UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA,
IRVINE

Martyrs, Models, and Miscreants:
The "Communist Child" in Wartime North China, 1937-1948

DISSERTATION

submitted in partial satisfaction of the requirements
for the degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

in History

by

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2021

DEDICATION

to

Martin and Jayden

whose own childhoods have been inextricably linked
to those discussed herein

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I am forever indebted to my two advisors, Dr. Jeffrey Wasserstrom and Dr. Emily Baum, for their patience, kindness, and enthusiastic support throughout the last seven years. I am grateful for the opportunity they provided upon admitting me to the doctoral program, the intellectual rigor of the training they have provided, and the promptness with which they have attended to providing feedback on my work and seemingly endless requests for letters of recommendation and other bureaucratic demands. I am equally fortunate to have received mentorship from Dr. Susan Morrissey and Dr. Anita Casavantes Bradford, who have served as secondary advisors for this project. My training and intellectual development have benefited enormously from the diversity of thought and perspectives they and other professors within the Department of History have generously offered me throughout this journey.

At some point or another, the following scholars have contributed to this work over coffee, through conference and panel discussions, emails, or facilitating introductions to materials and new colleagues: Paul Pickowicz, Joseph Esherick, Jeremy Brown, Karl Gerth, Timothy Cheek, and Fabio Lanza. On the Chinese mainland, I am thankful to Ma Weiqiang and Deng Hongqin, who were always charitable in providing language and resource support. I am grateful to Hebei University's Gu Gengyou and Hong Shanwei, who provided the personal friendships and academic resources that supported my research during the summer of 2016, and to Professor Chen Yong at UCI for facilitating these introductions. I thank Yu Yang at Hebei Technical Normal University for providing logistical support during my ten months of research during the 2017-2018 academic year. I am indebted to Li Bingkui, Yang Qiming, and Ren Yaoxing, with whom I shared many meals and wonderful conversations over the last several years. For their professionalism, attention detail, willingness to read multiple iterations of the same chapters or articles under tight deadlines, and—most importantly—their enduring friendship, I thank Olivia Humphrey, Stephen Pascoe, Matthew Wills, Peter Braden, and Yidi Wu. This voyage would not have been possible without you.

I am privileged to have received generous funding for the research and writing of this dissertation. Major sources of funding have come from an Andrew Mellon / American Council of Learned Societies (ACLS) Dissertation Completion Fellowship, a United States Department of Education Fulbright-Hays Doctoral Dissertation Research Abroad Fellowship, and a Henry Luce / ACLS Pre-Dissertation Travel Grant. I am equally thankful for funding provided by the Hoover Institution in the form of a Silas Palmer Research Fellowship, Stanford University's East Asia Library, UC Irvine's School of Humanities and Center of Asian Studies, and Charles and Ann Quilter.

Finally, none of this would have been possible without the love, warmth, and support provided by my partner, Chanjuan, and our two children, Martin and Jayden. They have contributed to this project in so many ways, least of which have been by offering motivation, encouragement, and a place to escape. I dedicate this project to Martin and Jayden, whose own childhoods have been inextricably linked to the children discussed herein.

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FIELD OF STUDY

Chinese Communist Party, children, childhood, and youth, modern Chinese history

PUBLICATIONS

"The Poster Child of the 'Second' Cultural Revolution: Huang Shuai and Shifts in Age Consciousness, 1973-1979," *Modern China*, Vol. 44 (2018), Issue 5: 497-524.

ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

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Doctor of Philosophy in History

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Professor Jeffrey Wasserstrom, Co-chair

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This dissertation argues that children have contributed significantly to the rise and longevity of Chinese Communist Party (CCP) power. Utilizing a broad and varied source base—including cadre work reports, newspapers, and wartime primary school textbooks—it asks and answers three broad questions. First, prior to China's War of Resistance (1937-1945), how had individuals associated with the Chinese Communist movement historically conceptualized children and childhood? In short, what was their ideal-type "communist child," and what type of childhood should this young individual experience? Second, during the war, what institutions did adults devise in order to realize their ideal-type "communist child" in the flesh? Third, what was the lived experience of children who grew up during this critical period? How did they respond to adult prerogatives? To what extent, if at all, did they become "communist children"?

Relying on close readings of government directives, cadre work reports, newspapers, pedagogical journals, wartime primary school textbooks, and many other primary source materials, this project aims to contextualize and excavate rural children's life experiences. In doing so, it argues that children made critical contributions to multiple war efforts, as spies,

sentries, and saboteurs, and to building Communist Party hegemony as agents of revolutions. It concludes that a focus on children as historical actors highlights the centrality of their labor to the CCP's military success, state-building efforts, and ascendance to political power. Finally, by juxtaposing the bourgeoning party-state's ideal-type "communist child" with accounts of what actual children did and said, this project moves the historiography of Chinese children from one focused solely on the intellectual history of childhood to, instead, the first generation of children to be fully raised with the Chinese socialist system.

