see Chapter One) and *daimao* upper-level primary schools—in which existing lower-level primary schools were expected to start offering grades five and six.[82] This move "from Soviet precedents to Chinese needs," as Suzanne Pepper summarizes it, was championed by Mao, but disliked by many educators' organizations, including the education periodical *Teacher News*.[83]

In Tianjin, the municipal department of education wrote a report in 1956 about the state of primary school education. The report began by proclaiming:

> Education work is going well. Children study hard, respect the teacher, are honest and brave, love collective property, return lost property to its owners, and in other ways are growing up with communist morals and character.[84]

However, the report also focused on a number of problems with the educational quality and outcomes in the primary school system. Many schools lacked sufficient qualified personnel or equipment and facilities, while others failed to create good communication with the students' households. According to education officials, these deficiencies had not only created problems in educational quality, but given the close

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[82] Pepper, *Radicalism and Education Reform in 20th-Century China*, 220–23.
[83] Pepper, 226, 232.
[84] TMA, File: X198-C-930-16, "Gaijin xiaoxue jiaoyu gongzuo de yijian" [Suggestions for improving primary school education work], 1956.

link between education and character, they also affected students' moral development. Officials blamed problems such as a lack of respect for teachers or petty stealing on these moral deficiencies caused by a defective education.[85]

The report reiterated that according to Marxist ideas about education, "all children can be educated" (*ertong shi wanquan keyi jiaoyu*). Thus, the solution was to reform education. The report exhorted teachers to spend more time and effort on teaching politics and character development during school, as well as to create activities and structure for children's time outside of school. The writers of the report recognized that the two-shift school system had created serious problems in managing children's time and development, creating a pressing need not only for extracurricular organizations such as household study groups, but also to educate parents better on how to rear their children correctly, since children were spending an increased amount of time at home. Suggestions for parents included not arguing in front of one's children and refraining from either being too harsh - using corporal punishment - or too lenient – "do not spoil children."[86] In short, every part of a child's life, from the household to their time playing in the streets, harbored the possibility of causing the child to develop bad habits and ideas, and so serious reforms in education, both within and outside of school, were necessary to forestall these potential perils.

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[85] TMA, File: X198-C-930-16, "Gaijin xiaoxue jiaoyu gongzuo de yijian" [Suggestions for improving primary school education work], 1956.
[86] TMA, File: X198-C-930-16, "Gaijin xiaoxue jiaoyu gongzuo de yijian" [Suggestions for improving primary school education work], 1956.

The Tianjin Department of Education was not alone in implementing educational reforms during the mid-1950s. Nationally, politics and moral character became increasingly important aspects of the educational curriculum even at the primary school level, at the same time that school enrollment was being expanded. According to Stig Thøgersen, following Mao's 1957 speech "On the Correct Handling of Contradictions among the People,"

> The education sector was given a more active role in the political and ideological sphere than during the first years of Communist rule. Schools were no longer just expected to produce more and better qualified personnel for socialist economic construction, they should also take the lead in the redistribution of knowledge, and thereby power, between social classes and in political indoctrination.[87]

The state was exerting greater pressure on schools to teach politics as an integral part of education, while enrollment was skyrocketing. In 1956, universal schooling received revived attention,[88] and in cities such as Changsha, thousands more students enrolled in primary school than the number for which the school system had planned. The combination of expanded enrollment and new responsibilities for the moral character and political attitudes of students created "the most chaotic year for elementary schooling since Liberation," at least according to beleaguered education officials in Changsha.[89]

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[87] Thøgersen, *A County of Culture*, 166–67.
[88] Pepper, *Radicalism and Education Reform in 20th-Century China*, 220–21.
[89] Pepper, 232–33.

By 1956, the "harried and rushed" phenomenon had become more severe than ever in most schools, and it affected both teachers and students. On Children's Day that year, a high school student from Tianjin wrote an anonymous letter to Chief He, head of the Municipal Education Department, complaining that students were overloaded with homework and school-scheduled activities. In addition to morning exercises, classes, and homework, students regularly also had to attend two or three school meetings per day, each of which lasted at least 30 minutes, and sometimes as long as two hours. The student wrote, "It's as if I'm under so much pressure that I can't even take a breath."[90]

Other students dealt with the abundance of activities by simply avoiding them altogether. At Shuangkou Primary School in Tianjin in 1956, "when it came time for [Young Pioneer] activities, [the children] just ran. … Even with guards posted at the doors, the children … took their red scarves and put them in their pockets to hide [them,] and then left."[91] The conspicuous red scarf given to members of the Young Pioneers is generally portrayed as a valued and precious item in children's stories, a reminder of one's duties to the Party and nation. However, in the real-life case of these suburban children, it marked them as obligated to endure tedious after-school

[90] TMA, File: X198-C-957-8, "Guanyu jiaqiang xuesheng jiazhang gongzuo de tongbao" [A notice concerning the work of strengthening student-parent work], June 4, 1956.
[91] TMA, File X198-C-951-3, "Shaoxiandui gongzuo zongjie," [A summary of Young Pioneer work], Dec. 3, 1956.

activities, so the children stuffed the scarf out of sight and fled through the school gates into the less-supervised world outside of school.

At Shuangkou Primary School, where children were running away from school rather than participate in Young Pioneer activities, school administrators saw that children did not have an enthusiastic attitude towards these mandatory after-school activities. Their solution was to implement educational reforms to correct the problem. School activities were added to promote respect for teachers, and all children were asked to do "a day of labor for the teacher" to manifest that respect. Administrators asked that story-time be made more interesting and lively, and organized small groups of students and teachers together. The sources do not specify what these groups did, but the creation of new groups led by teachers was part of a larger expectation that teachers take responsibility for children's behavior both within and outside of school. With these educational reforms, Shuangkou's students apparently learned to respect their teachers—who were probably also acting as their Young Pioneer counselors[92]—and "when the time came for Young Pioneer activities, there was no sentry posted at the door and no one ran away."[93] This rosy view of the power of education—that changes to lesson plans and activities could produce totally different attitudes and behavior on the part of children—was in line with ideas about

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[92] TMA, File: X198-C-1014-17, "Zai Heping qu Luzhuangzi Xiaoxue, guanyu 'er er zhi'、kewai huodong ju shaoxiandui de gongzuo deng wenti de fayan" [A speech about issues in the 'two-two system,' extracurricular activities, Young Pioneer work, etc. at the Heping district Luzhuangzi Primary School], March 10, 1957.
[93] TMA, File X198-C-951-3, "Shaoxiandui gongzuo zongjie," [A summary of Young Pioneer work], Dec. 3, 1956.

education at this time in Maoist China, although there were few other indications that education was working so well.

According to a 1956 report from the national Ministry of Education, the "harried and rushed phenomenon" persisted among teachers. The report listed two main reasons: One, outside organizations and movements were making too many demands of schools and teachers, and two, teachers had too heavy a workload. Throughout the 1950s, given the relatively small number of highly educated individuals, many teachers—primary school teachers especially—were mobilized to participate in other projects, resulting in fewer teachers with heavier workloads being left behind. Further contributing to the chaos in schools was the use of school buildings and facilities by local work units. Primary schools were apparently especially vulnerable to being requisitioned by other work units.[94]

In 1956, the national Ministry of Education conducted a survey of the primary and secondary school system. They discovered that the major problems that faced the school system included the "rushed and harried" work of teachers, just as in 1953. In addition to widespread implementation of multiple shifts and the expectation that teachers take responsibility for students' extracurricular activities, teachers' time was still being impinged upon by developments outside of the educational sphere.

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[94] "Zhongxiaoxue he shifan jiaoyu zhong xianzai you shenme wenti, Jiaoyu Bu wancheng chubu diaocha gongzuo" [What problems currently exist in the primary, secondary, and normal education, the Ministry of Education has completed preliminary investigation work], *Renmin ribao* [People's Daily], Dec. 4, 1956.

It is perhaps not unrelated that in 1956, the Tianjin Department of Education held elections for "exemplary teachers," who would have served as models. First each school elected its own exemplary teachers, then district-wide elections were held, and finally citywide. Exemplary teachers at the school level were supposed to receive eight yuan, or a commemorative material object of about the same value. County-wide exemplary teachers received sixteen yuan or a commemorative object.[95] With the school system in disarray, the promotion of teachers who managed to do an exemplary job despite the many challenges inherent to working at a primary school at this time could have suggested individualistic solutions without addressing the material conditions that impeded educational work. Exemplary teachers were supposed to meet the following criteria:

> "1. A clear history (*lishi qingchu*) and improvement in thinking (the point about a clear history can be not announced to the teachers)
>
> 2. Can carry out a well-rounded educational policy
>
> 3. Upright way of life, cooperates with the collective, had a good relationship with the masses, and loves students
>
> 4. Enthusiastic about teacher-training work

[95] TMA, File: X198-C-938-7, "Guanyu xuanping, pingjiang ji tuicun youxiu jiaoshi wei jidian yijian" [Some suggestions for electing, deciding on awards, and promoting exemplary teachers], June 22, 1956.

5. Creative and hardworking in improving the work, actively takes responsibility, does service for teaching, saves the nation capital, and loves collective property."[96]

Some of the criteria were specific to socialist China, such as cooperating with the collective and having a good relationship with the masses. And even further, some were specific to the straightened circumstances of the 1950s: saved the nation resources, loved collective property, and had a clear history, which suggested a good class background. It is unclear why class background was an important factor but left unannounced to the teachers.

One teacher named as a "special" teacher in 1956 was a man named Liu Zhenjiang, 22 *sui*, from a landlord family background, who had been teaching for five years. Liu was praised for studying hard, taking charge of physical education, serving as a brigade (*dadui*) counselor, and in helping run Young Pioneer activities.[97] Huang Shumin, a 21-*sui* woman from a rich peasant family background, was named an exemplary teacher in Hetou Village, in the suburbs of Tianjin. She too was praised for serving as a counselor, for both a brigade and company (*zhongdui*). Huang's description was even more specific, describing how she would arrange for food for the children when it was raining and they could not go home to eat at lunch, as they

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[96] TMA, File: X198-C-938-1, "Guanyu zai xuexiao nei jinxing zongjie jingyan pingxuan youxiu jiaoshi wei tongzhi" [A notice about summarizing the experiences of electing exemplary teachers in schools], April 7, 1956.
[97] TMA, File: X198-C-951-2, "Tianjin shi zhong, xiao xuexiao teyue jiaoshi dengji biao" [A registration form for Tianjin secondary and primary school special teachers], 1956.

normally did. She organized activities after school as a counselor including during the winter break.[98] She not only worked hard as a teacher during school hours, but she took responsibility for children during their lunch breaks, after-school time, and breaks in the academic calendar. In short, Huang took responsibility for taking care of local children at all times and filled the many gaps that existed in children's lives as their parents were mobilized into full-time work and meetings.[99] Furthermore, both of these people are from bad class backgrounds. Class background does not seem to have been an important factor in evaluating a person's contributions to the revolution at this point.

Furthermore, in 1956 the general policy guiding the educational system's structure and content begin to swing decisively towards revolutionary education. The Anti-Rightist Campaign of 1957 was a particularly decisive moment when the teaching style and educational content became much more politically charged and radical. The Anti-Rightist Campaign began targeting intellectuals who either held, or were suspected of holding, anti-Communist or anti-collectivization views. Teachers, with their relatively high levels of education, were considered intellectuals, and thus ended up being targets of the movement.[100] As a consequence, to avoid being labeled

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[98] TMA, File: X198-C-951-5, "Jie Kejian Laoshi deng youxiu shiji" [The exemplary achievements of Teacher Jie Kejian and others], Dec. 7, 1956.

[99] One might expect that at the age of 21, Huang did not yet have children, and perhaps only unmarried women teachers or men teachers could have devoted this kind of time and attention to their work. Similarly, during the Great Leap Forward, the vaunted Iron Girls were also often unmarried women.

[100] For information on how rural teachers were affected by the movement, see Shuji Cao, "An Overt Conspiracy: Creating Rightists in Rural Henan, 1957-1958," in

Rightists, many teachers were compelled to include more manual labor and political education in their teaching, which brought education more into line with national goals, but also allowed for post hoc claims by other educators that the changes lowered the quality of education.[101]

In 1957, during the Anti-Rightist Campaign and one year after a push to widely implement the two-shift school system across the whole city, education officials in Tianjin found that students' time was in total disarray. Children were often running wild throughout the streets during their time off, and although some schools had organized after-school activity groups for children, many of these students seemed to be using the time to copy each other's homework.[102] The state's inconsistent educational policy seemed to have reflected in daily life at the schools.

The Changing Place of Children

The new educational system may have focused on giving children a proletarian perspective, but the type, amount, and context in which children were supposed to labor had changed. The state was not in favor of getting children off the streets by any means necessary, i.e. child labor. Nor did state officials want children doing labor in just any way or environment. In Tianjin, before Liberation there had been hundreds of "young vagabonds" at the railway terminals who stole coal from

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Maoism at the Grassroots, ed. Jeremy Brown and Matthew D. Johnson (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2015), 77–101.

[101] Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, *Information China*, 3:940–41.

[102] TMA, File: X198-C-1014-1, "Guanyu gonggu tigao erbuzhi jiating zixue xiaozu he jinyibu gaijin erbuzhi gongzuo de tangzhi" [A notice about strengthening and improving self-study household groups for the two-shift system and further improve the two-shift system work], April 30, 1957.

passing freight trains. These "ragged little gangsters" were mostly children from nearby impoverished families. The Tianjin Railway Bureau began a campaign in 1950 to stop, catch, and reform them. They were sent to evening classes to learn literacy and the importance of productive labor, and while many escaped and continued stealing, apparently within six months, "every child had some regular job" and also continued to take the evening classes. It is not surprising that these children were all sent to school, but it is surprising that every single one was given a new job. Some of their new jobs were even the same as before undergoing reform. For example, children "who used to comb the ash pits illegally for unburned coal, were given this job officially, on a profit-sharing basis." Children laboring was evidently not the problem, nor even necessarily the type of labor. It was the lack of control that presented a problem for the state. As far as the state officials were concerned, children should only do certain types of labor, under supervision and official control.

These officials conceptualized one possible proper place for these extremely poor children as employment in the correct type of job with additional evening classes. Here the place of children was not changing drastically, and also that class distinctions in educational opportunity and type could be allowed to persist. We can also see the same types of gendered division of labor that persisted among adults, as boy and girl coal thieves ended up doing different types of work. The *North China Daily News* article specifies that "many of the girls" ended up working in textile

factories, whereas the boys had a range of options, including working in the railway service, coal collection, or other outside jobs.[103]

Assumptions about appropriate labor as well as the divergent goals of the state and family in Zhu Sibao's story are also gendered. In 1956, the supervisors at the docks in Shanghai discovered a fourteen year old girl, Zhu Sibao, working there. Zhu was working as a porter, regularly carrying loads of 100-200 *jin* back and forth to load and unload ships. While the supervisors recognized that according to child labor laws, the girl should not be working at the docks, there were not enough working-age adults in her household, and so her family needed her income. The supervisors suggested perhaps transferring her indoors to do lighter work more suitable for a girl, but they awaited orders from the Department of Labor.[104]

Officials at the Department of Education may have created a goal for all children and young teens to be enrolled in school, but families often had other needs that prevented them from sending their children to school. We can see from the above anecdote too that it was not only families that sometimes had different ideas about the proper place of the child. The dock supervisors were obviously sympathetic to Zhu's family plight, and while they did not think a young teenage girl should be working to load and unload at the docks, they did think it appropriate to give her other work. The

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[103] "Railway Coal Thieves Accept Regular Work," *North China Daily News,* July 11, 1950.

[104] SMA, File: B154-4-217-132, "Shanghai shi matou cangku zhuangxie banshi chu guanyu shidang chuli liusan tonggong de baogao" [Report on the appropriate handling of child labor in the Shanghai Dock Warehouse Loading and Unloading Office], Oct. 24, 1956.

state, which aimed to make childhood a carefree period when young people only labored for small amounts of time in a pedagogical context, opposed such child labor, causing tension with families who needed the wages of their younger members.

Conclusion

The state saw the education of children as a top priority, yet given its many other goals , it could not achieve universal primary school education during the 1950s. Given resource constraints and the unintentional problems created by other state projects, teachers were often left to bear the burden of teaching longer hours than ever before, in addition to being given responsibility for children's lives outside of school. The project of educating children become a story of one step forward, two steps sideways, as solutions such as the two-shift system created new problems, and institutions for children proliferated even as the staff pool from which to run them was stagnant.

Chapter Four

Young Scientists and Red Heroes, 1956-1966

Although children had been promoted as political participants as early as land reform, the Great Leap Forward represents one of the most crucial periods for the emergence of children as political participants. During the mid-1950s, children were pulled into state production campaigns, generally to kill pests, find scrap metal, or engage in other practical efforts to support production, as part of the First Five-Year Plan (1953-1957). Children's responsibilities had been gradually expanding ever since the beginning of the PRC, but starting in 1956, the collectivization movement pulled the whole nation, including children, into new structures of production and political participation, a trend that intensified during the Great Leap Forward.

This period is also one in which the ideal child in books, magazines, and movies increasingly diverged from the ideal behavior expected of most children in their daily lives. During the Great Leap Forward, the ideal child was an independent actor and problem solver, just as capable as the adults around her of participating in society, politics, and production. However, during the Great Leap Forward, and its aftermath, at home and in school, adult authority figures rewarded children for many of the same behavior as in the early years of the PRC: studying hard, helping one's classmates, supporting the teacher, doing chores at home, and being kind and obedient to adults and authority figures. Following the failure and dismantling of

Great Leap policies in the 1960s, the ideal child was less focused on scientific achievements and more focused on active, militant revolutionary participation.

The Great Leap Forward, starting in 1958, involved the intensification of industrialization and agricultural production. China had long lacked capital but had a large population, so during the Great Leap, the state tried to harness the latter advantage to compensate for the former problem. Rural peasants were mobilized to increase agricultural production to underwrite industrial expansion. As a part of this project, farms were organized into large-scale communes, even as state infrastructure projects also pulled men out of agricultural production. Rural women were expected to work regularly in the fields to earn work points to feed their families, prompting the creation of collective daycare centers and dining halls to lessen their domestic work and free women to participate more in work outside the home. In urban areas such as Shanghai and Tianjin, life was not reordered as radically, but the state promoted efforts such as the urban commune movement, to bring women out of the home into productive labor.

During the Great Leap Forward, in addition to organizing collectivization and pushing industrialization, the PRC was also constructing itself as a modern nation-state with a direct relationship to every one of its citizens, including children. Thus, children also constituted a population whose labor and intellectual potential could be harnessed for the Leap. Also during this period, the state pushed for greater recognition of the skills, experiences, and ideas of "non-experts," that is, people who had not been educated in a certain field such as agricultural science or metallurgy, but

nonetheless might be able to contribute to technological advancements and innovations within those fields. According to Maoist ideology, peasants in particular were seen as having untapped knowledge and experiences that could guide the PRC's development. It is possible that the emphasis on children's knowledge, skills, and abilities to contribute to production came out of this desire to tap heretofore unrecognized sources of expertise and ability.