CHAPTER 1: Introduction

This project began with a conversation involving two of my mentors, Professor Jeffrey Wasserstrom, a specialist in modern China, and Professor Anita Casavantes Bradford, an expert in Chicano/Latino Studies and History. In the fall of 2014, I was discussing with the two potential topics for my first-year research paper. At the time, I had been looking through a compendium of oral histories discussing China's War of Resistance (1937-1945) against Japan. The entries had been collected from individuals involved in education and propaganda work throughout the Chinese Communist Party's (CCP) northern territories. I remember sharing feelings that teetered between shock and amusement that children apparently served as sentries in a paramilitary capacity. In the entry I had just finished reading, I detailed for the two, a group of children had positioned themselves outside of a local Japanese army camp. While to uninformed passersby the children might have appeared to be playing, in reality their sole purpose was to watch for soldier deployment. When that happened, one of the children would run to notify a group of his or her peers—patiently waiting down the street—that the soldiers were on patrol. These children would then disperse to pre-determined areas in order to brief individuals carrying out activities unauthorized by the occupying Japanese government. Such activities included Communist cadre meetings, assessing and enforcing taxation policies, and attending anti-Japanese school lessons. Upon receiving notification that a patrol was out, those involved in these clandestine activities would immediately break up so as to avoid detection and hence harsh reprisals. As a historian of children and childhood, Dr. Casavantes Bradford was immediately drawn to my observations. "Look carefully," she said, "and you'll find children everywhere throughout the historical record." Dr. Wasserstrom concurred. "You might be on to something," he said.

As I dug into primary source material over the following months, I was both appalled and utterly fascinated by what I excavated. Black and white photos dating from the early 1940s showed uniformly dressed children—none older than eleven or twelve—standing stiffly at attention with what appeared to be rifles in their hands. Some photos displayed pre-teen youngsters and slightly older adolescents performing military drills for a large rural audience. Even more captured children standing at crossroads, where a boy scrutinized with one hand the travel documentation of a bemused adult, the other tightly grasping a spear taller than he himself stood. Newspapers, government directives, and cadre work reports corroborated that these photographs were not of some geographical anomaly isolated to one area, but a widespread regional phenomenon that developed under the conditions of total war. Some written records even go so far as to claim that children possessed such courage and devotion to the national cause of resistance that they selflessly sacrificed their lives—often through violently confronting enemy combatants—in order to safeguard their local communities. As I started contemplating the historiographical consequences of these discoveries, I began asking myself questions that historians of women and gender have long considered. Following Gail Hershatter's questions concerning whether women experienced a communist revolution, for example, I wondered whether the same was true for children. If so, which children? How did war and revolution shape children's daily lives? Did revolutionary ideals apply to all children evenly, or were they divided along axes of difference?[1]

While this dissertation does not answer all of these questions in a definitive manner, it at the very least strives to start a conversation. More specifically, this dissertation asks three broad questions. First, prior to China's War of Resistance, how had Chinese Communist adults

[1] Gail Hershatter, *Women and China's Revolutions* (Lanham, Maryland: Rowman & Littlefield, 2019), 219.

historically conceptualized children and childhood? In short, what was their ideal-type "communist child," and what type of childhood should this young individual experience? Second, during the war, what institutions did adults devise in order to realize their ideal-type "communist child" in the flesh? Third, what was the lived experience of children who grew up during this critical period? How did they respond to adult prerogatives? To what extent, if at all, did they become "communist children"? Relying on close readings of government directives, cadre work reports, newspapers, pedagogical journals, wartime primary school textbooks, and many other primary source materials, I have aimed to contextualize and excavate rural children's life experiences. In doing so, I have found that children made critical contributions to multiple war efforts, as spies, sentries, and saboteurs, and to building Communist Party hegemony as agents of revolutions. I conclude that a focus on children as historical actors highlights the centrality of their labor to the CCP's military success, state-building efforts, and ascendance to political power. Finally, by juxtaposing the state's ideal-type "communist child" with accounts of what actual children did and said, my work moves the historiography of Chinese children from one focused solely on the intellectual history of childhood to, instead, the first generation of children to be fully raised with the Chinese socialist system.

Interventions

Scholarship on the Chinese Communist Party from its founding in 1921 to the start of the Second Sino-Japanese War can be divided into four broad categories: political and organizational, intellectual, sociocultural, and regional. Political and organizational histories focus largely on the origins and formation of the CCP, tracing its development from a loose coalition of Marxist study societies to a unified Leninist organization. As with the present study,

this body of work agrees that the founding of the CCP was a several-year process aided with great support by the Communist International (Comintern) and culminated only in 1927 when a truly Marxist-Leninist Party was founded.[2] Intellectual histories, while in disagreement concerning the influence of certain Comintern agents, are congruent in identifying the indigenous and foreign factors that shaped Chinese Communism as an ideology. These authors agree that the Party's founding fathers were influenced both by an indigenous tradition of anarchism and external factors, which included Japanese, British, and American socialism.[3] Sociocultural histories of the CCP's early years depart from the aforementioned studies precisely in their ability to highlight the experiences of those other than elite Han Chinese men. Seminal studies examine the working class, women, secret societies, bandits, the peasantry, and youth. This scholarship draws attention to the tremendous effort the Party invested in building coalitions by appealing to and incorporating into the revolution broad swathes of the Chinese population.[4] Finally, regional histories provide an alternative view of Party developments by considering spaces absent from traditional studies. While conventional histories of the CCP focus on the people and developments closest to the loci of Party power, this body of work considers individuals and geographies that fall off the beaten path. In doing so, they have helped