During the Great Leap Forward, periodicals, storybooks, textbooks, and movies for children portrayed them as independent problem-solvers and political actors, who were often more perceptive and politically advanced than adults. Children were lauded as budding scientists and capable participants in all areas of society, politics, and production. They were depicted as creating successful experimental agricultural fields, killing sparrows during the Four Pests Campaign, finding large amounts of iron, and exposing traitors, spies, and anti-revolutionaries.

Children in these sources were praised for being heroic political actors going above and beyond the demands set by parents or teachers to contribute directly to the revolution. Parents and teachers were generally depicted as supportive but distant and uninvolved, or disbelieving of the child's ideas and potential. Even without help from adult figures, these capable children's efforts would prove successful. Children were portrayed as participating in state movements without, and sometimes in spite of, the intermediation of adults.

However, while storybooks and magazines praised children for performing heroic feats including saving a drowning child or inventing advanced agricultural

techniques, in daily life teachers and Young Pioneer counselors praised children for much more mundane achievements and qualities. Whereas the criteria to be chosen as a model child or "exemplary Young Pioneer" during the Great Leap Forward years grew to include acts of sacrifice and perseverance, they had not moved beyond the structure of authority that required children to obey the adults around them. In storybooks, children were rewarded for hard work, sacrifice, and contributing directly to production, politics, and society. These fictional children acted independently of the adults around them if necessary. In daily life, actual children found that they were rewarded for their hard work and sacrifice, but also for obeying the instructions and guidance of parents, teachers, and counselors.

After the Great Leap Forward failed in and resulted in a famine in which tens of millions of people died, the state withdrew from many Great-Leap policies, including the communes and dining halls. At the same time, the Sino-Soviet split resulted in the USSR pulling out all of its advisors in 1960. State leaders feared that Chinese socialist construction and the global socialist coalition were falling apart, fears deepened by the subsequent international tensions: the 1961 Bay of Pigs invasion, in which the U.S. planned an invasion of Cuba, an ally of the PRC; the nearly simultaneous 1962 events of the Cuban Missile Crisis, in which the U.S. and the USSR nearly engaged in nuclear war, and the Sino-Indian border war; and the escalation of the Vietnam War during the early 1960s. Thus, during the early to mid-1960s, the ideal socialist child envisioned by state actors changed in response to these national and international developments. During the 1960s, state media rarely

featured innocent and beatific young children as symbols of a successful revolution, as they had done during the Korean War (see Chapter Two). Instead, children were depicted as the eyes and ears of the revolution, ever ready to detect and defeat its enemies.

Now, given the instability that Chinese leaders saw in the worldwide socialist coalition, and attacks from outside, the revolution seemed far from over. Raising "revolutionary successors," who could continue to make revolution in this uncertain period, was more necessary than ever. Children during the 1960s were depicted as fighting for the revolution in dramatically heroic ways, giving life and limb if necessary. This type of child bears many similarities to the militant child from wartime stories and propaganda during the 1940s. Looping back to wartime themes reinforced the message that the revolution was not yet over and that there were more battles yet to fight.

Children and Collectivization, 1956-1958

During the two years prior to the Great Leap Forward, the CCP instituted the Hundred Flowers Campaign (1956-1957) and the Anti-Rightist Campaign (1957-1959). During the Hundred Flowers Campaign, the Party encouraged people to criticize the Party's progress since 1949. Some of the criticism was more serious than CCP leaders had anticipated, and the Party quickly shut down criticism and instituted a rectification and anti-rightist campaign. This familiar political narrative, however, does not reflect the chronology in primary and secondary schools or in rural areas. According to Cao Shuji, in the case of primary and secondary schools, teachers and

administrators often did not begin making criticisms or participating in subsequent struggle sessions until after these processes were complete in universities and central, provincial, and urban centers. Thus, the Hundred Flowers and Anti-Rightist movements were carried out nearly concurrently for some teachers.[1] Sometimes the academic year schedule was rearranged to accommodate these campaigns.[2] One can imagine that this affected teachers' time and ability to work effectively.

During this time, in schools and in the Young Pioneers, children were rewarded for much of the same behavior as in the early 1950s. For example, teachers and counselors continued to encourage children to participate in the state's literacy drive as part of their Young Pioneer activities.[3] One Young Pioneer report from 1956 praised a 10-year-old girl named Zong Huimin. Zong was a third-grader in Tianjin, and her teacher told her that "'helping moms and dads who are illiterate to learn to read is an honorable thing to do, and at the same time, it is also a duty of Young Pioneers.'"[4] Her parents were already literate, so Zong decided to teach some older women (*niangniang*) in her neighborhood. With her mother's help, she started a literacy group for six women, which met three times a week for an hour. The report praises Zong for her patience, attentiveness, and hard work. If someone was absent because they had to take care of something at home, she would give them make-up

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[1] Cao, "An Overt Conspiracy: Creating Rightists in Rural Henan, 1957-1958," 78.
[2] Cao, 88.
[3] TMA, File X198-C-951-3, "Shaoxiandui gongzuo zongjie," [A summary of Young Pioneer work], Dec. 3, 1956.
[4] TMA, File X198-C-799-27, "Women she zenyang dui saomang xiaozu jinxing fudao de" [How we should guide the anti-literacy small groups], 1956.

lessons so they would not fall behind. Teaching literacy had been part of the student contributions to building New China since the early 1950s and continued to be so into the late 1950s.

Changes in the state's expectations for children were most obvious in rural areas, where they could be drawn into nearby agricultural and industrial activities that were previously the purview of adults. For example, according to a 1956 national Ministry of Education report, children in some areas were asked to help collect scrap metal. Having groups of children hunting for scrap metal unsupervised predictably led to mishaps and accidents. One group of children living in Tianjin found old grenades in a river bed. The local supply and marketing cooperative (*gongxiao hezuoshe*) would not take them, and so the children kept and played with them until one exploded, killing two children. Other students engaged in less dangerous but still troubling behavior, such as digging up old coffins to get the nails or rummaging through trash piles. Other students, tasked with killing pests such as rodents and sparrows, took to carrying around dead mice tails, deemed unhygienic by educational officials.[5]

These documents from 1956-1957 are candid about the risks of children's un- or under-supervised participation in production, and complain that it is the result of recent efforts to mobilize children to participate in the First Five Year Plan, called the

[5] TMA, File X198-C-930-6, "Guanyu jiaqiang 'xiao wunian jihua' huodong de lingdao bing zhuyi anquan weisheng jiaoyu de tongbao" [A report on strengthening the leadership of the 'little five-year plan' activities and paying attention to safety, hygiene, and education], Feb. 24, 1956.

"Little Five Year Plan."[6] It was implemented during the mid-1950s, possibly as late as the autumn of 1955. It was first mentioned in a *People's Daily* article in November 1955.[7] It seems to have involved a call for both schools and Young Pioneer groups to organize more activities to get children to do productive labor and be actively involved in the First Five Year Plan, but, as the Ministry of Education report from 1956 about children killed by a found grenade stated, the organization of "Little Five Year Plan" activities at times lacked leadership, organization, and proper education for children about how to go about activities such as scrap metal collection in a safe way.

Not all of children's forays into production were so disastrous. In schools, where "labor education," or learning how to labor by actually doing it, was becoming a regular part of the curriculum, students participated in productive labor, but in a structured and supervised way, unlike the exhortation for Young Pioneers to sally forth and dig up some scap metal. In rural areas where collectivization had begun, students began regularly participating in agricultural labor as a part of their education, whether gardening a school plot or transplanting rice plants in the collective fields.

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[6] TMA, File X198-C-930-6, "Guanyu jiaqiang 'xiao wunian jihua' huodong de lingdao bing zhuyi anquan weisheng jiaoyu de tongbao" [A report on strengthening the leadership of the 'little five-year plan' activities and paying attention to safety, hygiene, and education], Feb. 24, 1956.

[7] *Renmin ribao*, "Jiangsu sheng Yixing xian he Liaoning sheng Fu xian Songshu qu de shaonian ertong, jianyi guanquo shaonian ertong kaizhan 'Xiao Wunian Jihua' huodong" [Jiangsu province's Yixing county and Liaoning province's Fu county's Songshu district's youth and children, suggest that the whole country's youth and children develop "Little Five Year Plan" activities], Nov. 29, 1955.

Some schools formed partnerships with nearby agricultural collectives. In urban areas where farming was not possible, students cleaned the streets, transported vegetables, repaired walls, and fixed classroom furniture.[8]

Children participated in production to further state goals as part of the state's collectivization movement, just as in later campaigns including the Great Leap Forward. This was also good training, especially for rural children, most of whom would go on to work full-time in agriculture after graduation from primary school. The shortage of opportunities for rural children to receive further schooling, discussed in Chapter Three, persisted through the 1950s. Although the likelihood of a primary school graduate advancing to secondary school had improved since 1953, going from 27 percent nationally to 43 percent in 1957, this was still less than half. Furthermore, the amount of junior high graduates who attended high school was dropping. In 1953, 40 percent of junior high graduates moved on to senior high school, but only 29 percent did so by 1957.[9] The primary and junior high school system, grades one through eight, was expanding far faster than the upper level of the education system, and beyond the need for workers with that level of education. Thus, primary schools and junior high schools were called to prepare their students for their most likely future as manual laborers.

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[8] TMA, File X198-C-1014-19, "Guanyu xuexiao jixiang jingchang gongzuo de shidao jianbao," [A bulletin about the supervision of schools' regular work tasks], Dec. 28, 1957.

[9] Pepper, *Radicalism and Education Reform in 20th-Century China*, 213, Table 9.5.

In 1957, Liu Shaoqi, a top leader since 1949, and from 1954-1959 the Chairman of the Standing Committee of the National People's Congress, went on a "provincial tour," which included surveying the state of education and the problem of students who wanted further schooling. While on the tour, Liu gave speeches trying to persuade students not to demand further education.[10] This problem of the "bottleneck" of students wanting more income influenced Great-Leap-Forward educational policies, as did a top-down push for more integration of labor into education, as part of a socialist education system.

Children in the Great Leap, 1958-1960

The Great Leap Forward began in 1958. Agricultural production in rural areas was organized into "people's communes," which often consisted of thousands of households organized to collectively engage in agricultural production, as well as massive infrastructure projects such as constructing irrigation systems. During the Great Leap Forward, many officials greatly over-reported agricultural yields, leading to too much of the harvest being claimed by the state to feed the urban population or to export. This caused the Great Leap famine in which tens of millions of people, mostly rural peasants, died. . As I will discuss below, the widespread food scarcity and hunger could not be commented on, either in published or unpublished archival documents. Thus, if one examines children's role in and childhood during the Great

[10] Roderick MacFarquhar, *The Origins of the Cultural Revolution 1: Contradictions among the People 1956-1957* (The Royal Institute of International Affairs, the East Asian Institute of Columbia University, and the Research Institute on International Change of Columbia University by Columbia University Press, 1974), 196–99.

Leap Forward, it appears to be a time of great innovation and exciting, rapid development, rather than a deadly catastrophe.

There were many important changes to discourses for and about children, in addition to changes to most children's material lives. The ideal child during this time became much more independent. Changes to education as a part of the Great Leap Forward also brought many changes to children's lives. The Great Leap in education included a push for greater educational access at all levels in tandem with greater participation in labor as a part of the formal schooling process. More children had access to schooling, at the primary and secondary level, but that schooling increasingly involved work outside the school.

During the Great Leap Forward, children's lives were changing in material ways. Most children in rural areas were living in communes, which were huge groupings of households to collectively farm land. These People's Communes, made up of thousands of households, in which people no longer had private plots of land or owned their own equipment or farm animals. The commune owned everything, and people earned income in the form of work points for their labor in the collective fields. By the end of 1958, nearly the entire rural population had been organized into People's Communes.[11] For the first time, women's duties within the household were collectivized, and dining halls and child-care centers within communes briefly functioned to free women from this domestic labor.

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[11] Spence, *The Search for Modern China*, 519.

Furthermore, the commune movement was not limited to rural areas. In urban areas, groups of 20,000 to 30,000 people were organized into short-lived communes, which, according to Roderick MacFarquhar, "developed on three patterns, according to their focus: around factories, around government organizations or schools, or around residential areas."[12] The urban commune movement was short-lived and had far less of an impact on urban dwellers' daily lives than the rural commune movement had on rural people's lives. However, it did create changes in how domestic labor was arranged and how young children were reared.

The urban commune movement led to the creation of child-care centers, urban dining halls, laundry stations, and neighborhood factories, in which women were mobilized to engage in small-scale production, often using agricultural or industrial byproducts, such as making soap out of discarded cooking oils and fats. During September 1958, Tianjin's first urban commune, the Hongshunli Commune, was established, with over 10,000 households. It had grown out of a processing factory organized by the neighborhood women's organization. When some of the neighborhood women got together to organize the processing factory after the Great Leap Forward was announced, "naturally they also wanted to organize dining halls

[12] Roderick MacFarquhar, *The Origins of the Cultural Revolution 2: The Great Leap Forward, 1958-1960* (New York: The Royal Institute of International Affairs, the East Asian Institute of Columbia University, and the Research Institute on International Change of Columbia University by Columbia University Press, 1983).

and nurseries."[13] The establishment of nurseries was part of ongoing changes in urban childhood that were linked to changes in the types and locations of women's labor. In the Hongshunli Commune, more local women got involved, and the activities—both production and "welfare work" (*fuli shiye*)—expanded. Eventually the organizations were brought together to create the Hongshunli People's Commune.[14]

The urban communes were established alongside existing urban structures, including boarding nurseries and the *danwei* system, under which one's workplace provided housing, food rations, and sometimes even dining halls, daycare, and schools. Thus, those urban workers employed by a *danwei* already had access to many of the services offered by urban communes.

According to official sources, the Hongshunli urban commune in Tianjin was largely driven by the labor of women and their need for help with reproductive labor, mostly cooking and childcare. The need for help with these tasks drove the integration of labor and welfare services that made communization both possible and necessary, We saw in previous chapters that the desire of state officials to structure children's time and keep them off the streets drove the institutionalization of childhood during the early years of the PRC. The form of women's labor also changed the shape of childhood during the Great Leap Forward. The state's efforts to mobilize women and women's own efforts to do productive labor outside the home at

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[13] Shuji Cao, "An Overt Conspiracy: Creating Rightists in Rural Henan, 1957-1958," in *Maoism at the Grassroots*, ed. Jeremy Brown and Matthew D. Johnson (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2015), 78.
[14] "Tianjin Hongshunli People's Commune Da Xian Weili [The Obviously Powerful Tianjin Hongshunli People's Commune]," 56.

this time drove further institutionalization of childhood, particularly early childhood, in urban communes.

According to a 1960 article in the *People's Daily*, the Hongshunli Commune had 110 nurseries with 2,830 children, and a majority of children whose families were part of the commune were in either nurseries or kindergartens.[15] This shifted the location and caregiver for many young urban children from inside the home, where they were cared for by family members, to central locations outside the home, where they were cared for by salaried caregivers. During the 1950s, an increasing number of primary school-age children were spending at least half of their day in an educational institution. Infants and young children were also placed in the hands of professional – or at minimum, salaried – caregivers. At least for the brief window while urban communes functioned, caregiving became a widespread professionalized occupation and nearly all children were expected to spend most of their time outside the home and within institutions.[16]

These efforts at relieving women's domestic duties were short-lived and often disappointing, as can be seen in an account of an urban commune in Beijing. At this urban commune, clothing disappeared at laundry stations, or sometimes took more

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[15] "Tianjin Hongshunli People's Commune Da Xian Weili [The Obviously Powerful Tianjin Hongshunli People's Commune]," 57.

[16] For an introduction to the rise of boarding nurseries and their effects on children, see Didi Kirsten Tatlow, "Recognizing Boarding Schools' Psychic Toll in China," *The New York Times*, October 5, 2016, https://www.nytimes.com/2016/10/06/world/asia/china-kindergarten-boarding-children.html. This contemporary source covers both the history of boarding nurseries in China and their contemporary incarnations.

than a month to be cleaned.[17] In other urban communes in Beijing, 80 percent of women reported not wanting to work for the commune, citing low wages and poor welfare services. Childcare was a major concern for urban women. In documents about the Chunshu urban commune in Beijing, many women did not leave their homes to participate in outside labor because even with the availability of nurseries, they still had to care for sick children at home or watch their children on Sunday, when children at boarding schools and nurseries returned home or guests might arrive. Apparently some of the work opportunities for these women did not include official leave or holidays (*gongxiu*).[18]

The Great Leap Forward changed the nature of children's education. In July 1958, the national Ministry of Education issued directives asking all government levels to keep better statistical records about advances in education. According to the Ministry of Education:

> To reflect the high tide and great results of our country's socialist culture, on the 1958 National Holiday, we want to point out the numbers from every project of the new academic year's educational enterprise development, and summarize and report the results of the Great Leap Forward in the education enterprise to the Party central authorities, to Chairman Mao, and to the whole

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[17] BMA, File 1-6-1703/12, "Fuwu xiangmu qiquan, fangshi linghuo, hen shou qunzhong huanying" [Welfare programs are complete, the methods are flexible, and they are popular with the masses], April 23, 1960.
[18] BMA, File 1-6-1703/12, "Fuwu xiangmu qiquan, fangshi linghuo, hen shou qunzhong huanying" [Welfare programs are complete, the methods are lively, and they are popular with the masses], April 23, 1960.

> nation's people. This will have great political influence both internationally and domestically, and will encourage the whole nation's people to promote the education enterprise in more quickly developing, and (so) this must receive serious attention.[19]

Statistics were compiled to demonstrate the increased number of schools. In greater Tianjin alone, 1,387 primary schools were added in Tianjin's counties during 1958, bring the total up to 10,113 primary schools. These numbers do not reveal much about the quality of schools, class size, or any other factors that might allow us to better understand educational expansion during the early phase of the Great Leap. The fact that there were only 89 more teachers than in 1957—one teacher for every 15 new schools opened—suggests that the teacher-student ratio was rising, and schools were likely all extremely understaffed.[20] However, there were likely many more children who were able to attend school for the first time.

Although the operation of schools in the early 1950s had been determined by necessity, during the Great Leap Forward, there was an intense ideological debate within the educational system about the best way to create socialist children. Should children be imbued with a high level of cultural knowledge, spending years learning

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[19] TMA, File X198-C-1170-12, "Zhuanfa jiaoyubu 'guanyu jiaqiang jiaoyu tongji gongzuo ji zai guoqingjie tigong xin xuenian shuzi de tongzhi' de tongzhi" [Transmitting the Ministry of Education's notice "A notice on strengthening educational statistics work and providing statistics about the new academic term at the National Holiday"], July 31, 1958.