[2] Hans J. van de Ven, *From Friend to Comrade: The Founding of the Chinese Communist Party, 1920-1927* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991); Alexander Pantsov, *The Bolsheviks and the Chinese Revolution, 1919-1927* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2000); S. A. Smith, *A Road is Made: Communism in Shanghai, 1920-1927* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2000). Though Gao Hua's monumental study does not deal with the 1921-1927 period, it belongs in the political and organizational section, precisely for its focus on elite politics in general, and Mao Zedong's role in shaping the Party in particular. See Gao Hua, *How the Red Sun Rose: The Origins and Development of the Yan'an Rectification Movement, 1930-1945* (Hong Kong: Chinese University Press, 2018).

[3] Arif Dirlik, *The Origins of Chinese Communism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989); Yoshihiro Ishikawa, *The Formation of the Chinese Communist Party* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2013).

[4] Elizabeth J. Perry, *Shanghai on Strike: The Politics of Chinese Labor* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1993); Christina K. Gilmartin, *Engendering the Chinese Revolution: Radical Women, Communist Politics, and Mass Movements in the 1920s* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995); Stephen C. Averill, *Revolution in the Highlands: China's Jinggangshan Base Area* (Lanham, Md.: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2006); Kristin Mulready-Stone, *Mobilizing Shanghai's Youth: CCP Internationalism, GMD Nationalism and Japanese Collaboration* (New York: Routledge, 2017).

us to recognize the many threads that went into making the Chinese Communist movement, as well as the movement's alternative, albeit short-lived, trajectories.[5]

While this work has advanced our knowledge of the origins, formation, and major developments of the CCP, significant gaps exist in how intellectual trends and ideology shaped the lived experience of those that participated in the Communist revolution. Egregiously absent from these histories are the roles of children as historical actors and childhood as an intellectual and sociocultural construct. Indeed, this body of scholarship seldom discusses children, if at all. In most cases, children are relegated to the footnotes, where they appear as statistics that emphasize the degree of community involvement in protests, or to accentuate the inhumane conditions under which ordinary Chinese toiled within industrial capitalism.[6] In other instances, children are discussed only briefly with regards to their position with the family unit, the degree to which women's labor was needed to raise them, or how a social revolution might reform child-rearing responsibilities and early childhood education.[7]

The attention scholars have paid to children and childhood during the Second Sino-Japanese War (1937-1945) and Chinese Civil War (1946-1949) has been equally sparse. The historiography of the CCP's rise to power during the earlier of these conflicts has described how political and military power, socioeconomic reform, and the intermediary elites helped facilitate Party policies at the grassroots level.[8] While scholars agree that the contours of the Party's

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[5] Wen-Hsin Yeh, *Provincial Passages: Culture, Space, and the Origins of Chinese Communism* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996); Patricia Stranahan, *Underground: The Shanghai Communist Party and the Politics of Survival, 1927-1937* (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 1998): Kit-ching Chan Lau, *From Nothing to Nothing: The Chinese Communist Movement in Hong Kong, 1921-1936* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1999).

[6] S. A. Smith, for example, notes that children participated on different occasion in strikes alongside men and women. See Smith, *A Road is Made*, 165, 203. Similarly, Perry notes that children often appeared in discussions concerning factory exploitation. See Perry, *Shanghai on Strike*, 48-49, 56, 170.

[7] *Shanghai on Strike*, 19; Gilmartin, *Engendering the Chinese Revolution*, 25, 42, 113.

[8] Representative works include Chalmers Johnson, *Peasant Nationalism and Communist Power: The Emergence of Revolutionary China, 1937-1945* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1962); Mark Selden, *The Yenan Way in*

relationship with "the peasantry" varied based on a host of local features, few historians have attempted to disaggregate the "the masses" into its distinct constituencies. This imbalance poses several problems. First, the historiography's focus on adult males omits the experiences and contributions of marginalized and vulnerable populations such as children. Second, by privileging the Party's reorganization of economic relations, historians have undervalued the concomitant social and cultural changes that occurred. Finally, by neglecting the Party's attention to children, the historiography has overlooked the concrete steps that the CCP took to shape—through children—its ideal nation.