[20] TMA, File X198-Y-926-7, "Guanyu 1958 zhi 1959 xuenian gexian xiaoxue jiaoyu gongzuo de zongjie baogao" [A summary report of the 1958-1959 school year educational work in every county's primary schools], 1959.

skills that would not necessarily directly transfer to their future jobs? Or should school be short and conducted mostly in fields, factories, and other "real-world" environments? During the Great Leap Forward, the latter approach flourished, both because it was considered ideologically correct and because pragmatically, many schools could not provide a full-time education. Furthermore, the priorities of national development could not spare many "full manpower units"—as one top official described a physically mature person in 1960, even if these "manpower units" might prefer to be enrolled in a secondary school or university.[21]

According to directives issued by the Shanghai Department of Education, students should be learning to love the Party, participate in labor, and have a proletarian standpoint (*lichang*) and perspective (*guandian*).[22] From the perspective of these educators, most of whom had just finished participating in the Anti-Rightist Campaign, many students lacked correct socialist values, and so education officials sought to correct this problem. Communist Youth League officials, who often coordinated with the creation of curriculum and school activities, suggested that schools make the politics teacher, rather than the language teacher, the head teacher, The Communist Youth League also recommended visits to the countryside or

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[21] MacFarquhar, *The Origins of the Cultural Revolution 2: The Great Leap Forward, 1958-1960*, 317; Wenhua Li, *Jue lie* [Breaking with Old Ideas] (Beijing, 1975).
[22] SMA, File: C21-2-1221-1, "Gongqingtuan Shanghai shiwei xuexiao gongzuobu guanyu Shanghai shi zhongdeng xuexiao 1958-1959 xuenian du diyi xueqi zhengzhi sixiang jiaoyu gongzuo de chubu yijian" [Preliminary opinions from the Communist Youth League, Shanghai committee's school work department on the work of political-thought education in Shanghai secondary schools during the first school term of 1958-1959], Sept. 1959.

factories to give children an opportunity to do labor.[23] Many rural primary schools also opened factories and experimental gardens, engaging in sideline production. Urban primary schools that were located near agricultural areas were supposed to send their students to labor on collective farms, if possible.[24] According to the Tianjin Department of Education, most primary school classes in these schools planted and tended 2-5 *mu*[25] of experimental gardens.[26] Their duties might also entail the labor of maintaining the school. At one primary school in Chongqing, students' duties "included grass-cutting, weeding of paths, [and] cleaning of classrooms."[27] The trend in education, clear already in 1956-1957, was to increase student time spent learning outside of the classroom walls. By 1959, primary school students were spending on average four hours each week doing labor as a part of their education.[28]

The encouragement of students to engage in productive labor as a part of their schooling coincided with a push, authored by Liu Shaoqi, for more community-run,

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[23] SMA, File: C21-2-1221-1, "Gongqingtuan Shanghai shiwei xuexiao gongzuobu guanyu Shanghai shi zhongdeng xuexiao 1958-1959 xuenian dui diyi xueqi zhengzhi sixiang jiaoyu gongzuo de chubu yijian" [Preliminary opinions from the Communist Youth League, Shanghai committee's school work department on the work of political-thought education in Shanghai secondary schools during the first school term of 1958-1959], Sept. 1959.

[24] MacFarquhar, *The Origins of the Cultural Revolution 2: The Great Leap Forward, 1958-1960*, 108.

[25] One *mu* is approximately 1/6 of an acre.

[26] TMA, File X198-Y-926-7, "Guanyu 1958 zhi 1959 xuenian gexian xiaoxue jiaoyu gongzuo de zongjie baogao" [A summary report of the 1958-1959 school year educational work in every county's primary schools], 1959.

[27] MacFarquhar, *The Origins of the Cultural Revolution 2: The Great Leap Forward, 1958-1960*, 112.

[28] MacFarquhar, 317.

half-study, half-work schools. Liu proposed this after his 1957 tour as a solution to the "bottleneck" of primary school graduates who wanted further schooling., Students at these schools attended classes for half of the day and worked for the other half, and their labor generally funded the schools.[29] While the half-work, half-study schools allowed for greater secondary educational access, the education that students received in these institutions was generally acknowledged to be of lower quality than that of regular secondary schools in which the students did not have to work to keep the school open.[30]

Even for these regular schools, no longer was in-school education complete. According to documents from the Communist Youth League, in order to truly learn to be a new socialist person, children must not only learn their school lessons, but also labor and work on socialist projects. Therefore, "proletarian schools should have an atmosphere of intense and enthusiastic battle."[31] According to prevailing educational trends, learning simply from books or a teacher's lecture was incomplete. A quiet learning environment was now considered to be a bourgeois one. Students' education had to be supplemented by both labor and struggle.

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[29] MacFarquhar, 108–9.
[30] MacFarquhar, 316.
[31] SMA, File: C21-2-1221-1, "Gongqingtuan Shanghai shiwei xuexiao gongzuobu guanyu Shanghai shi zhongdeng xuexiao 1958-1959 xuenian du diyi xueqi zhengzhi sixiang jiaoyu gongzuo de chubu yijian" [Preliminary opinions from the Communist Youth League, Shanghai committee's school work department on the work of political-thought education in Shanghai secondary schools during the first school term of 1958-1959], Sept. 1959.

Part of the struggle that students were supposed to engage in was class struggle, as well as the recognition of China's disadvantaged position in a world in which most powerful countries had industrialized decades or a century earlier. In some ways, the recognition of children's creativity and ability to understand important concepts and engage in labor is not new to the Great Leap Forward. In the previous chapters, we saw that even in 1949 the educational system gave children new responsibilities, such as becoming group leaders or playground monitors, and encouraged children to engage in labor, especially household chores. But now children were expected not only to assume responsibilities in school and chores at home: additionally, they were supposed to understand revolutionary struggle, visit factories, and labor alongside adult workers.

The changes in the educational practices for children also altered the very idea and definition of childhood. In some ways, the Great Leap Forward-era expectations for children reframed what childhood was and what children could do. At this time, the Communist Youth League argued that children under the age of fourteen—an important transition age at which many children quit school to work as adults and Young Pioneers applied to join the Communist Youth League—should not spend all their time in school without the expectation that they understand anything of the outside world or participate in revolutionary struggle.[32] According to the Communist

[32] SMA, File: C21-2-1221-31, "Gongqingtuan Shanghai shi wei guanyu xuexiaotuan, dui ganbu zai sixiang zuofeng he gongzuo fangfa shang cunzai de jige wenti de baogao" [A Communist Youth League, Shanghai committee report on a few issues

Youth League at this time, there is no age at which one receives the responsibilities of a socialist person, but rather, all citizens in the PRC, regardless of age, should be dedicated to the revolution.[33] However, there were still acknowledged differences between younger people and older people, and how they might best be mobilized to contribute to the revolution.

During the Great Leap Forward, storybooks, films, and newspapers articles all extolled the virtues of the capable, independent child. The prevailing idea in education and child-rearing at this time was that children were just as capable as adults of understanding and laboring for their world. As the Communist Youth League reminded educators in 1958:

> the content you tell [to children] should not be fundamentally different from that which you tell young adults. Don't think that youth and children are at all incomplete (*bu zheng*), or overly naïve. When Chinese children and youth make a great leap forward, it's not that they only understand a little.[34]

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that exist in the thinking, habits, and work methods of school teams and Youth League cadres], Sept. 1958.

[33] Although the document does not specify, it is likely that the Communist Youth League is referring mostly to older children, probably junior high students age eleven to thirteen. Certainly pre-school-age children are not portrayed participating in labor or doing adult-like or even heroic activities, even in the most fantastical accounts of child heroes.

[34] SMA, File: C21-2-1221-31, "Gongqingtuan Shanghai shi wei guanyu xuexiaotuan, dui ganbu zai sixiang zuofeng he gongzuo fangfa shang cunzai de jige wenti de baogao" [A Communist Youth League, Shanghai committee report on a few issues that exist in the thinking, habits, and work methods of school teams and Youth League cadres], Sept. 1958.

The phrase "make a great leap forward" could have referred to children's participation in state Great Leap Forward projects such as increased production, but it also could have referred to personal reform in line with the prevailing emphasis on applying socialist political ideology to all areas of one's life. In the case of children, this might mean helping a peer improve their schoolwork or being extra careful with public property, such as the school desks and chairs.

According to another document from the Shanghai Communist Youth League addressed to school cadres, young people were better than adults at some things. The report cited catching sparrows and spreading propaganda about not spitting, although it is unspecified why children and youth were considered better at these particular activities.[35] The Youth League noted that some adults thought that youth and children could not do anything, and underestimated their "creative abilities," but that this was simply a superstition (*mixin*) which must be destroyed.[36] Superstitions were usually connected to feudal thinking, which means that the idea that adults had to do everything for children, and that children were unable to do the things that adults could, was considered a backwards idea from an old, ideologically flawed society.

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[35] SMA, File: C21-2-1221-31, "Gongqingtuan Shanghai shi wei guanyu xuexiaotuan, dui ganbu zai sixiang zuofeng he gongzuo fangfa shang cunzai de jige wenti de baogao" [A Communist Youth League, Shanghai committee report on a few issues that exist in the thinking, habits, and work methods of school teams and Youth League cadres], Sept. 1958.

[36] SMA, File: C21-2-1221-31, "Gongqingtuan Shanghai shi wei guanyu xuexiaotuan, dui ganbu zai sixiang zuofeng he gongzuo fangfa shang cunzai de jige wenti de baogao" [A Communist Youth League, Shanghai committee report on a few issues that exist in the thinking, habits, and work methods of school teams and Youth League cadres], Sept. 1958.

According to state-promoted views in the late 1950s, children were just as capable as adults, and state media widely circulated stories to prove this point.

Children were not only given responsibilities vis-à-vis their peers and environment, but they were also increasingly encouraged to participate in state demands for political action or productive labor without parental intervention. In storybooks, the relationship between children and the state at this time was often portrayed as direct, with children needing no other mediating adult authority, such as a parent or teacher, to help them achieve their goals. In stories from this time, enterprising children make important contributions to production efforts, without and sometimes even in spite of the adult figures in their lives, such as finding large stores of iron for smelting that most adults had long forgotten about.[37]

Many storybooks published during the Great Leap Forward focused on the technical and productive accomplishments of young children, and encouraged them to emulate their socialist peers. For examples, the story "Little Michurin" from 1958 referred to Shang Machao, a child who idolized Ivan Vladimirovich Michurin, a Russian Soviet agricultural scientist. Young Pioneer Shang Machao became interested in grafting trees at the age of eleven. By fourteen, he tested experimental grafting techniques that his father dismissed and discouraged. Shang persisted despite his father's increasing anger at Shang's disobedience, eventually discovering a successful method of grafting the plants. Shang's father was not the only backward

[37] *Tie lunzi* [Iron tire], Dec. 1959. Cotsen Children's Library, 99115, Pams/NR/Chinese/Box 232.

element that Shang had to educate. When he proposed that his classmates start a "little farm" to support the Great Leap Forward, some of his peers protested that "the Great Leap Forward was an adult matter, and all children must do was study well." Shang, the story shows, knew better, and with the help of the ideologically correct Young Pioneer counselor, he and his classmates started a successful experimental farm plot.[38] In this case, it was not that all children were more advanced than the adults around them, but the most politically advanced figure in the story was a child. Shang succeeded in his innovative agricultural techniques by defying his father and leading the other children into a more correct understanding of the children's role in national projects.

Stories about children succeeding despite the lack of faith from the adults around them do not only appear in Great Leap Forward-era China. For example, Ruth Krauss' popular children's book *Carrot Seed* was published in 1945 in the U.S. It told the story of a young boy who planted carrot seeds, and despite the warning from his mother, father, and older brother that "it won't come up," the little boy waits patiently and is rewarded when he eventually harvests a giant carrot. The *Carrot Seed* and "Little Michurin" have superficial similarities. Both feature young boys who succeed in growing plants despite warnings from the adults around them that their endeavors will surely fail. However, the unnamed protagonist of the *Carrot Seed* and Shang Machao are very different: the young American boy patiently waits for his carrot

[38] Xue Anjing, *Xiao Miqiulin* [Little Michurin], Shanghai: Juvenile and Youth Publishing House, Dec. 1, 1958. Cotsen Children's Library, 154309, Pams/NR/Chinese/Box 124.

seed, doing nothing more than weeding and watering. He seems unperturbed by his family's naysaying, and is portrayed as nothing more than happy when it grows. He does not show the carrot to his parents to demonstrate their ignorance and his skills, and the story's simple style and the ending suggest that patience will be rewarded, not that children have special or advanced knowledge. In "Little Michurin," in contrast, Shang has special agricultural skills and knowledge that are unrecognized, and an integral part of the plot focuses on his convincing others that they are wrong, and he is right. It is not a whimsical, playful story, but rather a serious and didactic one.

Another important shift during this time was that the state encouraged children to direct their loyalties from the family to the collective. In a sense, this was true of everyone in the Great Leap Forward communes. We can see this shift in storybooks from the time that depict contentious relationships between children and their families. Not only were children sometimes encouraged to ignore the advice of parental figures, but they were also sometimes depicted as criticizing parental figures.

In the storybook "A Bowl of Soybeans," published in 1959, Xiaoping is a twelve-year-old orphan, raised by her grandmother. She is a good student and member of the Young Pioneers. She loves soybeans, and one day her grandmother takes some from the collective fields to cook for her. She realizes that she should report her grandmother for stealing, but if she does so, Xiaoping could lose the only person who takes care of her. In the end, Xiaoping remembers that the commune is her family, and that as a Young Pioneer, she must do what is right and report her

grandmother.[39] She wraps her red scarf—a sign of her membership in the Young Pioneers—around herself, and writes a big character poster criticizing her grandmother.

In this story, as well as that of Shang Machao, we can see that in some materials for children, state organizations such as communes or the Young Pioneers have begun to replace family as the primary bond. Xiaoping is portrayed as having greater loyalty to the commune than her grandmother. Xiaoping, like many model children in storybooks, is an orphan, and therefore has fewer family bonds to break if necessary to support the state. At this time, even children with living parents were often separated from them, as adults were often very busy engaging in production during the socialist era, so teachers and Young Pioneer counselors often stepped in and performed roles that had formerly fallen to mothers or other familial caregivers. In stories such as Xiao Ping's, children were being portrayed as having a direct, unmediated relationship with the state, through its organizations.

Xiao Ping's criticism of her grandmother is particularly troubling because of the unspoken context of the story: rural communes after the Great Leap Forward were the site of terrible famine and death. It is likely that 30 million people died during the Great Leap Famine.[40] Many of the millions who died were children. The median age

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[39] "Yi wan maodoujiao" [A bowl of soybeans], Zhengzhou: Henan People's Publishing House, April 1959. Cotsen Children's Library, B-000003, Pams/NR/Chinese/No. 12.

[40] One source, on "incorrect sentences" in Tianjin's juvenile corrections system (covered in more detail in Chapter Five) notes that one teenaged boy's transgressions included complaining in politics class that the Great Leap policy of "unified purchase

of death dropped precipitously between 1957 and 1963, during which the Famine killed millions, including adults in their prime, but the young and vulnerable most especially.[41] Furthermore, although the Leap ended in 1961, the years of malnutrition continued to afflict rural residents, children in particular.

Xiao Ping's grandmother's motivation for stealing crops and feeding them to her granddaughter was written about as a mild grandmotherly habit of spoiling her granddaughter, but most contemporary readers would have understood that the real reason that parents and grandparents stole crops at this time was to feed their starving children, although hunger and deprivation were taboo in all published materials. In this story, Xiaoping, whose grandmother may be trying to protect her life, was deputized to go after her on the state's behalf. While for the most part the state encouraged children to contribute positively to production by collecting scrap metal or killing pests, at other moments children could also be deployed against their elders at a time when scarcity was producing tensions between adults and the state.

Despite these material and discursive changes, within school and the Young Pioneers, teachers and Young Pioneer counselors rewarded actual children for a set of values that was very similar to that of the early 1950s. The capable, independent child who was smarter and more competent than the adults around her was mostly featured in stories and newspaper articles. Within school and the Young Pioneers, model

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and unified distribution" had resulted in not enough food to eat. See TMA, File: X53-C-1731-1, "Guanyu jiancha shaonian fanguansuo gongzuo qingkuang he anjian qingkuang de baogao" [A report on inspections of the juvenile corrections facility work situation and the situation of incidents], December, 1960.

[41] Spence, *The Search for Modern China*, 523.

children and Exemplary Young Pioneers were generally chosen for fulfilling the demands set by parents, teachers, and counselors. They might fulfill these demands in extreme ways, sacrificing any free time and devoting themselves to serving the people in every waking movements, but children were nonetheless rewarded for their actions within institutional and familial structures.

Models of the Great Leap Forward are reminiscent of the "Exemplary Young Pioneers" of the New Democracy period, usually studious and collectively minded youth who participated in labor, particularly within the home, and used their time outside of school in constructive ways. In a Young Pioneer report from 1960, team leaders (*xiaoduizhang*)—a minor leadership role generally given to high-achieving and disciplined children—were praised for their "love of work, setting a good example, and taking care of their team members." Young Pioneer counselors praised whole teams for their work in helping each other successfully complete their homework, clean their neighborhoods, and tidy their own households.[42] Other children were praised for using their more specific talents in politically useful or productive ways, such as Li Minggao, an eleven-year-old boy who was praised for his drumming skills and how seriously he took the responsibility of drumming at the local Youth

[42] SMA, File C21-2-1641-26, "Zhongguo Shaonian Xianfengdui Shanghai shi Hongkou qu Di San Zhongxin Xiaoxue dadui weiyuanhui tianbao de Hongkou timing biaoyang de duiyuan ji jiti de youxiu shiji biao" [A list of exemplary achievements of the members and groups in Hongkou district, filled out by the No. 3 Central Primary School's Brigade Committee of the Hongkou district, Shanghai, China Young Pioneers], 1960.

Palace.[43] In short, children were rewarded for taking care of their peers and contributing to the collective.

The case of Xu Guiying, a thirteen-year-old girl from Hongkou district, Shanghai, manifests many of thesame traits desired during the first eight years of the PRC. Xu, chosen as an Exemplary Young Pioneer in 1960, was praised for her studiousness, her love of labor, and her collective attitude. Every day she came to school early to clean the classroom and prepare materials for her teacher, and at home she helped her parents with housework and taking care of her younger siblings. She also helped her elderly neighbor shop for and cook her food. However, in addition to all these good deeds, Xu also performed more extreme displays of her dedication to the collective.

In a poignant series of anecdotes, the report described how Xu helped a paralyzed classmate get to and from school, assisted her with household chores, and even carried the girl home from school on her back during a rainstorm. Xu's entire day was taken up by her studies and the labor she performed for others.[44] She was an exemplary model of a young socialist, always thinking about and working for the

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[43] SMA, File C21-2-1239-2, "Zhongguo Shaonian Xianfengdui Shanghai shi Luwan qu Di Si Shifan Xuexiao fushu xiaoxue dadui weiyuanhui tianbao de 1958 nian Shanghai shi sixiang huodong jijifenzi dengjika" [Activist registration cards for Shanghai's 1958 "four-item movement" filled out by the No. 4 Normal School's attached primary school's brigade committee of the Luwan district, Shanghai, China Young Pioneers], 1958.