This dissertation addresses these lopsided conceptualizations by disaggregating the sociopolitical coalition that constituted "the masses" (*qunzhong*). Well-known to scholars of the Chinese Communist revolution are the class categories into which the Party divided rural society. These included landlord, worker, and rich, middle, and poor peasant. Less well studied are the wartime organizations based on age and gender. These included women (*funü*), youth (*qingnian*), adolescents (*shaonian*), and children (*ertong*). While the official Party line had long subordinated these categories to that of class, officials regularly acknowledged the special interests of these various social groups, and hence the need for them to have their own mass organizations. By focusing largely on just one of these social groups—children—this dissertation reveals both the importance of these constituencies to the rise of Party power, and the degree to which the CCP garnered and galvanized their support. My focus on children as historical actors supports historiographical currents arguing that a major factor contributing to the Party's rise to power

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Revolutionary China (Cambridge, M.A.: Harvard University Press, 1971); Tetsuya Kataoka, *Resistance and Revolution in China: The Communist and the Second United Front* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1974); Kathleen Hartford and Steven M. Goldstein, eds., *Single Sparks: China's Rural Revolutions* (Armonk, New York: M.E. Sharpe, 1988); Tony Saich and Hans J. van de Ven, eds., *New Perspectives on the Chinese Revolution* (Armonk, New York: M.E. Sharpe, 1994); David S. G. Goodman and Feng Chongyi, eds., *North China at War: The Social Ecology of Revolution, 1937-1945* (Lanham, Md.: Rowman & Littlefield, 2000).

and success over the Chinese Nationalists was the former's more efficient and successful mobilization of social forces.

Childhood as an intellectual construct and children as an important social group remain understudied in the historiography of modern China, with several notable exceptions. The most comprehensive studies have focused their attention on children as consumers, symbolic representations, and objects of state paternalism and philanthropic beneficence. This research examines how state bureaucrats, intellectuals, and philanthropists sought to improve the quality of their future society through institutions such as education and welfare.[9] Of the work not concerning child-centered institutions, attention is paid almost exclusively to childhood as an intellectual construct. The result is a paucity of work that focuses on children as historical actors.[10] While I acknowledge the importance of this scholarship, overlooked in this body of work is the CCP's conceptualization of childhood as an intellectual construct and relationship with children as an important social group. This absence is especially peculiar given the longevity and contemporary importance of the Party and its child-centered institutions.

[9] Representative works include Limin Bai, *Shaping the Ideal Child: Children and Their Primers in Late Imperial China* (Hong Kong: The Chinese University Press, 2005); Andrew F. Jones, "The Child as History in Republican China: A Discourse on Development," *positions: east asia cultures critique*, Volume 10, Number 3 (Winter 2002): 695-727; Susan Fernsebner, "A People's Playthings: Toys, Childhood, and Chinese Identity, 1909-1933," *Postcolonial Studies*, Volume 6, Number 3 (2003): 269-293; Henrietta Harrison, "A Penny for the Little Chinese: The French Holy Childhood Association in China, 1843-1951," *American Historical Review*, Volume 113, No. 1 (2008): 72-92; Margaret Mih Tillman, *Raising China's Revolutionaries: Modernizing Childhood for Cosmopolitan Nationalists and Liberated Comrades, 1920s-1950s* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2018).

[10] Important exceptions include Margaret Mih Tillman, "Engendering Children of the Resistance: Models for Gender and Scouting in China, 1919-1937," *Cross-Currents: East Asian History and Culture Review*, No. 13 (December 2014): 134-173; Aaron William Moore, "Growing Up in Nationalist China: Self-Representation in the Personal Documents of Children and Youth, 1927-1949," *Modern China*, Vol. 42, Issue 1 (2016):1-38; Melissa A. Brzycki, "Revolutionary Successors: Deviant Children and Youth in the PRC, 1959-1964," in Kristine Moruzi, Nell Musgrove, and Carla Pascoe Leahy, eds., *Children's Voices from the Past: New Historical and Interdisciplinary Perspectives* (Cham, Switzerland: Palgrave Macmillan, 2019), 285-304.

Work that has focused on children and childhood in the Communist context tends to focus overwhelmingly on the Cultural Revolution decade (1966-1976).[11] While this work has done much to advance our understanding of how the CCP thought of children and childhood during a crucial moment of China's modern history, these studies' major shortcoming lies in compartmentalizing their efforts to a chronologically rigid episode. As a result, it has been easy for scholars to mistakenly identify what are actually articulations of *longue durée* historical developments as aberrations or massive transformations. In her analysis of Cultural Revolution-era print and cinematic productions, for example, Orna Naftali correctly identifies what she terms as the "belligerent child" trope. Typically gendered male, this child appears as a ferocious combatant rather than a weak and innocent creature, who struggles—often violently—against class enemies.[12] Naftali concludes that Cultural Revolution-era media more often depicted boys rather than girls as perpetrators of violence, and hence rightfully corrects early understandings of the period as one that promoted gender erasure. However, by neglecting to look beyond the 1966-1976 decade, Naftali and others have overlooked the fact that, as this dissertation demonstrates, the "belligerent child" was not unique to the Cultural Revolution period. On the contrary, I argue, the notion of an ideal-type communist child had been present in the Chinese Communist movement from its very inception in the early 1920s. Similarly, we might argue that

[11] Feng Xiao-xia, "An Overview of Early Childhood Education in the People's Republic of China," in Nirmala Rao, Jing Zhou, and Jin Sun, eds., *Early Childhood Education in Chinese Societies*, (Dordrecht: Springer, 2017); Stephanie Donald, "Children as Political Messengers: Art, Childhood, and Continuity," in Harriet Evans and Stephanie Donald, eds., *Picturing Power in the People's Republic of China: Posters of the Cultural Revolution* (Lanham, Md.: Rowman & Littlefield, 1999); Anita Chan, *The Children of Mao: Personality Development and Political Activism in the Red Guard Generation* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1985); Zang Xiaowei, *Children of the Cultural Revolution: Family Life and Political Behavior in Mao's China* (Boulder, Colorado: Westview Press, 1999); Kyle E. David, "The Poster Child of the 'Second' Cultural Revolution: Huang Shuai and Shifts in Age Consciousness, 1973-1979," *Modern China*, Vol. 44, Issue 5 (2018): 497-524; Xu Xu, "'Chairman Mao's Child': Sparkling Red Star and the Construction of Children in the Chinese Cultural Revolution," *Children's Literature Association Quarterly*, Volume 36, Number 4 (Winter 2011): 381-409.

[12] Orna Naftali, "Chinese Childhood in Conflict: Children, Gender, and Violence in China of the 'Cultural Revolution' Period (1966-1976)," *Oriens extremus* (December 2014): 85-110.

the craze of youth mobilization and political violence that transpired during the Cultural Revolution's Red Guard phase was not an aberration, but the cultural logic of child and youth empowerment with roots stretching back to these early years.

Scholarly investigations of children and childhood are important for many reasons. Appropriating what one scholar of women and gender has argued, histories that fail to pay close attention to the changing scope and meanings of both children's labor and children as flexible symbols of social change are neither complete nor comprehensible.[13] As I detail below in the chapter overview, children through their labor made significant material contributions to the Chinese Communist Party's rise to power. In the CCP's rural base areas and border regions, they contributed economically through agricultural and handicraft production. Like women, children filled in the labor gaps left behind as able-bodied men enlisted—voluntarily or otherwise—in local armies. As agents of revolution, children contributed to nation- and Party-building endeavors by distributing propaganda, performing in street theater, and teaching basic literacy to their friends, family, and neighbors. Similarly, as a form of military manpower, they assisted the Communist army by carrying out spying, communications, and espionage responsibilities.

As a flexible symbol of social change, this dissertation offers what I term the "communist child," an ideal-type conception represented by a hard-nosed youngster with a keen sense of class consciousness and social justice. As I argue throughout the dissertation, the Chinese Youth League (CYL) and Chinese Communist Party's conceptualization of the communist child was informed by both establishments' adherence to a Marxist-Leninist epistemology, which privileged class over age as the primary category of organization. While the imagined communist child was a sociocultural construction, this archetype served as the model after which

[13] Hershatter, *Women and China's Revolutions*, xiii.

Communist youth and adults organized, educated, and mobilized actual children. While, theoretically, class trumped age, we see in practice a tension in this class-age dyad. As I show, these tensions became most pronounced when children overstepped their boundaries and challenged adult authority, or when the responsibilities with which some adults entrusted children became too burdensome. In these cases, sources suggest that adults conceded to notions of children's inherent innocence, weakness, or immaturity. They did so in order to relieve children of certain duties and to reposition them within an age-ordered hierarchy. As with gender, then, age could trump class when in matters of political expediency.

The dissertation's findings have implications for the broader field of childhood studies, particularly with regards to the prevailing notions of modern childhood. Childhood studies scholars in general follow the consensus that the hallmarks of modern childhood include a shift from work to schooling, declines in infant mortality and birthrates, and the rise of child-centered institutions whereby youngsters became the beneficiaries of state paternalism.[14] While this work has advanced our knowledge of children and childhoods within liberal democratic and industrial capitalist societies, many of these developments are inadequate in helping us to understand the children of the Chinese Communist revolution, which has been ideologically illiberal and economically state-driven. Viviana Zelizer's argument, for example, that modern childhood is marked by children's increasingly economic worthlessness falls apart in environments like rural north China, where child labor remained indispensable to agrarian household economies. Similarly, while her broader argument that the protection and education of children were significant modernist milestones is more compatible with the Chinese experience, this still

[14] Peter N. Stearns, *Childhood in World History* (New York: Routledge, 2011); Viviana A. Zelizer, *Pricing the Priceless Child: The Changing Social Value of Children* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1985); Heidi Morrison, *The Global History of Childhood Reader* (New York: Routledge, 2012).

requires qualification. Zelizer argues that adults protected children by gradually placing them into institutions—such as nursery, primary, and boarding schools—that sheltered them from the adult world. In the context of the Chinese revolution, however, while adults certainly sought to protect their children, they did so not by removing them from adult society, but by incorporating them more intimately into it. As I show throughout the dissertation, children were called on to directly participate in mass politics and mass warfare alongside adults. Teaching children about the horrors and tragedies of war, for example, sought not only to prepare them to confront war when it arrived, but was also a means of preparing them for future revolutionary struggle.