[44] SMA, File C21-2-2253-51, "Shanghai shi Hongkou qu Tangshan Lu Xiaoxue tianbao de timing biaoyang de Shaoxiandui jiti ji shaoxiandui de youxiu shiji biao (Xu Guiying)" [Shanghai city Hongkou district, Tangshan Road Primary School's report of the accomplishments of specially mentioned Young Pioneer groups and individuals], 1963.

collective, and constantly engaged in constructive activities, leaving no time for bad influences or misbehavior. Xu's story is similar in many ways to earlier stories of Exemplary Young Pioneers, but we can also see that the lengths to which a child must go to be considered exemplary became more extreme. The model child was no longer just hard-working and studious, but now she performed physical feats of heroism.

Children in an Imperiled Revolution, 1961-1966

After the Great Leap Forward campaigns and policies were cast aside in the wake of the Great Leap Forward famine, children were less often characterized as capable participants in production, and more often as successors to, and defenders of, the revolution. According to Chen Jian, after the Sino-Soviet split in the 1960s, Mao and his allies within the CCP saw the USSR as "a potential enemy," and used the specter of Soviet-style revisionism to "mobiliz[e] the Chinese people to sustain [Mao's] continuous revolution."[45] Children were used as tools to mobilize the masses, even as they themselves were also expected to take part in the defense of the revolution.[46]

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[45] Jian Chen, *Mao's China and the Cold War* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2001), 84.

[46] For a better sense of the international context and China's role in the Cold War, see Jeremy Scott Friedman, *Shadow Cold War: The Sino-Soviet Competition for the Third World* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2015); Austin Jersild, *The Sino-Soviet Alliance: An International History*, The New Cold War History (Chapel Hill, [North Carolina]: The University of North Carolina Press, 2014); Odd Arne Westad, *The Global Cold War: Third World Interventions and the Making of Our Times* (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005).

Children would likely have understood, or at least known about, many of these events. Storybooks and periodicals had always kept children up to date on international affairs, providing an account of American aggression and imperialism in the Korean[47] and Vietnam Wars,[48] as well as the dire straits of black and working-class Americans.[49] In the early 1960s, the Juvenile and Children's Publishing House carried books about the Bay of Pigs invasion in Cuba.[50]

Prior to the Sino-Soviet Split, the Juvenile and Children's Publishing House published many children's books with advice from Lenin, pictures of a friendly Stalin playing with children, and Russian folk tales. This changed after 1960. *Children's Era* carried an article titled "We are not the same as the USSR," to explain some of

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[47] *Zhongguo renmin zhiyuanjun zai Chaoxian* [The Chinese People's Volunteer Army in Korea], Chenguang Publishing Company, June 1951. Cotsen Children's Library, 75102, Pams/NR 20/Chinese/Box 83; *Zhiyuanjun kuandai fulu* [The Volunteer Army treats prisoners of war kindly], Chenguang Publishing Company, July 1951. Cotsen Children's Library, 75101, Pams/NR 20/Chinese/Box 83; Cotsen Children's Library, 75134, Pams/NR 20/Chinese/Box 81, *Mei jun zai Chao de baoxing he Mei fu* [The American army's atrocities in Korea and American prisoners of war," Chenguang Publishing Company, January 1951.

[48] *Hu Bobo de haizi: Nanfang de gushi* [Uncle Hu (Chi Minh)'s children: Southern stories], Shanghai: Juvenile and Children's Publishing House, May, 1957. Cotsen Children's Library, 67726, Pams/NR 20/Chinese/Box 183.

[49] *Meiguo dalaoban* [The American big boss], Shanghai: Juvenile and Children's Publishing House, July 1954. Cotsen Children's Library, 154322, Pams/NR/Chinese/Box 280/Item 36; *Wo shi ge Meiguo heiren haizi* [I am a black American child], Beijing: Wenzigaige Publishing House, July 1960. Cotsen Children's Library, 66487, Pams/NR 20/Chinese/Box 150; *Heiren de kongsu* [Black people's accusations], Nanjing: Jiangsu People's Publishing House, May 1965. Cotsen Children's Library, 71820, Pams/NR 20/Chinese/Box 105.

[50] *Guba tan* [The beach in Cuba], Shanghai: Junevile and Children's Publishing House, Nov. 1962. Cotsen Children's Library, 67797, Pams/NR 20/Chinese/Box 239.

the ideological differences between the PRC and the USSR and the Sino-Soviet split.[51] An important part of the discursive project to shape children into future socialist citizens was informing them about international affairs and China's place within the global context. However, the tone of these accounts and stories became more militant and strident as the 1960s unfolded.

The ideal socialist child during the 1960s was distinct from both the happy, studious, obedient child of the first few years and the active, autonomous child of the Great Leap Forward. During the 1960s, the ideal socialist child was not necessarily focused on participating in production or making scientific advances. Rather, he or she was focused on cultivating a revolutionary ideological standpoint, and finding possible enemies of the revolution. The biography of Liu Wenxue, for example, showed up often in children's stories and periodicals, as well as in the accounts that children wrote about themselves, and how they were expected to behave. Liu Wenxue, a fourteen-year-old boy from Sichuan, was killed in 1959. According to an account published in *Little Friend* in June 1960, he caught a former landlord stealing peppers from the collective fields. After he confronted the landlord and threatened to expose his theft, the man killed Liu. The police quickly found and executed the former landlord for his crime.[52]

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[51] "Women he Suliande bu yiyang" [We are not the same as the USSR], *Ertong shidai* [Children's Epoch,] No. 17: Sept. 1961. Cotsen Children's Library, 35519.
[52] "Mao Zhuxi de hao haizi: Liu Wenxue" [Chairman Mao's good child: Liu Wenxue], *Xiao pengyou* [Little Friends], No. 12: June, 1960. Cotsen Children's Library, 153026.

In this account, published shortly after Liu's death, the situation is resolved by the police. Liu Wenxue bravely tried to protect the collective fields, but in the end the landlord is only stopped by a more powerful, adult authority. There is also no didactic conclusion, entreating children to do the same as Liu. Indeed, there had been other stories about martyred children who had been publicized through the first decade of the PRC, including most notably Liu Hulan, whose story had been omnipresent, retold in operas, films (the 1950 version is discussed in Chapter Two), and books over the 1950s and 1960s.[53] The publication of such stories was not meant to incite children to do the same, but rather to show how horrible pre-liberation China was, and how bravely all Chinese people had participated in the revolution. Liu Wenxue's story began a departure from that theme. He had also died for the revolution, but *after* Liberation had occurred. The message to children had begun to change: the revolution is not over, and there is not a clear break between the old and new societies.

Stories of children dying for the socialist revolution more than a decade after a socialist government had been established blurred the state's sharp distinction between the "feudal old society" and the "New China." It also began laying the groundwork for children to once again fight for the Communist cause, as they had during the wartime years. If the old society had not actually been firmly and completely eradicated, and the enemies of the old society continued to pose a threat, then the war for liberation had not actually ended. The publication of Liu Wenxue's account in 1960 marks a return to a wartime mentality and the beginnings of a call to

[53] Edwards, *Women Warriors and Wartime Spies of China*, 181–82.

battle. However, that moment had not quite yet arrived in 1960. The effects of international turmoil and the split within the Party after the failure of the Great Leap Forward had only just begun to appear in children's literature. The implicit message of this account seemed to be that children should admire Liu Wenxue and be aware the revolution's enemies were alive and well, but there was no call or exhortation yet for children to throw themselves into battle.

Nevertheless, by 1964, Liu Wenxue's "spirit of not fearing sacrifice" was explicitly held up as a model for children. The November 1964 issue of *Children's Era*, on the fifth anniversary of Liu's death, published an article about Liu and the lessons children should learn from his story. In particular, it specified that children should not fear "violent threats" (*baoli de weixie*) or sacrifice, and they should "remember class hatred" (*jieji chouhen*) and protect the revolution at "every moment" (*shike*).[54] Liu Wenxue's life was no longer a story simply to listen to and admire; his tale had become a blueprint for children's lives. This coincided with the beginning of the Socialist Education Movement in 1964. After the failure of the Great Leap Forward, national leaders worried that many cadres were engaging in corrupt activities and many peasants were engaging in small-scale capitalist sideline production and businesses. The central government officials decided that a Socialist

[54] "Xuexi Liu Wenxue de 'ying gutou' jingshen" [Study Liu Wenxue's spirit of "hard bones"], *Ertong shidai* [Children's Epoch,] No. 22: Nov. 16, 1964. Cotsen Children's Library, 35519.

Education Campaign was needed to promote socialist values, including collectivism, and to denounce harmful values, such as capitalism and extravagance.[55]

In that same 1964 issue of *Children's Era*, the story of another young person was printed: Dong Yunliang, who had read Liu Wenxue's story and modeled his own behavior after him. As a child in school, Dong—now seventeen years old—had particularly loved the stories of child heroes including Liu Wenxue, Liu Hulan, Huang Jiguang, and others. One day, when Dong was assigned to watch to corn field, he caught a man stealing some ripe corn. The man, described as a bandit, thief, and rapist, fought with Dong, but unlike in the story of Liu Wenxue, he did not manage to kill the boy. The man was soon caught, and Dong recovered in the hospital.[56] Here we can see direct evidence that Liu Wenxue's story was now meant to inspire children to model themselves after him in nearly every way, including risking their lives to protect the revolution, or more specifically, those that wanted to hurt the revolution and the people by stealing a snack in the collective fields. The stakes may seem low: a few peppers or ears of corn, but this seemingly petty theft was construed as serious counter-revolutionary behavior in state sources.

Here we can again see diverging discourses similar to those of the Great Leap Forward: children who acted independently were praised in storybooks, whereas children who worked hard and listened to authority figures were commended by the

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[55] Spence, *The Search for Modern China*, 530–31.
[56] "Buwei liren de xiao yingxiong" [The little hero who didn't fear the sharp sword], *Ertong shidai* [Children's Epoch,] No. 22: Nov. 16, 1964. Cotsen Children's Library, 35519.

Young Pioneers, schools, and work units. The major difference between the Great Leap Forward and the early 1960s is what these independent children were doing in storybooks. During the Great Leap Forward, they generally worked hard towards a production goal: finding iron or inventing new agricultural techniques. During the mid-1960s, children acted independently to confront enemies and defend the revolution. The storybook ideal for children had become much more militant and aggressive. This was tied to larger trends, according to which the revolution was under threat from within and without. Radio broadcasts and films featured stories of wartime child heroes such as Liu Hulan; Yan Xiufeng, more famously known by his childhood nickname Zhang Ga; and a group of Fujianese children who assisted the Eighth Route Army during the War of Resistance.[57]

Children were encouraged to also participate in the transmission of stories such as that of Liu Wenxue. A July 1964 issue of *Children's Era* described Chen Qiang, a Young Pioneer who worked as a storyteller for younger children. Chen both took Liu as a model for his own behavior and participated in transmitting that model to younger children.[58] Propaganda work was an important part of children's labor at this time. Publications in the mid-1960s pushed children to participate in spreading revolutionary messages. One collection of poems from 1964 featured poems about

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[57] "990 *qianzhou*" [990 KC], *Meizhou guangbo* [Weekly broadcast], Aug. 14, 1965.Stephanie Hemelryk Donald, "Children's Feature Film," ed. Edward L. Davis, *Encyclopedia of Contemporary Chinese Culture* (New York: Routledge, 2005).
[58] "Xiao gushi yuan" [The little story worker], *Ertong shidai* [Children's Epoch,] No. 14: July 1, 1964. Cotsen Children's Library, 35519.

different roles children could play in daily life. Besides acting as "little soldiers" and working to wash clothing or hoe the fields, children could also help by acting as "little broadcasters." The poem featured a little boy who climbed a tree, megaphone in one hand and broadcast sheet in the other, to spread propaganda to workers.[59] For scholar Stephanie Donald, children have a unique role in the consumption and transmission of political propaganda. In her discussion of children in political posters in the PRC, Donald finds that "children are doubly subjected. Their bodies are symbolically called into service of the state according to current requirements, while also carrying an emotional appeal to the adult spectatorship."[60] In the same way, in fulfilling the role of a little broadcaster, the boy in the poem is both laboring for the state, as well as calling adults around him to engage in productive labor. Adults also engaged in propaganda work at this time, but as a Shanghai Youth League report from 1958 suggested, children were considered more effective at spreading propaganda than adults, likely because of their "emotional appeal."[61]

In the magazine *Children's Era*, the words "red" and "revolutionary" began appearing in every article title. The winter 1961 issue has pieces titled, "A revolutionary life is an example; be a red youth starting when you are young," "Red

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[59] *Xiao bing* [The little soldier], May, 1964. Cotsen Children's Library, B-000001, Pams/NR 20/Chinese/Box 306/Item 33.
[60] Donald, "Children as Political Messengers: Art, Childhood, and Continuity," 83.
[61] SMA, File: C21-2-1221-31, "Gongqingtuan Shanghai shi wei guanyu xuexiaotuan, dui ganbu zai sixiang zuofeng he gongzuo fangfa shang cunzai de jige wenti de baogao" [A Communist Youth League, Shanghai committee report on a few issues that exist in the thinking, habits, and work methods of school teams and Youth League cadres], Sept. 1958.

seeds," and "Red youth speeches."[62] Children were being depicted as politically active revolutionaries, with increasingly militant and politically engaged models put forth for children's behavior.

Not only was the ideal child modeled in these stories similar to that of the World War II and civil war era, but children's publications featured stories from the wartime years. One article from 1961 exhorts children to "study the red youth from the Yan'an era."[63] According to this article, children and youth during the Yan'an era "actively participated in every political movement" and "together with the adults, heeded the Party's calls."[64] In 1963, *Children's Era* began running a comic serial called "Second Child." Second Child was a young boy who lived during the pre-Liberation era, and he endured all kinds of hardships because of this. The two major themes of these cartoons were that the pre-Liberation days were terrible, and that in order to preserve the current state of Liberation, everyone must heed the Party's call.

The first issue in 1963 featured Second Child putting his family's lamb out to pasture, only to come back later and find that the landlord had stolen it.[65] Eventually

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[62] *Ertong shidai* [Children's Epoch,] No. 8: April 16, 1961. Cotsen Children's Library, 35519.
[63] "Xiang Yan'an shidai de hongse shaonian xuexi" [Study the red youth from the Yan'an era], *Ertong shidai* [Children's Epoch,] No. 1-2: Jan.-Dec. 1961. Cotsen Children's Library, 35519.
[64] "Xiang Yan'an shidai de hongse shaonian xuexi" [Study the red youth from the Yan'an era], *Ertong shidai* [Children's Epoch,] No. 1-2: Jan.-Dec. 1961. Cotsen Children's Library, 35519.
[65] "Er Wazi" [Second Child], *Ertong shidai* [Children's Epoch,] No. 1: Jan. 1, 1963. Cotsen Children's Library, 35519.

his father is forcibly conscripted by the GMD,[66] and Second Child is forced to work for the landlords.[67] Second Child learns to fight back, however, retaliating against both the landlords and the GMD. He finds a store of guns hidden by local elites,[68] lights some fireworks to alert the Red Army, and is saved by the Red Army and reunited with his father, who has since joined the Communists.[69] In these stories, Second Child models both how children in China suffered before the PRC was founded, and the aggressive tactics necessary to defeat the CCP's enemies.

Other stories about capable and independent children with an unmediated relationship to the state demonstrated the state's effectiveness as a parental proxy. In a 1965 issue of *Children's Era*, a 6th-grade boy named Li Yansong wrote an essay about how fortunate he was to be living in New China. Li's parents and grandparents all died by the time he was 11 *sui*, and so he was an orphan. He wrote that his life would have been hard like that of Lei Feng, but because the Chinese Communist state had brought about a New Society, he was instead fed and clothed well, and received a good education.

Lei Feng was an orphan who lived a hard life as a child pre-Liberation, but later joined the Communist Youth League and later People's Liberation Army. He

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[66] "Er Wazi" [Second Child], *Ertong shidai* [Children's Epoch,] No. 3: Feb. 1, 1963. Cotsen Children's Library, 35519.
[67] "Er Wazi" [Second Child], *Ertong shidai* [Children's Epoch,] No. 12: June 1, 1963. Cotsen Children's Library, 35519.
[68] "Er Wazi" [Second Child], *Ertong shidai* [Children's Epoch,] No. 1: Jan. 1, 1964. Cotsen Children's Library, 35519.
[69] "Er Wazi" [Second Child], *Ertong shidai* [Children's Epoch,] No. 3: Feb. 1, 1964. Cotsen Children's Library, 35519.

was devoted to the CCP, and was a model worker and soldier, receiving multiple awards. His early hardships and devotion to his work and the Party were the subject of many newspaper articles, including in the *Liaoning Daily*, *Shenyang Daily*, and the *People's Daily*. However, not until after his death in 1962 did Mao and the PLA elevate Lei Feng to the status of national model. After he died on the job, his diaries were published as examples of good morality and correct behavior—usually, selflessly serving the Party and other people. In 1963, the campaign to "Study Lei Feng" began, one that continues to be promoted yearly in the twenty-first century PRC.[70] It is possible that his status, recorded accomplishments, and curated story as a model worker, soldier, and Party member during his life made Lei Feng easier to deploy as a model in death. Lei Feng was both a model of how to be a good Party member, worker, soldier, and member of society, but he was also a model of how to consume models. In his posthumously published, and possibly apocryphal, diary, he wrote about his admiration of other state-promoted models and heroes, and how much he aspired to be like them.[71]

Li contrasted Lei Feng's difficult childhood with his own privileged upbringing after losing his family. Li wrote that when he was sick, his teachers and the commune took excellent care of him, taking him to the hospital and paying for all his expenses. In particular, he notes that his class's head teacher stayed with him all

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[70] John W. Ruwitch, "Lei Feng and the 'Learn from Lei Feng' Campaign of 1963: Mao, PRC Politics, and Hagiography as a Political Tool" (M.A thesis, University of California, Santa Cruz, 1996), 6–8.
[71] Ruwitch, 12.

through the night when he was particularly ill.[72] From this story, we can see children's testimony being used to show other children, as well as the population at large, how to be grateful for their situation. Li's story manifests the successes of the Chinese socialist revolution, drawing a material contrast between the difficult and penurious pre-Liberation life of an orphan like Lei Feng, and the ease and generosity that Li himself experienced upon the death of his family.

Li's story also shows the importance of certain key adult figures. The head teacher, often the Chinese language arts teacher, was in charge of many of the administrative tasks such as communicating with parents, as well as practical matters relating to children's lives, including taking young children to and from school or organizing homework groups for the students. In Li's case, the head teacher goes beyond these more mundane tasks to prove his or her indispensability and dedication by doing the work that would have been done by Li's parents. Since parents were often very busy engaging in production during the socialist era, teachers did often step in and perform roles that had formerly fallen to mothers or other familial caregivers. In this case, Li's head teacher steps up to act as a parent figure without hesitation. The major change during the first few years of the PRC had been the shift to institutionalization, with state departments and Party organizations structuring much of children's daily lives. During the Great Leap, younger children were also brought into the population would should properly be institutionalized. Although the

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[72] Li Yansong, "Wo ye you xingfu de tongnian" [I also have a fortunate childhood], *Ertong shidai* [Children's Epoch,] No. 19, October 1, 1965. Cotsen Children's Library, 35519.