Much like scholars in general have come to accept the notion of multiple modernities, so must scholars of children and childhood embrace the notion of multiple modern childhoods.[15] In this regard, I argue that existing conceptualizations of a socialist modernity are useful in understanding children and childhood in the context of the Chinese revolution. In examining the Soviet case, David Hoffman has identified that liberal and illiberal political systems alike endeavored both to involve citizens in mass politics and to use science to create a rational social order. In contrast to liberal democracies, however, illiberal societies were anti-capitalist and espoused a collectivist orientation.[16] The Chinese case reflects these Soviet realities. As I argue throughout the dissertation, for example, a key attribute of the ideal-type communist child was its willingness to sacrifice—either through enduring personal hardship or giving its life—for the collective. Similarly, I show that other elements of socialist modernity that informed the experience of children during the Chinese revolution include mass mobilization for national self-strengthening, the radical reorganization of class relations, eliminating superstition and so-called

[15] S. N. Eisenstadt, "Multiple Modernities," *Daedalus*, Vol. 129, No. 1 (Winter, 2000): 1-29.
[16] David L. Hoffmann, *Stalinist Values: The Cultural Norms of Soviet Modernity, 1917-1941* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2018), 7-13.

backwards customs, and new forms of bodily practice, such as through embracing hygienic modernity.[17] In doing so, I challenge scholarship that has largely espoused a Eurocentric view of children and childhood, and call on scholars to look for ways in which childhoods across the world converged on and contended against the prevailing liberal and capitalist western models.

This dissertation is the only study to examine the first generation of children to be fully raised within the Chinese socialist system. In doing so, it charts the experiences of young human beings during a formative period of their psychological and physiological development. While it may be difficult—if not impossible—to investigate how these revolutionary experiences impacted the attitudes of the adults these children would become, scholars of the Chinese revolution would be remiss not to consider childhood—a critical period of the human life course—when contemplating the motivations and ambitions of youth and adults in the early years of the People's Republic of China and beyond. I hope that this work will begin a scholarly discussion on how future scholars might proceed with such efforts.

Sources and Methodology

Research for this dissertation took place under less-than-ideal circumstances. Over the last several years, China's state archives have become increasingly off limits—if not completely closed off—to foreign researchers. In the few cases where I had managed to access state archives, the materials available were either irrelevant or so sparse that few if any meaningful conclusions could be drawn. As a result, this study relies on two alternative source bases: published archives widely available in mainland Chinese public libraries and online databases, and a small but unique primary source collection housed at the Hebei Provincial Museum's

[17] Hans J. van de Ven, "War, Cosmopolitanism, and Authority: Mao from 1936 to 1957," in *A Critical Introduction to Mao*, ed., Timothy Cheek (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 87-109.

private, off-site vault in the city of Shijiazhuang. Chapters one, four, and five rely on the former, and chapters two and three the latter.

Published primary source collections may be a unique Chinese tradition. Known as "source collections" or "anthologies" (*ziliao xuanbian*), "compendiums" (*huibian*), or simply "historical materials" (*lishi shiliao*), these volumes are transcribed re-publications of primary source documents held in official state archives throughout mainland China. The range of document types present in any one collection varies. These may include periodical or newspaper articles, letters and memorandum, local and central government directives, cadre work reports, oral history, and so forth. Similarly, the topic around which certain collections are organized can be equally diverse. The collections I use here, for example, have been compiled based geographical considerations (i.e. the Jin-Cha-Ji north China border region), chronology (i.e. pre-war and wartime periods), social groups (i.e. youth), and institution (i.e. primary school education).

These collections do not have a unitary patron or commissioning authority. They have been compiled and published by various university presses, government agencies, commercial interests, and civil society organizations. Likewise, they were not all commissioned or published at any one time, but instead have spanned multiple central government administrations, each reflecting varying degrees of information openness and restriction. The nineteen-volume collection of youth materials, for example, was published over a forty-five-year period between 1957 and 2002. The sheer breadth of individual scholars, organizations, government administrations, and presses involved in the commissioning, compilation, production and circulation of these collections, in addition to the wide span of time over which these volumes have been published and housed, demonstrates incredible diversity. These collections remain an

underutilized repository of primary source material and should be more widely incorporated into scholarly research. This is especially true as mainland state archives are likely to remain off limits for the foreseeable future.

The second cache of primary source documents that constitute the bulk of my research here originate from the Hebei Provincial Museum (*Hebei sheng bowuguan*). Unlike the collections discussed above, these primary sources—wartime primary school textbooks and reports authored by the Youth National Salvation Federation (YNSF) (the wartime iteration of the CYL)—are original handwritten and mimeographed materials—that, at the time I examined them, had yet to be curated by a professional archivist. These materials, which were under the supervision of mid-level museum staffer with no training in document preservation, were in the summer of 2016 held in an offsite vault within a residential apartment complex several kilometers from the museum itself. While I did not enter the vault, when the documents were brought to me in an adjacent office it was immediately clear that the materials had not been well cared for. Covered in dust and literally disintegrating in my hands, these documents appeared to have not been organized in any systematic fashion. Because it was only by an incredible stroke of luck that I gained access to these documents, I have strong reason to believe that future access, especially to foreign visitors, will be denied. Thankfully, I have photographed and stored in a moveable hard drive all of the materials cited in this dissertation. In the interest of transparency and fairness to the scholarly community, I am happy to share these files with any researcher interested either in corroborating my conclusions or pursuing their own project of interest.

As exciting as these materials—the published collections and the museum originals—have been to work with, they are not without their limitations. First, and perhaps most straightforward, without having accessed or read accounts written by other social groups, such as

the Chinese Nationalist Party, north Chinese warlords, of the Japanese North China Area Army, the perspectives and conclusions herein are necessarily lopsided. That is, they overwhelmingly privilege the Chinese Communist point of view. Statistics concerning primary school enrollment figures or enlistment in the Children's League, therefore, have not been corroborated by outside sources. When necessary, I have noted these issues throughout the dissertation. A second and similar constraint is the fact that all of the sources I have examined here were written by youth or adults. That is, none of the materials I have consulted were written by children themselves. This is not for lack of trying. Simply put, throughout history and across the world children have left behind few if any historical records that adults have felt worthy of preservation. This remains the single biggest challenge historians of children and childhood face. As such, our understanding even at a basic level what it was like to grow up during the Chinese revolution must necessarily be understood from adults' vantage point.

The final major challenge is the ideologically overdetermined nature of the source base. Communist youth and adults had a tendency to read into children a nature congruent with Marxist-Leninist ideological prescriptions. Without accounts from children themselves, we have no way of ascertaining to what degree children themselves actually—if at all—internalized these prescriptions. Nevertheless, childhood as a social construct is a structure within which children are raised, organized, educated, and, in this case, mobilized. Therefore, while I cannot make precise conclusions concerning children's interiority, I can demonstrate with considerable confidence the ideological impulses motivating adults' conception of the ideal child, the type of childhood children were to have, and the institutions adults established in order to realize the ideal-type "communist child" in the flesh.

With such context, I argue, we can make reasonable conclusions concerning the reports of actual children that punctuate the historical record. I take seriously the accounts of children that appear, for example, in cadre work reports, pedagogical journals, and major newspapers. By reading closely these accounts I tease out how such observations comport to and push against the Marxist-Leninist conception of the ideal-type communist child. Here I caution the reader from dismissing wholesale sources suggesting children enthusiastically supported Party policies as merely propaganda. By taking seriously accounts of children's assent to adult prerogatives, I argue, we glean a more nuanced and complex picture of the power negotiations that took place between the Party and the disparate social constituencies that populated China's rural hinterland. Indeed, assent is important because one-dimensional analyses that emphasize only resistance fail to interrogate how historical subjects willingly conformed to dominant cultural trends.[18]

Throughout the dissertation, I pay close attention to text and narrative structure, subject representation, authors' intended knowledge claims, and the tropes around which writers have organized their observations and conclusions. I read both along and against the archival grain, identifying contradictions, cracks, and confusions in "truth" in order to suggest important insights.[19] By doing so, I argue that the ubiquity and variety of children throughout the historical record makes feasible an illuminating reconstruction of the social and cultural life worlds of the children of the revolution. Even with these methodological insights, however, I can only provide here a "good-enough story." That is, rather than writing a comprehensive understanding of children and childhood during this historical juncture, what I hope to provide here is the start to a

[18] Susan A. Miller, "Assent as Agency in the Early Years of the Children of the American Revolution," *The Journal of the History of Childhood and Youth*, Volume 9, Number 1 (Winter 2016): 48-65.
[19] Karen Vallgårda, "Can the Subaltern Woman Run? Gender, Race, and Agency in Colonial Missionary Texts," *Scandinavian Journal of History*, Volume 39 (2014): 472-486.

fruitful conversation whereby future scholars can determine how and where this story is incomplete.[20]