Leap had failed, the idea that non-familial institutions and figures might be best suited to rear children continued.

As they had in the early 1950s, state officials worried a great deal about the type of media that children consumed and the type of person who reared them. Education officials worried in particular about uneducated grandparents and housewife mothers who might impart backward thinking, superstition, and other problematic ideologies. With the increasing precariousness of China's place in the international world and the instability within the worldwide socialist coalition, as well as the domestic conflict over how China should develop domestically, these issues once again rose to prominence. A collection of children's writings published in 1965 contained essays written by children about what kind of information was appropriate to consume. For example, one essay was titled, "Definitely don't listen to that kind of talk." The collection also featured an essay written by Xu Fang, a student in the first year of junior high, about what kinds of stories one should tell. Xu wrote about how he loved to listen to their grandfather's ghost stories. He knew that such stories were not real, and although his parents tried to convince him that these kinds of stories were harmful, it was not until his teacher reprimanded him for repeating them to other students that he realized the error of his ways. Not only did Xu decide limit himself to listening to and telling stories with state-approved educational value, but he also convinced his grandfather to do the same.[73]

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[73] *Shaonian lunwen xuan* [Selections of youth writing], May 1965. Cotsen Children's Library, 75906, Pams/NR 20/Chinese/Box 185.

This marked the seriousness of feudal or superstitious stories—they should not even be listened to, much less told—as well as a new responsibility for children. They should not only obediently listen to the lessons taught by authority figures, but they were also now responsible for discerning the correct type of information, passing it along to others, and re-educating their elders. Children had been given a role as arbiter of what was politically correct, and what was politically harmful. They had already been told via Great Leap Forward-era storybooks that they might need to disregard the advice of adults at times, and even to denounce them for politically backward behavior.

However, in daily life, schools and the Young Pioneers continued to choose as models children who were mostly obedient, studious, and hardworking, rather than those who engaged in life-threatening heroics. Multiple models for children circulated during the mid-1960s including that of the heroically self-sacrificing revolutionary, like Liu Wenxue, and the quietly hardworking do-gooder, like Lei Feng. In 1964, in Fuxing Secondary School in Shanghai, Gao Xiaoxin, age fourteen, was chosen as an Exemplary Young Pioneer, and his behavior fit the Lei Feng model. The Young Pioneer report described him as a good student who loved the Party and was constantly reading the works of Mao. He also read the speeches given by Communist Youth League leaders, attended Young Pioneer events, and was preparing to apply to the Communist Youth League. The specific anecdotes that illustrated his selflessness

and devotion to others were mundane incidents, including the time Gao used his own money to buy a bolt for the classroom door after it kept blowing open during class.[74]

Most children, perhaps, had few opportunities for selfless sacrifice like that of Liu Wenxue or Dong Yunliang, and so Lei Feng, the quiet do-gooder, seemed to be the dominant model for actual children to emulate. Gao, like Lei Feng, was praised for studying hard and selflessly helping those around him, not fighting battles in the fields. Lei Feng's everyday diligence was much easier for most children to achieve in their daily lives. He was, as John Ruwitch notes, "the peacetime embodiment of a revolutionary," albeit at a time when peace seemed threatened.[75] The Lei Feng model provided a practical and safe way for children to contribute to the revolution, and it also fit within most teachers' and parents' expectations that children would be studious, hard-working, and obedient to authority figures. One can imagine that most parents especially did not want their children to risk death or injury defending the collective fields.

State officials had their own goals and concerns. Given the great responsibilities being handed to children, as well as their importance as future citizens, many officials began to privately worry that this post-1949 generation was not ready to inherit the revolution. They were supposed to be a fully "red" generation,

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[74] SMA, File: C21-2-2506, "Gongqingtuan Shanghai shiwei shaonianbu dui Hongkou qu youxiu shaoniandui jiti ji youxiu shaoxianduiyuan biaoyang cailiao" [Laudatory materials from the Communist Youth League's Shanghai Committee's Youth Division in Hongkou district about exemplary Young Pioneers Groups and Exemplary Young Pioneers,] June 1964.

[75] Ruwitch, "Lei Feng and the 'Learn from Lei Feng' Campaign of 1963: Mao, PRC Politics, and Hagiography as a Political Tool," 12.

raised after the new society was founded, but state officials worried that children and youth were falling short of the ideal socialist child in important ways. Young Pioneer officials saw children sneaking out after school to avoid participating in Red Scarf activities and education officials worried that students lacked a proletarian attitude. According to official reports, bourgeois movies from Hong Kong continued to be popular, , urban students were dropping out before even finishing primary school and becoming vagrants or street peddlers, and cities were expanding their work-study schools to manage all the children who were sent to that system after behavior problems in regular schools. In short, state officials had serious concerns about these successors to the socialist revolution, and they were not entirely sure how to proceed. Chapter Five will detail official concerns about the next generation of revolutionary successors and subsequent state efforts to correct the ideology and behavior of deviant children and youth.

Chapter Five

Mischief, Crime, and Punishment, 1956-1966

In our society, even though there are some youth who are poisoned by capitalist ideology, have serious shortcomings, and commit serious errors, they need only to quickly face up to their shortcomings and errors. By drawing a lesson from these setbacks, they can become the motherland's good daughters and sons.

In our society, every person is willing to extend a hand in enthusiasm, to rescue or assist… their comrades, to care for and help their continued progress. Every person feels great joy at the smallest steps forward taken by someone who has stumbled.

In our society, youth who have committed errors will not be ruined after a single setback. They should not feel despondent, hang their heads, or shed tears. [Rather,] they should be full of confidence as they overcome their shortcomings, and continue to bravely forge ahead. Lessons are collected from mistakes. Every person's progress will surely receive support and assistance from every angle.

We want to tell you these things. We hope, and even believe, that you will certainly become one of the motherland's useful and talented people.[1]

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[1] SMA, File: C32-2-83, "Qingniantuan Shanghai shiwei, Shanghai shi Qinglian guanyu gei shizu qingnian Ma Xiaoyan zai Yingxia Tielu jianzhu gongcheng zhong

This letter to a former delinquent youth, Ma Xiaoyan, was written in 1956 by the Shanghai branch of the Communist Youth League and its umbrella organization, the All-China Youth Federation. Ma had been convicted of being a "hooligan thief" (*liumang daofei*) a year earlier,[2] but had now turned his life around by working on an infrastructure project, a railway line connecting Yingtan and Xiamen.[3] Although he was likely older than 18 when arrested, the ideas in the letter applied to both youth and children.[4] As already noted, the overarching idea about children during the early Maoist years was that there was no "innate" human nature or talent. This meant that with the proper upbringing, education, and environment, all children could be raised to be smart, hard-working, and patriotic. Without a fixed human nature, even children and youth who made mistakes could be reformed into productive workers and

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shou ligong biaozhang de guli xin" [An encouraging letter from the Shanghai Communist Youth League and the Shanghai All-China Youth Federation to commend the juvenile delinquent Ma Xiaoyan's meritorious contributions to the Yingxia Railroad], July 27, 1956.

[2] SMA, File: A80-2-108-43, "Qingniantuan Shanghai shiwei bangongshi guanyu Fang Zhen, Zhou Ruifu deng shisan liumang daofei chuli wenti de tongbao," [A Shanghai Communist Youth League Office report on handling the problem of the 13 vagrant bandits including Fang Zhen and Zhou Ruife], March 15, 1955.

[3] This railway line is over 500 miles away from Shanghai, his hometown. Ma was sent quite far away to perform this labor. SMA, File: C32-2-83, "Qingniantuan Shanghai shiwei, Shanghai shi Qinglian guanyu gei shizu qingnian Ma Xiaoyan zai Yingxia Tielu jianzhu gongcheng zhong shou ligong biaozhang de guli xin" [An encouraging letter from the Shanghai Communist Youth League and the Shanghai All-China Youth Federation to commend the juvenile delinquent Ma Xiaoyan's meritorious contributions to the Yingxia Railroad], July 27, 1956.

[4] Although Ma's age was not listed, of Ma's fellow "vagrant bandits" for whom there was an age given, all were between the ages of eighteen and thirty.

revolutionary successors. Misbehaving children and criminal youth, however, challenged these ideas on the part of state officials.

This chapter examines misbehaving and criminal children in Shanghai and Tianjin from 1956 to 1966, a time when the development of children and youth was under heightened scrutiny. As the requirements for a good socialist child were raised ever higher during the Great Leap Forward, and more responsibility for the revolution was laid on children's shoulders during the late 1950s, it became increasingly difficult for children to live up to these standards. If we look at representations of children at this time, heroic children in storybooks made scientific innovations and defended the revolution. In daily life, model children chosen by Young Pioneer leaders helped with family and neighborhood duties. These standards changed after 1959 in response to the failure of the Great Leap Forward and cracks in the global socialist coalition, when there were top-level fears that socialist construction was falling apart. In Department of Education documents from the late 1950s and early 1960s, officials voiced concerns that children born into the new socialist society lacked the revolutionary experiences, political consciousness, and proletarian values necessary to be successors to the revolution. Raising "revolutionary successors" who could continue to make revolution in this uncertain period was more necessary than ever. However, this process could go terribly wrong if harmful influences were allowed to affect children's development, and therefore the process required vigilance on the part of educators and state officials.

Furthermore, as we saw in Chapter Three, the state pushed to expand and further politicize education beginning in 1956-1957, creating a great deal of chaos and stress for teachers and school administrators. From the push for expanded educational access in the late 1950s to the Great Leap Forward, there were rapid changes in both the national environment and educational policy. In this fraught environment, deviant children and their impertinence and even criminal behavior played on the concerns of already overtaxed officials and teachers who were being assigned more of the blame for wayward children, at the same time that their class sizes swelled.

As a part of this post-Great Leap Forward focus on children and youth, the Party began paying particular attention to the behavior and attitude of its young people, and found some of them to be less than ideal. As one 1962 report about the state of children and youth in Shanghai from the municipal branch of the Communist Youth League stated, "some prominent problems have even emerged, and a few [children and youth] have degenerated into criminals."[5] The examples given ranged from mild—children who admired capitalist Hong Kong and described it as "heaven" (*tiantang*)—to very serious, including theft and murder. Although these types of ideological and behavioral problems were attributed to a small minority of young

[5] SMA, File: C21-2-2014-3, "Pan Wenzheng guanyu yiding yao yong jieji he jieji douzhen guandian qu wuzhuang shaonianertong de fayan gao" [A draft of a speech by Pan Wenzheng about the definite need to use class and class warfare viewpoints to arm youth and children], 1962.

people, the report warned that "the situation is still extremely serious."[6] This chapter will examine children who played hooky, misbehaved, and committed crimes ranging from petty theft to violent assaults. By looking at how the state defined "problem" behavior, we can also see the behavioral norms at this time, which often included not only the type of activity or behavior, but where and under whose supervision they were done.

This chapter will also look at how the state attempted to put into place a coherent system of reform for young people who committed criminal offenses. A formalized Criminal Code of the PRC was not put forward until 1979, but by 1957, it had become clear that a national "system of punishment that could achieve the goals of the criminal law" was needed, including for juvenile offenders.[7] That year, state officials released the Security Administration Punishment Act, for "minor unlawful acts" that did not reach the level of criminal offenses, and the "Lectures on the General Principles of Criminal Law of the People's Republic of China," a published discussion of criminal law written by scholars at the Teaching and Research Office for Criminal Law at the Central Political-Legal Cadres' School in Beijing.[8] Together, these two works give us a general picture of how PRC officials in the late 1950s

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[6] SMA, File: C21-2-2014-3, "Pan Wenzheng guanyu yiding yao yong jieji he jieji douzhen guandian qu wuzhuang shaonianertong de fayan gao" [A draft of a speech by Pan Wenzheng about the definite need to use class and class warfare viewpoints to arm youth and children], 1962.

[7] Jerome Alan Cohen, *The Criminal Process in the People's Republic of China, 1949-1963: An Introduction* (Cambridge, MA and London: Harvard University Press, 1968), 82.

[8] Cohen, 58, 202.

thought criminal and deviant youth should be treated, although in practice there was no clear system for reforming and sentencing young offenders, and, as we can see from municipal-level reports, local actors sometimes dealt with problem children in ways that diverged from central state dicta.

Revolutionary Successors Gone Astray

During the 1960s, state officials grew increasingly concerned about its young people and their viability as "revolutionary successors." This phrase began to circulate widely in the mid-1960s, especially during the Socialist Education Movement. In 1962, the phrase "cultivation of revolutionary successors" began to appear in *Zhongguo qingnian*, the official newspaper of the Communist Youth League, as part of a shift in the official consideration of the importance of childhood and youth. It was most widely used in 1964, during the Socialist Education Movement. During this uncertain period, officials were preparing the state and its people for a generations-long struggle, as the revolution was not proceeding as quickly and smoothly as state planners had hoped. At the same time, officials began arguing that "no one develops Communist morality or revolutionary spirit naturally, not even those who are raised in socialist society."[9] This created a new and urgent emphasis on the proper education and cultivation of children and youth.

[9] James R. Townsend, "Revolutionizing Chinese Youth: A Study of Chung-Kuo Ch'ing-Nien," in *Chinese Communist Politics in Action*, ed. A. Doak Barnett (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1969), 461. According to Townsend, following the failure of the Great Leap Forward, in 1962 the Party revised its expectation that class conflict in China would be resolved in a matter of a few years.

We can see the heightened concern with the behavior of young people during this time period in the attention given to the extracurricular lives of students at Shanghai's Huaihai Middle Road Primary School. During the 1960s, state institutions were focused on giving children a proletarian education during and after the formal school day. During the fifth meeting of the Shanghai Communist Youth League in 1962, for instance, one report praised Young Pioneer leaders for taking children to the Bund to show them the effects of imperialism by touring the imposing row of European-style office buildings that had housed foreign banks and hotels before 1949.[10] Children who skipped their structured extracurricular activities, or schools that did not organize any activities, were thus a particular thorn in the sides of state officials who had no hope of influencing children if they were not around to be influenced.

While state officials had begun to link time spent unsupervised outside of school with problem behavior that they saw as threatening the future of the Communist revolution, many non-state actors disliked this large amount of free time for personal and practical reasons.[11] For example, some urban residents disliked noisy and disruptive children running around all day. In a survey completed in 1964 in

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[10] SMA, File: C21-2-2014-3, "Pan Wenzheng guanyu yiding yao yong jieji he jieji douzhen guandian qu wuzhuang shaonianertong de fayan gao" [A draft of a speech by Pan Wenzheng about the definite need to use class and class warfare viewpoints to arm youth and children], 1962.

[11] SMA, File B105-7-859, "Shanghai shi jiaoyuju guanyu Shanghai shi san jie san ci rendaihui ti'an chuli qingkuang baogao" [The Shanghai Department of Education's report on the third meeting of the Third Shanghai People's Congress's draft resolution on handling the situation], 1960.

Tianjin, residents complained that after the two-shift system was implemented, children played with slingshots, fought, and yelled in the streets during their newly expanded free time.[12] After household study groups were established in Tianjin, neighborhood residents who participated in the 1964 survey declared the groups to be "really a good thing" (*zhen shi haoshi*).[13] Despite broad agreement about how young people should spend their time (and how they should *not* spend it, i.e. fighting in the streets) there were a number of barriers to organizing children's time that had not diminished since the early years of the PRC, when state officials first tried to bring all children into an institutional structure of schools and extracurricular activities.

Middle Huaihai Road Primary School's problems in organizing children's time after school were typical. The school was located in a busy commercial area; it had implemented the two-shift system; and most students came from households in which both parents worked outside the home during the day. Its location in a commercial district played into CCP fears about the contaminating influence of urban areas. In a 1962 Communist Youth League report from Shanghai, nearly every part of the city outside of school: the household, society, and the whole "outside world"—

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[12] TMA, File: X198-C-2100-4, "Jiaqiang xiaowai jiaoyu, zhanling kewai huodong zhendi jieshao Dong Sanjing Lu deng xiaode xingqiri julebu" [Strengthening extracurricular education and occupying the front of extracurricular activities by introducing the East Sanjing Road and other small Sunday leisure clubs], Nov. 5, 1964.

[13] TMA, File: X198-C-2100-4, "Jiaqiang xiaowai jiaoyu, zhanling kewai huodong zhendi jieshao Dong Sanjing Lu deng xiaode xingqiri julebu" [Strengthening extracurricular education and occupying the front of extracurricular activities by introducing the East Sanjing Road and other small Sunday leisure clubs], Nov. 5, 1964.

especially areas near markets—could seduce children into participating in immoral and illegal behavior such as theft, ticket scalping, and gambling.[14] Urban areas were portrayed as made up almost entirely of corrupting places, practices, and people, with schools and Young Pioneer activities presented as the few safe oases. Furthermore, despite state promotion of extracurricular activities for children on the two-shift school system since the early 1950s, the organization of these activities was difficult, and many schools had not attempted it, for reasons outlined below. This problem was not new in 1962, but it was given serious attention at that time.

According to a 1962 speech by one of the school's counselors, Zhang Ruixiang, given at the Shanghai Communist Youth League's Fifth Meeting on Young Pioneer Work, many of the children "ran wild in the streets" (*zai lu shang fengkuang*), failed to do their homework, and even in some cases ran away from home to become "street hooligans." The schools responded by attempting to organize "extracurricular small groups," but faced problems of implementation. Children at the Huaihai Middle Road Primary School sneaked out of these extracurricular activities. Teachers were sent out into the streets to round up the children, but as fast as teachers brought them in, children escaped out the back door.[15]

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[14] SMA, File: C21-2-2014-3, "Pan Wenzheng guanyu yiding yao yong jieji he jieji douzhen guandian qu wuzhuang shaonianertong de fayan gao" [A draft of a speech by Pan Wenzheng about the definite need to use class and class warfare viewpoints to arm youth and children], 1962.

[15] SMA, File: C21-2-2014-54, "Zhang Ruixiang guanyu yiding zhanling xiaowai shenghuo zhege zhendi de fayan gao" [A draft of Zhang Ruixiang's speech on occupying the battlefield of children's lives outside of school], Nov. 21, 1962.

The teachers decided to observe how children were spending their time, so they went out to the streets and lanes after school. They saw children with their noses pressed against bakery windows, running around shops, playing ball, and reading comic books. The teachers asked the children why they did not attend the after-school groups, and they apparently replied with candor: "The after-school groups aren't fun. We are always studying and there is nothing else to do. It's much more fun to play in the streets." The children requested that the small groups have lively activities, like their school's Young Pioneers activities.[16]

While the teachers learned much about the interests of their students, we can also learn about the desired behaviors for children at this time. Teachers wanted to create obedient, hard-working children through educational activities during and outside of school, and they thought the best way to do so was under their supervision. When teachers observed a child reading comic books, they did not praise the child for her reading habits. Rather, they saw a child absorbing information outside of a controlled context.[17] Similarly, when teachers saw a group of children playing ball in the streets, they did not applaud the teamwork, physical exercise, and creativity that could be involved in organizing and playing games. Instead, they voiced a need to create similarly lively activities within school-organized groups. Many of the

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[16] SMA, File: C21-2-2014-54, "Zhang Ruixiang guanyu yiding zhanling xiaowai shenghuo zhege zhendi de fayan gao" [A draft of Zhang Ruixiang's speech on occupying the battlefield of children's lives outside of school], Nov. 21, 1962. The school's Young Pioneers evidently organized fun and engaging activities for children, unlike those of Tianjin's Shuangkou Primary School, discussed in Chapter Three.

[17] These comics were all published by state-run or controlled printing presses, and contained content and messages of which the state approved.

pastimes in which children were engaging—unprompted and unorganized by adults—after school were very similar to those in which they might be asked to participate during structured activities. However, teachers and Young Pioneer counselors only thought these sorts of group activities and individual initiatives were desirable if they occurred under the umbrella of a state-sanctioned, adult-managed organizations.

This group of teachers came up with a plan for what must be done: the after-school groups must have rich and lively activities that engaged children, not just quiet study and homework. The children's avoidance of extracurricular activities had compelled the teachers to accommodate their desires. Many of the school's teachers, however, were unhappy at the mounting requirements on their time. Some complained that "right now we're supposed to be making the quality of education better, and we spend a lot of our time teaching, so we don't have time to develop [more] activities." One noted that if it was already not working well to supervise the few students who came to the groups, how could teachers plan supervised activities for even larger groups if more students attended?[18] Many of the teachers commented that how children behaved outside of school was the responsibility of their families and society at large.[19] They balked at the new expectation that they take responsibility for children's behavior and activities outside of school, in addition to their behavior and education during school.

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[18] At this school, some of the small study groups apparently took place at school. It is unclear how a two-shift school had the extra space and personnel to manage this.
[19] SMA, File: C21-2-2014-54, "Zhang Ruixiang guanyu yi ding yao zhanling xiaowai shenghuo zhege zhendi de fayan gao" [A draft of a speech by Zhang Ruixiang about the need to occupy the front of life outside of school], Nov. 21, 1962.

Without structured activities, however, education officials feared that children would never grow up into good citizens and revolutionary successors. The school endeavored to change the minds of its staff, and after meetings and discussions, the teachers reportedly were sufficiently convinced that "teachers are responsible for taking care of children and youth's well-rounded development, and that they ought to care about children's life outside of school." They agreed to try organizing after-school groups in conjunction with the Young Pioneers to make the process easier. These groups were called "Little Team Homes," "team" here referring to the smallest level of organization among Young Pioneers.

To test the idea, the teachers decided to organize a "Little Team Home" among a fourth-grade class made up mostly of the children of capitalists and the upper class, ostensibly because they lacked discipline and their "labor habits" (*laodong xiguan*) were poor. However, one could also wonder if these children's large and well-appointed homes were also a factor. Despite the Communist takeover in 1949, before the Cultural Revolution many wealthy families continued to live in much larger and more comfortable quarters than the working class.[20] The wealthy and the well-connected often had large and luxurious quarters.[21]

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[20] According to Nien Cheng, author of *Life and Death in Shanghai*, "the Party did not decree how the people should live. In fact, in 1949, when the Communist army entered Shanghai, we were forbidden to discharge our domestic staff lest we aggravate the unemployment problem." Nien Cheng, *Life and Death in Shanghai* (New York: Grove Press, 1986), 4.

[21] In 1950, Gu Zhun, an economist and accountant who worked for the Finance Ministry in Shanghai, and his family moved to a spacious Western-style estate—complete with a tennis lawn and two carriage houses, but they did share the property

Thus, the living quarters of many of the upper-class and capitalist families whose children attended Huaihai Middle Road Primary School were almost certainly larger and better appointed than those of nearby working-class neighborhoods. In the early 1960s, class labels such as "capitalist" might not have held any connection to the family's current relationship to capital or the means of production, as most factories and businesses had been nationalized by that point. Nevertheless, they often continued to live in their former neighborhoods, and enjoyed a higher standard of living than working class families. As Gu Zhun, who worked at the Finance Ministry in Shanghai wrote of his lifestyle in the 1950s and early to mid-1960s: "This kind of luxurious living reached the level of old Shanghai's big capitalists or great officials."[22] It is unclear from these documents whether the drive to create extracurricular organizations in upper-class neighborhoods was solely driven by anxieties about the class outlook of those students, or if it was also a matter of convenience.

Individual classes (*ban*) within each grade were often composed of children who lived near each other, helping with the organization process. A pair of brothers in the same class offered their house, but their parents were reluctant to host a group of ten or more children. After persuasion efforts by the teachers, they agreed to try

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with two other families. Christopher R. Leighton, "Venture Communist: Gu Zhun in Shanghai, 1949-1952," in *The Capitalist Dilemma in China's Communist Revolution*, ed. Sherman Cochran, Cornell East Asia Series 172 (Ithaca: Cornell University East Asia Program, 2014), 125.

[22] Leighton, 126. Gu Zhun wrote this during the Cultural Revolution, so he might have had reason to exaggerate the luxuriousness of his lifestyle to fit with the practice of self-criticism during that time.

hosting for one week, and the group was successful—engaging in both studying and games, and always cleaning up afterwards, according to the report. Soon the school convinced other parents to host the other "Little Team Homes."[23]

This process had worked well among these upper-class children, so the school also attempted to organize children who came from a working-class neighborhood: "Lane 108" on Chengdu Road. There, many families lived in such close proximity that the stairways and hallways of the buildings were usually stuffed full of belongings that would not fit inside everyone's homes, and during the summer children often slept outside on the street. Moreover, according to the report, families in this working-class neighborhood relied on their children to help out within the household, so for the relatively small amount of time that these children were not at school or helping around the house, they only wanted to play. The teachers seemed not to have considered that children who already, by necessity, possessed a strong work ethic and little free time might not need extracurricular activities. Despite the obstacles, the school managed to organize a "Little Team Home" for one of the third-grade classes whose children primarily came from this neighborhood—despite initial apathy and opposition on the part of already-harried parents—but it took quite a different form from the upper-class children's group. Instead of meeting in one of the children's homes, they met at the back of a small local shop where a board was set up

[23] SMA, File: C21-2-2014-54, "Zhang Ruixiang guanyu yi ding yao zhanling xiaowai shenghuo zhege zhendi de fayan gao" [A draft of a speech by Zhang Ruixiang about the need to occupy the front of life outside of school], Nov. 21, 1962.

to function as a makeshift table. Children only went to the group to complete their homework, and afterwards left to play freely in their neighborhood.[24]

School administrators saw the "Lane 108 Little Team Home" as evidence of their ability to overcome obstacles, and more broadly, as proof that that "humans can change their environment" (*ren keyi gaizao huanjing*).[25] However, there were obvious material and content differences between the two groups. Upper-class children likely met in spacious rooms within their homes to complete their homework and engage in games and activities planned by their teachers, while working-class children finished their homework at an improvised table before going home to help with household chores or briefly play in the streets. Although they participated in more labor—regarded by education officials as beneficial for developing into a model Communist citizen—working-class children had fewer opportunities for supplemental educational activities, putting them at a disadvantage when it came to academic grades and advancing to senior-primary—grades five and six—and secondary school.

During the 1950s and 1960s, most teachers were saddled with double shifts, given the ubiquitous two-shift school system and perpetual teacher shortages, and yet education officials still asked that they take responsibility for children's time and education outside of school. The time and effort devoted to these projects strongly

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[25] SMA, File: C21-2-2014-54, "Zhang Ruixiang guanyu yi ding yao zhanling xiaowai shenghuo zhege zhendi de fayan gao" [A draft of a speech by Zhang Ruixiang about the need to occupy the front of life outside of school], Nov. 21, 1962.

illustrates the state's desire to structure children's time as much as possible, despite opposition from teachers, parents, and children.

Furthermore, we can see that much of the responsibility for shaping children into good future socialist successors was given to teachers, regardless of how much time and effort that might require. For example, in February 1962, teachers debated how to handle disruptive students in the *Beijing Daily*. The teachers debated whether or not it was correct to ask a disruptive student to leave the classroom. The answers, as summarized in the *People's Education* journal, varied somewhat, from negative responses—no, the correct solution is to research the student's issues, and then patiently implement ideological education, and improve your classroom teaching style; to positive affirmations—yes, it is an acceptable solution when also paired with patiently educating the student; to the most flexible and agnostic—it depends on the student and the situation. Regardless, all acceptable solutions involved the teacher patiently educating the problem student as the main component. This was a time-consuming solution that relied entirely on the teacher. The end of the article did mention the need to coordinate with parents, but this was an aside in the larger article about how teachers should handle these situations.

Similarly, in the September 1965 issue of *People's Education*, another article discussed the best way to handle students who dozed off in class, fidgeted, or had trouble concentrating. According to the article, one of the most common ways of handling students such as this was to ask them to stand during class. But was this enough, the article asked? Indeed, as the article noted, students were not solely

responsible for this behavior; teachers shared some of the responsibility as well. If a teacher's lectures were lively and inspiring, they would hold the students' attention. Thus, teachers should not only ask students who were nodding off or fidgeting to stand in class, but they should also consider how they could improve their teaching methods.[26] During the 1960s, developing young people into studious, respectful adults was in large part the responsibility of teachers.[27]

Teachers were also responsible for the correct transmission of a proletarian class consciousness, one of the key attributes necessary for a revolutionary successor. The transmission of class consciousness and political ideology from parents to children was debated within the early years of the PRC, and teachers were sometimes divided on how best to serve students from different class backgrounds. In the August, 1965 issue of *People's Education*, Yi Xin, a teacher at a rural middle school, wrote a letter to the editor asking for help in teaching students from different class backgrounds. According to Yi Xin, at their school, some of the teachers treated students from poor and middle peasant backgrounds very differently from students with a landlord class label. If students with a peasant background were disruptive or did something wrong, the teachers were afraid to correct them. In addition, their teachers had low requirements for their academic performance, and often gave them uniformly high marks on tests. The opposite was true for the students with landlord

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[26] "Zenyang duidai xuesheng da keshui" [How to handle students who doze off], *Renmin jiaoyu* [People's education], September, 1965.
[27] "'Zenyang yange yaoqiu xuesheng' he 'zenyang jiaoyu zinü'" ['How to rigorously enforce demands on students' and 'How to educate children'], *Renmin jiaoyu* [People's education], February, 1962.

class labels. Teachers refrained from offering those students extra help or guidance, and barred them from participating in extracurricular activities. Yi Xin did not think this sort of pedagogical approach was correct and wanted guidance from the editor at *People's Education*. According to the editor:

> On the one hand, we should strengthen our education and training of workers and peasants and children with a strong class feeling. On the other hand, it is necessary to actively strive to educate and remold students who have originated in the exploiting class families so that they will betray the original class, draw a clear line with the exploiting class families and firmly follow the road of socialistic revolution.[28]

The article emphasized that even though the majority of children of workers and peasants would grow up with a correct class consciousness, they were still susceptible to "sneak attacks" (*qinxi*) from capitalist ideology, and thus teachers must never stop strengthening socialist ideological education. The editor further warned that if the mistakes and shortcomings of the children of workers and peasants were never corrected, then the teachers who acted this way were, in effect, ceding the "ideological front" (*sixiang zhendi*) to capitalism. On a more practical level, the editor admitted that despite the acquisition of a socialist class consciousness, the children of workers and peasants were more likely to have grown up in financially strapped households with parents who often had limited formal education. These led to

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[28] "Zenyang zhengque duidai jiating chushen butong de xuesheng?" [How to correctly treat students from different class backgrounds?], *Renmin jiaoyu* [People's education], August, 1965.

difficulties in school for those children, and if their teachers had low requirements for them and gave them good grades regardless of performance, their future career or ability to test into good schools would be compromised.[29] Therefore, the article emphasized, teachers must have high requirements for them and correct their mistakes.[30]

As for the children of bad classes--landlords, rich peasants, and capitalists--the article noted that although they came from exploitative households, the degree to which they absorbed that ideology varied, and furthermore, they were not the same as actual landlords, rich peasants, or capitalists, since none of them had ever participated in exploitation. Their behavior was more important than their class label, and thus they should be treated on an individual basis, but always educated into "walking the socialist road."[31] Whereas during the Cultural Revolution, bloodline theory—the idea that class was inherited—became popular, particularly in secondary schools, in 1965, one's family background was not yet considered determinative of one's class stance and ideology.[32] While the children of peasants and workers might have had some

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[29] "Zenyang zhengque duidai jiating chushen butong de xuesheng?" [How to correctly treat students from different class backgrounds?], *Renmin jiaoyu* [People's education], August, 1965.
[30] "Zenyang zhengque duidai jiating chushen butong de xuesheng?" [How to correctly treat students from different class backgrounds?], *Renmin jiaoyu* [People's education], August, 1965.
[31] "Zenyang zhengque duidai jiating chushen butong de xuesheng?" [How to correctly treat students from different class backgrounds?], *Renmin jiaoyu* [People's education], August, 1965.
[32] Yiching Wu, *The Cultural Revolution at the Margins: Chinese Socialism in Crisis* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2014).

advantage in receiving a correct class standpoint at home, all children, including those of "bad elements," were still considered capable of becoming revolutionary successors.

Even in the 1960s, however, not all children were in schools where they could be reached by the ostensibly transformative power of education and hard-working teachers. By 1965, the attendance rate for school-age children was 84.7 percent nationally, according to statistics from the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences. While this constituted an impressive increase from ten years earlier, when it was 53.8 percent, that still left over 17 million children not in school. There were also many children who graduated from primary school, generally around age twelve or thirteen, who did not have the opportunity to go to a secondary school. As discussed in Chapter Three, there were few secondary schools in proportion to primary schools, so graduation from a primary school was no guarantee that a child would advance to secondary school. These children who were unattached to any institution were out of the easy reach of the state.

Cities at this time often had large numbers of "unemployed youth" (*shehui qingnian*), a term that meant young people who were neither in school nor had a job. It included young people in their twenties as well as school-age children. According to a report from 1963, among seven northern cities including Tianjin, there were about 124,000 unemployed youth, of which about sixteen percent were school-age children, which meant thirteen *sui* or younger. Of the rest of the unemployed youth—those fourteen *sui* and older—the majority of them had failed out of primary or

secondary school, and a minority had quit their jobs.[33] There was a huge gender imbalance among these children and youth, as about two-thirds were girls and young women. The report does not speculate about the origins of the gender imbalance, but it is possible that young men found employment more easily than young women. In particular, the school-age children or those just graduated from primary school posed a problem. As the report noted, a child of thirteen *sui* was too young to begin factory work or be sent to the countryside, so there was little for them to do besides "loiter in the streets."

Besides pointing out that some areas had organized community-run secondary schools (see Chapter One) in an attempt to fix this problem, the report suggested that the children under the age of fourteen should go to school, and that all others should be sent to work in the countryside.[34] However, the shortage of teachers persisted in the mid-1960s, compounded by budgetary problems, making it unlikely that the city could open enough schools to accommodate these children. The authors of the report at the Tianjin Department of Education lamented that the department lacked the funds to hire more teachers, which would allow the city to increase the availability of secondary education. As of April 1965 when the report was written, they estimated

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[34] TMA, File: X198-C-1891-13, "Guanyu chengshi shehui qingnian xuexi qingkuang jianbao" [A report on the situation of cities' unemployed youth], June 1, 1963.

that they did not even have enough money to pay the salaries of the current teaching staff.[35]

In Tianjin, education officials found that unsupervised unemployed youth and children presented the same issues as children still enrolled in two-shift schools, who had similar amounts of free time. The two groups were discussed together in a 1964 report about a citywide meeting of education officials. The report noted that some unemployed or two-shift children and youth were behaving poorly and sometimes even resorting to criminal behavior, including fighting in the streets, selling ration coupons on the black market, and petty theft. The proposed solution for both groups of children and youth were similar: better education, and for some of the unemployed youth, jobs. The plan to strengthen education for all demographics involved the formation of small groups. For children in the two-shift school system, the household small groups needed to be fortified to include activities beyond homework, such as science and handicraft activities, as well as participation in household chores. For unemployed children and youth, local residents' committees, neighborhood offices, and the Communist Youth League were instructed to work together to organize study and labor small groups. In these small groups, young people could study politics and

[35] TMA, File: X198-Y-1235-2, "Guanyu qingqiu jiejue 1965 nian laodong gongzi zhibiao de baogao" [A report on the request to resolve the 1965 labor wages quota], April 21, 1965.

participate in "service labor," meaning that the Department of Labor would allocate them work. The report does not specify if they would be paid for this labor.[36]

Criminal Children and Youth

Not all children were engaged in mild delinquent behavior such as skipping extracurricular activities or loitering in the streets. Other children and young people engaged in criminal behavior. The way that various local actors, including teachers, Young Pioneer counselors, and Public Security officers treated these young people differed, and the solutions ranged from peer intervention to incarceration in a variety of institutions, including work-study schools and juvenile corrections facilities. The solution was ostensibly tied to the severity of the crime and the willingness of the child to reform, but in practice, approaches to criminal children were ad hoc and constantly shifting.

The case of Xu Zhiming illustrates the peer-intervention approach. According to a 1962 report from Shanghai, Xu was a primary school student who ran away from home and turned to theft and gambling. His parents had regularly beat him when he lived at home. However, once the school officials found out about this, one of the school's Young Pioneer small groups was sent to help him. The group invited Xu to join them, welcomed him when he came to Young Pioneer activities, and provided him with all the books, supplies, and support he needed. These kind peers helped him

[36] TMA, File: X198-C-1891-5, "Zhaokai guanyu jiaqiang zai xue xuesheng he shehui qingshaonian ertong jiaoyu gongzuo de tongzhi" [Convening a report on strengthening the education work for students and unemployed youth and children], Jan. 31, 1963.

with his homework and paid for him to go on field trips in which he otherwise could not have afforded to participate. According to the report, Xu was moved by all their help and concern and resolved to be a "good child," eventually proving his transformation by returning a fountain pen he had found to the study group leader instead of keeping it himself.[37] In the case of Xu, CCP officials acknowledged that his behavior was not the result of some innate bad character, but rather stemmed from a difficult home life and lack of resources, although there was never any mention of how the family problem was addressed. The solution was to provide proper education and material support. Crucially, in this case, support was provided by his peers, rather than directly coming from institutions such as his school or the Young Pioneer League or authority figures, like a teacher.

Not all children could be reformed with the help of peer or teacher intervention, however. A 1963 Tianjin Party committee report avowed that with proper education, most children could properly develop, but, as the report acknowledged, some children and youth were "stubborn and rowdy" (*wanlie*) and difficult to reform using conventional educational methods.[38] The report described this group of "stubborn" children and youth as "very small," but ominously noted that this

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[37] SMA, File: C21-2-2014-3, "Pan Wenzheng guanyu yiding yao yong jieji he jieji douzhen guandian qu wuzhuang shaonianertong de fayan gao" [A draft of a speech by Pan Wenzheng about the definite need to use class and class warfare viewpoints to arm youth and children], 1962.

[38] TMA, File: X198-C-1891-5, "Zhaokai guanyu jiaqiang zai xue xuesheng he shehui qingshaonian ertong jiaoyu gongzuo de tongzhi" [Convening a report on strengthening the education work for students and unemployed youth and children], Jan. 31, 1963.

group could "undergo many types of education to no effect, and in order to protect the peace of social life and the healthy development of the second generation," certain more extreme measures were necessary. This small group was no longer considered a part of the successors to the revolution; rather, they must be separated from their peers in the "second generation" in order to protect it. This was a fundamental shift away from the Maoist assumption that all children were capable of being molded into socialist successors with proper education, and seems to have been part of a prevailing pessimism about both the success of the revolution and the likelihood of producing revolutionary successors.

Officials had been quietly confronting this possibility—that some children and youth could not be reformed through the intervention of a household study group or better political education—since at least the late 1950s. This acknowledgment led to the establishment of work-study schools, and the use of juvenile corrections facilities whose establishment pre-dated the PRC. The existence of "stubborn" children who failed to reform after receiving education called into question the Maoist idea of human nature, that all children could develop into good socialist citizens with the proper education. Furthermore, according to statistics collected by the state, cases of young people committing crimes seemed to be increasing in the early 1960s. For example, according to a report from Shanghai in 1962, the proportion of youth and children who engaged in stealing was on the rise.[39] State

[39] SMA, File: C21-2-2014-3, "Pan Wenzheng guanyu yiding yao yong jieji he jieji douzhen guandian qu wuzhuang shaonianertong de fayan gao" [A draft of a speech

officials considered theft, especially of public property, to be a serious crime, but many reports about theft committed by young people at this time suggest that some of these thieves might have been homeless youth who had no other means of survival. Depending on the severity of their misbehavior or criminal acts, juvenile offenders could be sent to a work-study school, a juvenile corrections facility, or a farm for re-education through labor.[40]

Of all the ways in which children and young people might fall short of the revolutionary successor ideal, those who committed "serious crimes"—generally, violent crimes—were the most troubling to state officials. To illustrate the severity of this problem, the 1962 report on rising child crime in Shanghai gave as an example the case of seventeen-year-old Zhang Lianhua, who kidnapped another child to steal his clothing, and then drowned the child. The report omitted details of Zhang's punishment or reform efforts, as his case was mostly used to illustrate the severity of the problem facing Shanghai.[41] Tianjin officials faced similarly violent incidents

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by Pan Wenzheng about the definite need to use class and class warfare viewpoints to arm youth and children], 1962.

[40] TMA, File: X198-C-1891-5, "Zhaokai guanyu jiaqiang zai xue xuesheng he shehui qingshaonian ertong jiaoyu gongzuo de tongzhi" [Convening a report on strengthening the education work for students and unemployed youth and children], Jan. 31, 1963. Although they make few appearances in official documents during the first dozen years of the PRC, work-study schools, juvenile corrections centers, and re-education through labor programs had existed long before the 1960s. See Frank Dikötter, *Crime, Punishment, and the Prison in Modern China, 1895-1949* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2002).

[41] SMA, File: C21-2-2014-3, "Pan Wenzheng guanyu yiding yao yong jieji he jieji douzhen guandian qu wuzhuang shaonianertong de fayan gao" [A draft of a speech by Pan Wenzheng about the definite need to use class and class warfare viewpoints to arm youth and children], 1962.

committed by young people. In 1961, Gu Xinguo, a seventeen-year-old high school student at a boarding school in Hebei province, took a gun that his father had left at home and shot at his fellow classmate Zhang Junjuan. It grazed her pants, but she was unhurt. Gu slipped away in the chaos, and went on to shoot his roommate before being apprehended. None of the students was seriously injured.[42]

According to a report from the Shijiazhuang Department of Education, Gu had not been approved for entry into the Communist Youth League, and he blamed Zhang and two other classmates—all of whom were members of the Youth League—for his rejection. He also had recently had arguments with his (adoptive) parents. That day, he had grabbed his father's gun, with an idea to kill his three classmates and himself.[43]

In their search to solve the puzzle of how a young person raised in socialist China—by a father who was a veteran cadre (*lao ganbu*), authorities named four main causes for his violent behavior: his family's lenient child-rearing style; bad influences from within the community; "yellow" novels about Chinese and European knights of antiquity; and a school administration that did not take his behavior seriously.[44] His

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[42] TMA, File: X198-C-1669-2, "Zhuanfa Shijiazhuang qu guanyu zhengding deng zhongxue lianxu fasheng xiongsha he shengchan laodong zhong shangwang shigu de tongbao" [A report for Shijiazhuang district about recurring murders and work accidents and deaths in Zhengding and other secondary schools], Dec. 22, 1961.
[43] TMA, File: X198-C-1669-2, "Zhuanfa Shijiazhuang qu guanyu zhengding deng zhongxue lianxu fasheng xiongsha he shengchan laodong zhong shangwang shigu de tongbao" [A report for Shijiazhuang district about recurring murders and work accidents and deaths in Zhengding and other secondary schools], Dec. 22, 1961. His father's possession of a gun was unusual, and the report does not specific why he had a gun and kept it at home.
[44] A "veteran cadre" was a revolutionary who had joined the CCP before 1949. Veteran cadres were considered venerable and politically reliable. "Yellow" in this case meant obscene or decadent.

father was already quite old when his parents adopted Gu, wanting a child to take care of them in their old age. They adored him "like a pearl in one's palm," giving him whatever he wanted, and education officials were sure this was "one of the main reasons for his crime." Furthermore, his contacts within his urban community were problematic. Many of his friends had parents who were among the "five bad elements": landlords, rich peasants, counter-revolutionaries, rightists, and other bad elements, and others of his friends were what the report called "the dregs of society" (*shehui zhazi*). According to officials, some of them were his sworn brothers, and they engaged in "sodomy."[45] Gu's affiliation with these urban "dregs of society" confirmed officials' worst fears about the dangers inherent in young people spending their free time unsupervised.

The third reason listed was his attraction to Chinese and European novels about knights, which, according to the report, had "poisoned" him, "creating a personality that worshiped the European knights of antiquity." His proclivity for this type of novel also vindicated official efforts to supervise young people as much as possible. A supervised study group might have forbade him from reading materials not published or approved by the state. Officials found fault too with the school administration, which had been aware of his personal and behavior problems, but did

[45] TMA, File: X198-C-1669-2, "Zhuanfa Shijiazhuang qu guanyu zhengding deng zhongxue lianxu fasheng xiongsha he shengchan laodong zhong shangwang shigu de tongbao" [A report for Shijiazhuang district about recurring murders and work accidents and deaths in Zhengding and other secondary schools], Dec. 22, 1961.

not take them seriously, especially in light of his father's status as a veteran cadre.[46] Speculation about what caused Gu's violent behavior demonstrates the state's concerns about the many ways youth could be led astray, and confirmed the necessity of state efforts to more fully control important aspects of youthful development.

The examples of criminal children and youth also help us understand more clearly where the boundaries of normative behavior were drawn by the state, teachers, Communist Youth League leaders, and parents, but the lack of a consistent response also suggests that local actors had considerable leeway in how they treated criminal behavior on the part of children. Some offenses were consistently objectionable, in the case of violent crimes and theft. Theft, even petty theft for as a means of survival for a homeless youth who had run away from home, as in the example of Xu Zhiming, was unacceptable behavior. However, whereas some children such as Xu Zhiming were reformed through teacher and peer intervention, others, such as thirteen-year-old Lu Fengqi who also committed petty theft (and wrote public slogans deemed "reactionary") in 1960, were sent to juvenile corrections facilities.[47] The education and public security systems seem to have lacked consistent responses to criminal behavior on the part of young people, and how a wayward young person was dealt with could depend on a number of factors, including their crime, previous

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[46] TMA, File: X198-C-1669-2, "Zhuanfa Shijiazhuang qu guanyu zhengding deng zhongxue lianxu fasheng xiongsha he shengchan laodong zhong shangwang shigu de tongbao" [A report for Shijiazhuang district about recurring murders and work accidents and deaths in Zhengding and other secondary schools], Dec. 22, 1961.
[47] TMA, File: X53-C-1731-1, "Guanyu jiancha shaonian fanguanjiaosuo gongzuo qingkuang he anjian qingkuang de baogao" [A report about inspecting juvenile corrections facilities' work situation and case situation], Dec. 1960.

criminal offenses, family circumstances, age, the need for labor at nearby state-run farms and factories, and the inclination of the person deciding their sentence.

The cutoff age to determine if a young person was considered a juvenile offender varied throughout twentieth-century China. In Republican-era Shanghai, one of the main prisons, the Jiangsu No. 2 Prison, defined juvenile offenders as those under twenty years old. The foreign concessions, however, each defined age slightly differently. The 1906 "Shanghai British Prison Regulations," for example, defined juvenile offenders as under sixteen years old, whereas the Shanghai International Settlement government used fifteen as the upper limit. In 1949, after the Communists took control, juvenile offenders (*shaonianfan*) were defined as between thirteen and eighteen, although in practice, much like the inconsistent responses to criminal behavior, age was also an unstable criterion.

Carceral institutions for reforming young people had a history stretching back through the entirety of the Republic of China. Prisons for young people had existed since at least 1913, when the Republic of China's new prison code established youth prisons (*younianjian*), separate from adult men & women's prisons, although little was done to implement the law.[48] However, in 1922, the Ministry of Justice set forth plans for a system of reform schools in a "Constitution of Reform Schools."[49] For youth offenders younger than fourteen, reform schools were supposed to be the only sentence. For offenders age fourteen to eighteen, prison time could be combined with

[48] Dikötter, *Crime, Punishment, and the Prison in Modern China, 1895-1949*, 67, 174.
[49] Dikötter, 174.

time spent at a reform school.[50] Much like later Maoist ideology, the Republican reform school and system was predicated on the idea of "human malleability," and that "deviant activities of poor children" were "closely linked to anxiety about rampant urbanization."[51] Similarly, the CCP linked urbanization to children's deviant activities. In short, the system of reformatory institutions maintained and established by the PRC built on ideas and institutions from the Republican era.

During the early years of the PRC, re-education efforts targeted wayward populations such as vagrant children and youth. According to Maoist ideology, proper political education could reform anyone into an upstanding socialist citizen and worker, and so re-education centers were set up to reform people who were not yet productive or politically conscious workers in the eye of the state, but who had not committed crimes serious enough to necessitate incarceration. By June 1950, 854 people were detained in Beijing's re-education centers. They were generally beggars, vagrants, or petty criminals who had been deemed by the court to need reeducation. Of the 854 internees, 154 were children below the age of fifteen.[52] This motley collection of people was a byproduct of early CCP rule when CCP officials operated under the assumption that wayward elements of the population could be quickly re-educated into diligent, productive workers. As Aminda Smith has shown, that early

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[50] Dikötter, 173.
[51] Dikötter, 174.
[52] Aminda M. Smith, *Thought Reform and China's Dangerous Classes: Reeducation, Resistance, and the People* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2013), 73.

optimism was dashed by the recidivism and stubborn refusal of many of these members of the lumpenproletariat to follow orders. By 1957, a unified reeducation through labor system incarcerated all offenders, including many young people.[53]

Re-education centers and juvenile detention centers seem to have been the last resort for children who committed the worst crimes. Most recalcitrant and petty-criminal children and youth were sent to work-study schools, which were generally secondary institutions, but also included primary schools for children as young as nine. In 1958, one year after the establishment of the two-shift school system in Tianjin, four municipal districts created "work-study schools" in response to high levels of youth crime. The municipal government decried the establishment of these work-study schools, emphasizing that the best way to prevent high levels of youth crime was through the organization of better after-school activities for students at two-shift schools, not through the creation of a system of work-study schools.[54] Local school officials apparently did not share their viewpoint, however. The district-level work-study schools had been established in a hurry, as the districts were unwilling even to wait for the establishment of a municipal-level work-study school that was in the process of being built.[55] The report also emphasized that one of the best ways to

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[53] Smith, *Thought Reform and China's Dangerous Classes*.
[54] TMA, File: X53-C-1731-4, "Suihan songqu "Guanyu zhengdun shi、qu gongdu xuexiao de fang'an" qing zhuan shuji chu shenpi," [An accompanying letter sent to "The case regarding the reorganization of city and district work-study schools" to be transmitted to the secretary's office for examination and approval], March 14, 1960.
[55] TMA, File: X53-C-1731-4, "Suihan songqu "Guanyu zhengdun shi、qu gongdu xuexiao de fang'an" qing zhuan shuji chu shenpi," [An accompanying letter sent to

prevent high levels of youth crime was through the organization of better after-school activities for students at two-shift schools, not through the creation of a system of work-study schools.[56] Though the inference is notexplicit, the two-shift school system seems to have created an increased population of juvenile delinquents, or exacerbated existing problems caused by deviant children and youth, whose families and communities were unable or unwilling to handle them. Thus, at least at the district level, the state responded by creating more disciplinary institutions for these children and youth.

The distinction between work-study schools and juvenile corrections facilities is unclear, at least in Tianjin. According to the 1960 report about city and district work-study schools, there were a total of 631 children and youth in the work-study schools, and another 84 in the city juvenile corrections center, awaiting trial and sentencing. In this situation, the juvenile corrections facility seemed to function as a jail, temporarily holding possible offenders. However, in another document about Tianjin's juvenile correction center, also from 1960, inmates have sentences,

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"The case regarding the reorganization of city and district work-study schools" to be transmitted to the secretary's office for examination and approval], March 14, 1960.

[56] TMA, File: X53-C-1731-4, "Suihan songqu "Guanyu zhengdun shi、qu gongdu xuexiao de fang'an" qing zhuan shuji chu shenpi," [An accompanying letter sent to "The case regarding the reorganization of city and district work-study schools" to be transmitted to the secretary's office for examination and approval], March 14, 1960.

measured in years.[57] The center may have functioned as both a jail and a permanent location for juvenile offenders.

Furthermore, children who were poor, vagrant, or had engaged in criminal acts were all treated in similar ways during this period. The majority of children and youth incarcerated in both work-study schools and juvenile corrections facilities were convicted of theft, often repetitive theft or making a livelihood solely from theft. This pointed to a population of homeless, vagrant young people whom the state thought could be molded into productive adults through work and education. Furthermore, both facilities may have de facto functioned as welfare institutions or orphanages for adolescent boys.

In Tianjin's work-study school, there were 631 inmates, 560 boys and 71 girls. They ranged in age from nine to nineteen, but the majority (510) were between thirteen and seventeen. Of the 631 children and youth at the school, 540 had committed theft, 62 had engaged in hooliganism (*liumang*), 8 had committed counter-revolutionary crimes, 3 had committed fraud, and 18 had committed uncommon offenses, relegated to the "other crimes" category.[58] The makeup of the juvenile corrections facility residents is similar. There were 405 children and youth between

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[57] TMA, File: X53-C-1731-1, "Guanyu jiancha shaonian fanguansuo gongzuo qingkuang he anjian qingkuang de baogao" [A report on inspections of the juvenile corrections facility work situation and the situation of incidents], December, 1960.

[58] [58] TMA, File: X53-C-1731-4, "Suihan songqu "Guanyu zhengdun shi、qu gongdu xuexiao de fang'an" qing zhuan shuji chu shenpi," [An accompanying letter sent to "The case regarding the reorganization of city and district work-study schools" to be transmitted to the secretary's office for examination and approval], March 14, 1960.

the ages of twelve and eighteen. The categories of crimes were the same as those of their counterparts in the work-study school: 262 committed theft, 98 engaged in hooliganism, 31 committed counter-revolutionary crimes, 5 committed fraud, and 9 committed crimes left uncategorized.[59] One might guess that those with more severe crimes were sent to the juvenile corrections facility despite the similar cateogires of crimes, given that some of its residents had been sentenced to over ten years in the facility, and one even to death, but the difference is never stated.[60]

Children and youth sent to Tianjin's work-study schools included children and youth who committed crimes or offenses—including organizing a thieving gang, using theft as a primary means of making a living, rape, "behavior that seriously destroyed the social order of school"—who had no family member to watch over them. They were sent by the court system to these facilities for a "sentence" of a pre-determined number of years, three being the median sentence.[61] Given that one of the criteria for sending a young person to the work-study school was "using theft as a primary means of making a living," and that theft was one of the most common

[59] TMA, File: X53-C-1731-1, "Guanyu jiancha shaonian fanguansuo gongzuo qingkuang he anjian qingkuang de baogao" [A report on inspections of the juvenile corrections facility work situation and the situation of incidents], December, 1960.
[60] TMA, File: X53-C-1731-1, "Guanyu jiancha shaonian fanguansuo gongzuo qingkuang he anjian qingkuang de baogao" [A report on inspections of the juvenile corrections facility work situation and the situation of incidents], December, 1960.
[61] TMA, File: X53-C-1731-4, "Suihan songqu "Guanyu zhengdun shi、qu gongdu xuexiao de fang'an" qing zhuan shuji chu shenpi," [An accompanying letter sent to "The case regarding the reorganization of city and district work-study schools" to be transmitted to the secretary's office for examination and approval], March 14, 1960.

crimes that led to incarceration at both the work-study school and the juvenile corrections facility, the different between these two facilities in unclear.[62]

These work-study schools used a combination of productive labor and thought education to induce better habits in these children and youth. The goal was to produce youth with good revolutionary outlooks and the skills and willingness to provide the nation with a labor force. These children were to receive a technical education so that they could become manual workers, mostly in an urban setting. Statistics from 1959 show that in Tianjin, a majority of the children and youth came from families of workers. That fewer of the children came from wealthy rural or urban backgrounds, and that most had lived their lives within not only a socialist nation but a proletarian household, was not mentioned in state documents.

The incarceration of so many working-class youth in work-study schools gave credence to the notion that working-class children might grow up within materially constrained homes, and that their parents might be unable to give them the tools to succeed in a regular classroom. Work-study administrators acknowledged the behavior problems among working-class children in the statistics they collected. The behavior problems of these youth and their subsequent detention in state-run

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[62] The overlap between criminality and poverty or vagrancy has a long history in China, as illustrated by Janet Chen. She notes that ideas about the poor as "social parasites" and productive labor as an necessary component of modern citizenship were part of globally circulating ideas during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. These ideas were taken up by Chinese reformers, who established workhouses for the poor that both provided welfare and incarcerated the objects of their beneficence. See Chen, *Guilty of Indigence*.

educational and reformatory institutions reinforced the idea that only in state-run institutions could children be assured of a beneficial education and upbringing.

Most of the cases described in reports on work-study schools concern boys. Girls are rarely mentioned; they numbered 71 among the 631 children and youth sentenced to work-study schools in Tianjin. There are also no details in these reports about gender segregation for living quarters, classes, or types of skills detainees were expected to acquire. However, one anecdote about a fourteen-year-old girl in Tianjin detained for sexual crimes is suggestive of the type of crime of which girls were perhaps more often accused. According to a 1960 report, Zhang Qiaolian was accused of having "adult relationships" in exchange for food or money starting at the age of nine. The report does not specify Zhang's sentence or fate. Her story was included in a section of the municipal report on how children and youth are often mistakenly convicted of crimes, suggesting that young people, and perhaps girls especially, were vulnerable to local ideas about consent, culpability, and the age at which childhood ended and adulthood began. Indeed, the report laments that young girls who were convicted of crimes had often been lured into "traps" by adults.[63]

Although the report recognizes that extremely young girls should not be punished for engaging in sexual acts with adults, youthful sexuality was clearly a punishable offense, since boys were also noted as having been convicted after vague crimes which could be translated as raping girls and women, or simply having sexual

[63] TMA, File: X53-C-1731-1, "Guanyu jiancha shaonian fanguansuo gongzuo qingkuang he anjian qingkuang de baogao" [A report on inspections of the juvenile corrections facility work situation and the situation of incidents], December, 1960.

relations. Girls were particularly vulnerable, however, since, at least in this case, they were sometimes viewed as being just as culpable as their adult sexual partners or rapists, even if they were quite young and vulnerable when such incidents happened. This municipal-level report may have recognized that Zhang was not culpable; however, she had still been convicted by a local court at some prior point.

The majority of the students at Tianjin's work-study schools were teenagers between the ages of thirteen and seventeen, but the schools also housed dozens of children age nine to twelve. There were enough children for the city to call for the building of not only a work-study secondary school, but also a work-study primary school.[64] This young age range suggests that for the Chinese state, the behavior of children as young as nine needed to be scrutinized for impropriety and reactionary elements. If a nine-year-old child needed to be removed from his home, school, and community, then his development even at this point must have been considered crucial in predicting his adult attitude and behavior. The inclusion of children in re-education projects such as work-study schools shows the importance that the state attached to children's development, even if they may have been serving as de facto welfare institutions for children without stable families.

Although there were no clear criteria for a young person's designation as a juvenile offender and sentencing to a juvenile corrections facility, there were national guidelines in places after 1957. According to the Security Administration Punishment

[64] TMA, File: X53-C-1731-1, "Guanyu jiancha shaonian fanguansuo gongzuo qingkuang he anjian qingkuang de baogao" [A report on inspections of the juvenile corrections facility work situation and the situation of incidents], December, 1960.

Act of 1957, thirteen was the minimum age of culpability for acts that "violate security," although light punishment was recommended for youngsters over the age of thirteen but younger than eighteen.[65] However, the "Lectures on the General Principles of Criminal Law" suggest the ages of thirteen and fifteen, respectively, while also noting that "it would not be fitting to understand the above-mentioned legal ages as absolutes." As the "Lectures" note, different areas in the PRC had different levels of development of the economy and the educational system, leading to "a great gap in the level of development of mental and intellectual capacity between minors in cities and those in the countryside and in mountainous areas."[66] The "Lectures" never explicitly state whose mental and intellectual capacity might be lower on average — youth in cities or in rural areas — but the careful language nonetheless suggests that children and youth in rural areas were considered to have less developed powers of reasoning because of lack of schooling and lower cultural levels, and thus should perhaps not be held responsible for criminal and deviant actions until a later age than their urban peers.

Local public security offices and people's courts had substantial discretion in how they handled young offenders. This meant that while some criminal youth were sent to juvenile re-education and detention centers, others were treated as adults even if they were under the age of eighteen. According to the 1958 "Report of the Ministry of Public Security Relating to the Work of Preparing the Establishment of Houses of

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[65] Cohen, *The Criminal Process in the People's Republic of China, 1949-1963: An Introduction*, 232.
[66] Cohen, 345–46.

Discipline for Juvenile Offenders," many youth criminals "are dispersed in prisons and reform through labor groups and are mixed together in custody with adult offenders," where they were open to "contamination" by criminal adults and not given the correct type of political education necessary for their reform. The Ministry of Public Security hoped to remedy this problem by partnering with the Ministry of Education to open nine juvenile detention centers, capable of housing up to five thousand young people. The report also noted that while the funding would initially come from the Ministry of Public Security, "after next year expenditures should come from production income" that resulted from the "light labor" to which juvenile offenders would be assigned.[67]

During the early years of the PRC, from 1949-1953, most juvenile offenders were housed at the Shanghai Municipal Prison (*Shanghai shi jianyu*), although as early as March 1950, a small number of juvenile offenders were sent to the Shanghai Farm, in Jiangsu province.[68] This follows Jeremy Brown's assertion that in the 1960s, troublesome urbanites, particularly youth, were often forcibly sent to the countryside.[69]

In 1953, a dedicated Juvenile Corrections Facility was established in Shanghai, for the express purpose of detaining juvenile offenders under the age of

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[67] Cohen, 595–96.
[68] "Di yi jie: shaonianfan [The first section: juvenile offenders]," Shanghai shi difangzhi bangongshi [The Shanghai gazetteer office], accessed May 2, 2017, http://www.shtong.gov.cn/node2/node2245/node73095/node73105/node73142/userobject1ai86251.html.
[69] Brown, *City versus Countryside in Mao's China*, 130–32.

eighteen. For the first three years, only male juvenile offenders were housed there. Female juvenile offenders continued to be sent to the Shanghai Municipal Prison until 1956. Both education and productive labor were to be used to reform these young people, although after age fifteen, state guidelines declared that "production should be primary and education should be secondary" (*yi shengchan wei zhu, jiaoyang wei fu*). The Corrections Facility was housed in a converted temple, the Baohua Temple in Dachang, a suburb of Shanghai.[70] The offenders were supposed to be at least twelve *zusui*—twelve literal years, not using the *sui* system—and to have committed a serious crime, such as counter-revolutionary activities, murder, arson, rape, or persistent theft. The report readily admitted, however, that offenders who weren't yet twelve years old were sometimes inadvertently (*wuxin*) sent to the Juvenile Corrections Facility. Those with a serious or contagious illness or who were first-time offenders with family members able to take them in could be educated elsewhere. By the end of 1953, the Juvenile Corrections Facility housed over 600 juvenile offenders. The majority had committed theft, and the second largest group had committed crimes including "hooliganism" (*liumang*—a catch-all term that could have meant homelessness, gang-related activity, or sexual relations) and rape.[71]

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[70] "Di yi jie: shaonianfan [The first section: juvenile offenders]."

[71] Same-sex sexual relations were also among the behavior covered by the term hooliganism. For further details, see Yang Kuisong, "How a 'Bad Element' Was Made: The Discovery, Accusation, and Punishment of Zang Qiren"," in *Maoism at the Grassroots: Everyday Life in China's Era of High Socialism*, ed. Jeremy Brown and Matthew D. Johnson (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2015), 39; "Di yi jie: shaonianfan [The first section: juvenile offenders]."

Offenders younger than twelve *zusui* were supposed to be sent to the Department of Civil Affairs (*minzheng ju*) to be housed and educated (*shourong jiaoyang*,) although what that entailed is unclear.[72] These extremely young offenders were part of a category called "young people undergoing education and reform" (*shaonian jiaoyang renyuan*), which generally referred to young people under the age of sixteen who had not received official sentences.[73] Regardless of not having received an official sentence, these young people were sent to receive education alongside officially sentenced juvenile offenders in work teams, or, like the very young, were sent to the Department of Civil Affairs for education and rehabilitation.[74]

By 1955, a large number of juvenile offenders were being sent to the Shanghai Farm, where they worked on reform-through-labor teams (*laogai zhidui*). Approximately 700 juvenile offenders had been sent there by June 1955, where they were segregated by gender into the teams, although given that there were only 31 young female offenders, they were too few to form their own group, and were sent to work with the adult female brigade. In 1956, there were 949 juvenile offenders detained at the Shanghai Farm, but they were subject to a "sorting out" (*qingli*), after which the Juvenile Corrections Center at the Shanghai Farm was closed. This "sorting out" process also affected juvenile offenders at the Shanghai Juvenile Corrections

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[72] "Di yi jie: shaonianfan [The first section: juvenile offenders]."
[73] Guowu fazhi bangongshi [Legislative Affairs Office], ed., *Gong'an fazhi guizhang sifa jieshi quanshu [A book of judicial interpretations of public security laws and regulations]* (Zhongguo fazhi chubanshe [China Legal Publishing House], 2005), 10–25.
[74] "Di yi jie: shaonianfan [The first section: juvenile offenders]."

Facility, where many of them were released. After sorting out, only 300 youth remained in the center. In total, the sorting out process affected about 1800 juvenile offenders and "young people undergoing education and reform." Of these youth, 1,006 were released. The rest remained on work teams, detained by the Department of Civil Affairs, or in a corrections facility.[75]

Although many young people were released as a result of the "sorting out," the number of incarcerated youth quickly rebounded to pre-1956 levels. By 1958, there were approximately one thousand young people at the Juvenile Corrections Facility, including hundreds who had been sentenced to at least five years of detention. Given the large number of incarcerated youth, many of who would not be released for years, many of the older offenders—both juvenile offenders and "young people undergoing education and reform"—were sent to Baimaoling Farm in Anhui. "Young people undergoing education and reform," i.e. young offenders who had not been officially sentenced, had in some locations become the majority of incarcerated youth. At Juntianhu Farm, also in Anhui, the majority of the incarcerated young people were "young people undergoing education and reform." The farm was officially designated as a work-study school, the Southern Anhui Juntianhu Work-Study School.[76]

Sending wayward young people to productive units seems to have been an increasingly popular strategy in the late 1950s and early 1960s. Young people were

[75] "Di yi jie: shaonianfan [The first section: juvenile offenders]."
[76] "Di yi jie: shaonianfan [The first section: juvenile offenders]."

being sent not only to farms, but also factories. In 1960, for reasons unspecified, all the juvenile offenders—those with official sentences—at Baimaoling Farm were sent to work units, including Anhui's Xinsheng Cotton Textile Mill, for the remainder of their sentences. This is not particularly surprising, given the emphasis on the importance of productive labor for all young people at this time, as well as the Shanghai Municipal People's Government Political and Legal Committee's official policy since 1953 that "production should be primary and education should be secondary" (*yi shengchan wei zhu, jiaoyang wei fu*) for juvenile offenders over the age of fifteen.[77]

Additionally, in 1960, the options for reforming "young people undergoing education and reform" were expanded to include the Shanghai Juvenile Corrections Facility. The change was ostensibly made to reduce the number of wayward youth who were officially sentenced. According to the joint announcement from the highest People's Court, the highest People's Prosecutor's Office, and the Department of Public Security, only those young people who committed serious crimes, such as murder, arson, or rape, should be officially sentenced. Children and youth who committed "normal crimes" (*yiban fanzui*) should rather be detained for education for a flexible amount of time, to be determined by "how they behave" (*haohuai biaoxian*). As a result of this policy, between 1960 and 1962, over five thousand "young people undergoing education and reform" were detained at the Juvenile Corrections Facility, and they made up the majority of the Facility's population.

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[77] "Di yi jie: shaonianfan [The first section: juvenile offenders]."

While this policy was likely an attempt to keep young people from being sentenced to excessively long periods of court-mandated incarceration, in practice it seems to have greatly increased the number of young people who were detained at the Juvenile Corrections Facility, where they were not entitled to release upon serving a certain amount of time. "Young people undergoing education and reform" could be detained as long as the Facility administration deemed necessary.[78]

Conclusion

The years 1956 to 1964 were characterized by burgeoning school enrollment, increasingly high standards for children and youth, less time within school for most children, and the predominance of Maoist ideas about the importance of education in determining a child's moral character. In response, state officials created a series of stopgap measures to structure and guide as much of children's time as possible, including household study groups and Young Pioneer activities. Whereas Maoist ideas about human nature dictated that all children were educable or reformable, in practice officials increasingly struggled with criminal children and youth, some of whom seemed beyond reform. In particular, local-level officials often did not share the viewpoint of their higher-ups, creating a situation in which on-the-ground practices did not conform to official ideals.

Misbehaving and criminal children made evident the failures of the revolution. As far as state officials were concerned, this meant that the remnants of the old society had not yet been eradicated, and what was worse, they continued to

[78] "Di yi jie: shaonianfan [The first section: juvenile offenders]."

influence the direction of Chinese society—in this case, the development of China's revolutionary successors. Furthermore, given the failures of the Great Leap Forward and the Sino-Soviet split, the PRC needed "revolutionary successors" more than ever before. The efforts of state officials to create revolutionary successors would eventually constitute one of many factors that led to the Cultural Revolution (1966-1976).

The kinds of behavior that were deemed undesirable or even criminal tell us what kind of behavior was desired for children and youth. For the most part, teachers and Young Pioneer counselors wanted children who spent as much time as possible under the supervision of state-sanctioned authorities and within state- or school-organized activities. Children were to be encouraged to take initiative, lead their peers in initiatives to help each other and help out around the neighborhood, engage in physical activities, and read books, but only if those activities were happening within certain places under the supervision of certain adults. For their part, children often did not care to conform to state directives about how their time should be spent, preferring to play in the streets, skipping or sneaking out of unappealing activities if necessary. Others ran away from bad home situations and made their living by stealing. These misbehaving and criminal children illustrate the limits of the state's ability to reshape society.

Conclusion

In 1966, the Cultural Revolution (1966-1976) began, and the educational and extracurricular lives of children changed in substantial ways. The first two years of the Cultural Revolution included many student and worker uprisings, and revolutionary fervor in many cases devolved into factional infighting.[1] These struggles brought China closer to a level of disorder and violence that the country had not experienced in the nearly twenty years since the Communists and Nationalists had fought China's civil war (1947-1949). In the early 1970s, many of the revolutionary policies of the Cultural Revolution were folded into state practices as the state re-established control and order.

Many scholars have interrogated the factors that made the Cultural Revolution possible. By focusing on childhood, this dissertation sheds new light on this question. Throughout early years of the PRC, children were reared to believe in their importance to the success of their society and nation. Furthermore, during the Great Leap Forward and the early 1960s, children were also given a role as arbiter of what was politically correct, and what was harmful. They were told via storybooks from the late 1950s and early 1960s that they might need to disregard the advice of adults at times, and even to denounce them for politically backward behavior. Reading stories about young scientists, political activists, and revolutionary heroes was

[1] Recent studies on the Red Guards and the Cultural Revolution include: Andrew G Walder, *Fractured Rebellion: The Beijing Red Guard Movement* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2009); Andreas, *Rise of the Red Engineers*; Wu, *The Cultural Revolution at the Margins*.

intended to give children a sense of authority and purpose, and this sense of responsibility and capability, as well as ideas about the importance of political righteousness, perhaps later contributed to the rise of the Red Guards when these children became young adults.

Although little studied, the lives of primary-school age children also underwent great upheaval during these years. Many schools temporarily ceased operation, and the Young Pioneers became Little Red Guards. Red Guards began organizing themselves in 1966, and soon thereafter the state extrapolated from these extra-state (and sometimes anti-state) organizations to create a state-sanctioned junior organization called the "Little" Red Guards. Just like Young Pioneers, Little Red Guards were primary school students, generally between the ages of seven and fourteen. They were chosen for their good character and revolutionary attitude and deeds. Little Red Guard magazines that circulated during the Cultural Revolution told stories of Little Red Guards overcoming obstacles and doing good, revolutionary deeds. The stories told about these Little Red Guards bore many similarities to those of the early and mid-1960s, with children needing to make vital contributions to an embattled revolutionary cause. The Little Red Guards represented an institutionalization of broad strokes of the Red Guard phenomenon, tailored for younger children, but in practice much of the Little Red Guard practices represented a continuation of Young Pioneer narratives, activities, and experiences. This suggests that in spite of the upheaval of the Cultural Revolution, there was more continuity in

messages for children between the first seventeen years and the Cultural Revolution than is usually acknowledged.

Just as the Young Pioneers were replaced by the Little Red Guards in the late 1960s, and reverted back again to the Young Pioneers in the late 1970s, the socialist child envisioned by the Chinese Communist state was never static, although the main efforts by the state to create a socialist childhood were somewhat consistent. The state kept universal education as a goal throughout the 1950s and 1960s. State and Party actors persisted in regarding urban spaces in particular with suspicion, and continued to mobilize working adults—especially women, leaving national and local officials to constantly try to devise ways to structure children's time outside of school. As the revolution progressed, and the national and international landscape shifted, the ideal socialist child that the state wanted to produce in these institutions changed. The obedient, studious child who featured prominently in the immediate postwar era was soon replaced in the mid-1950s by a scientifically minded, autonomous participant in production and revolution alike. This child too soon disappeared from magazines and posters. Her more militant, revolutionary counterpart emerged in the early 1960s, just as state officials were grappling with the persistence of naughty and criminal children, even so many years after the ostensibly successful establishment of a socialist society. This child was featured in posed pictures of groups of Little Red Guards in military dress, holding red spears. She sang songs about revolution, and likely had more of an education in politics than her counterparts even a few years earlier.

Not everything about the socialist child changed with the advent of the Cultural Revolution, nor with its ending and Mao's death. The "Learn from Lei Feng" campaign, initiated in 1963, has persisted nearly continuously. In contemporary China, it is celebrated on March 5 every year. While both the PRC and its vision of childhood have changed considerably since 1949, some elements of the socialist states' relationship with childhood have remained unchanged. Through the school system and extracurricular activities, primarily the Young Pioneers, the state continues to impress upon children the importance of patriotism, the virtue of serving the Party, and the good life that the PRC has provided them. As Kyle David has noted, the persistence of the Red Scarf in in particular—its color meant to represent the blood of martyrs who died for the revolution—shows that the state's goal of "produc[ing] children loyal to the Communist Party" has not changed in the post-Mao era. The PRC continues to focus on children, since the raising of future citizens—revolutionary successors or otherwise—is integral to the state's survival.

This dissertation shows that children were everywhere in daily life and state goals. As state actors attempted to create a certain type of childhood, this project revealed the many ways that various state projects and actors, at different levels of the government, were often unintentionally at odds with each other. This created new problems on the ground, and also illustrates that the PRC state was not a homogenous entity, despite tired American narratives that continue to depict the PRC as a totalitarian state with complete control over its citizens' lives.

For a new Communist government, the project of creating revolutionary successors was about the survival of the revolution and the state itself. Raising a generation of capable and loyal revolutionary successors was vital to the operations of the PRC and its ruling party, the CCP. Children and childhood thus represents an important intersection between state and non-state actors. The state had a clear stake in molding children into adults who shared official priorities of socialist development, and families had a clear stake in rearing adults who contributed to and supported the family unit. These priorities often overlapped, as in the provision of universal primary-school education, but also often diverged, as in cases when the state tried to divert children's loyalties to the state and its organizations rather than the family unit. Those competing claims on children's allegiance were never more contested than in Red Guard activity during the Cultural Revolution, but in general, PRC efforts to create a direct relationship with children did not succeed in reorganizing the family structure and loyalties. China has, however, achieved universal primary school education, and nearly all primary school students become Young Pioneers.[2] The state did succeed in changing daily life for many urban children, making state-controlled institutions a normal and expected place for children to spend their time, an expectation that persists to this day.

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[2] Erik Eckholm, "After 50 Years, China Youth Remain Mao's Pioneers," *The New York Times*, September 26, 1999, sec. World, https://www.nytimes.com/1999/09/26/world/after-50-years-china-youth-remain-mao-s-pioneers.html.

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