A Note on "Child" and Other Age Categories

It is important at the outset to specify what I mean when I use age categories such as "child" (*ertong*), "adolescent" (*shaonian*), and "youth" (*qingnian*). Throughout this study, I use these terms just as the authors of the primary sources under consideration have. In reference to "child," for example, the historical record consistently refers to human beings that fall roughly between the ages of seven and fifteen. These chronological markers have remained more or less consistent throughout China's long history. Han dynasty (202 BCE – 220 CE) medical practitioners chose ages seven (for girls) and eight (for boys) as the beginning of a period of maturation. This stage of physical development was punctuated by "the transition from primary to permanent dentition," the maturation of the kidney system, and significant hair growth. Ancient texts used the word *tong* to refer not only to children under the age of fifteen, but also "bare hills" and "young lambs and calves" that have not yet grown horns. In addition to physical growth, ancient medical practitioners perceived children at this age to begin developing "confidence in [their] physical, intellectual, and emotional maturity." Ages seven to eight, therefore, became landmarks years for children, at which adults considered their progeny ready to begin elementary schooling. Lastly, a child's fifteenth year marked the end of childhood and start of adulthood. Medical practitioners believed that it was at around this age (fourteen for girls and sixteen for boys) that humans' kidney systems had matured and they acquired the capacity to reproduce sexually. The Chinese medical and intellectual traditions, therefore, have historically

[20] I borrow the term "good-enough story" from Gail Hershatter. See Gail Hershatter, *The Gender of Memory: Rural Women and China's Collective Past* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2011), 3.

based their usage of age categories (e.g. "infant," "child," "adult") on these common understandings of human physical development.[21]

Chinese authors and associates continued using these chronological markers throughout the Republican-era (1911-1949). Of the individuals who wrote widely for and about Chinese children in the 1920s, for example, Zhou Zuoren is one of the most well-known. In a lecture given at Beijing Kongde School on October 26, 1920, a talk which was later published in *New Youth* (*Xin qingnian*), Zhou followed precedent by denoting the fifteenth year of the human life cycle as that which witnessed the transformation from "young child" (*you'er*) or "youngster" (*shaonian*) to "youth" (*qingnian*). This fifteenth year also indicated the cut off age for primary school attendance. Zhou noted that children aged three to fifteen were to attend primary school grades one through six, whereas youth fifteen and above were to attend middle school and higher institutions of learning.[22] The use of these chronological markers continued during the 1930s and 1940s. During the Second Sino-Japanese war, for example, the Wartime Association for Child Welfare (*Zhanshi ertong baoyuhui*)—the largest child welfare organization of the period—accepted children aged fifteen and younger. Pedagogically, the association placed children aged eighteen months to three years in nurseries, those aged three to six in kindergartens, and those aged six to fifteen in primary schools.[23]

The Chinese Communist Party's border regions organized children under their jurisdiction using these same categories and years. A catchall phrase used throughout the historical record is "school-aged children" (*xueling ertong*). From the start of the war in 1937 up

[21] Bai, *Shaping the Ideal Child*, 3-5, 17-18.
[22] Zhou Zuoren, "Ertong de wenxue" [Children's Literature], *Xin qingnian* [New Youth], Volume 8, Issue 4 (1920), 56.
[23] M. Collette Plum, "Unlikely Heirs: War Orphans during the Second Sino-Japanese War, 1937-1945" (PhD diss., Stanford University, 2006), 71-72.

to the founding of the People's Republic of China, government documents are largely consistent that "school-aged children" specifically indicated those aged seven to fourteen. Children were required to begin the first of six years of primary school education at age seven, when they entered lower primary school (*chuji xiaoxue*). This lasted for four years. Then at approximately age ten, students entered upper primary school (*gaoji xiaoxue*) for a final two years of education.[24] Together, these six years constituted the "four-two system" (*si'er zhi*) that operated from the start of the war until the dissolution of the border regions in 1948. Education for children under age six appears to have been limited. Though a 1941 *Border Region Education* article notes that a kindergarten opened for children aged four to six, I was unable to find further mention of this school elsewhere.[25]

The border region was also consistent in using fifteen as the age at which children transitioned into "youth" and then adults. Official reports throughout the period of this study indicate that the youngest age at which cadres considered an individual a "youth" (*qingnian*) was fifteen or sixteen. Youth aged fifteen to twenty were suitable for middle school (*zhongxue*) and "normal" (*shifan*) school education, the latter of which provided vocational teacher training.[26] In

[24] "Bianweihui guanyu puji guomin jiaoyu dongyuan ertong ruxue dian" (Border Region Committee Telegram Concerning Universal Citizen Education, Mobilizing Children to Enroll in School), *Bianqu jiaoyu*, January 15, 1941, reprinted in Wang Qian, ed., *Jin-Cha-Ji bianqu jiaoyu ziliao xuanbian: chudeng jiaoyu fence* [Compendium of Jin-Cha-Ji Border Region Education Materials: Elementary School Education] (Shijiazhuang: Hebei jiaoyu chubanshe, 1990), 1:38-39, hereafter abbreviated as *JCJCDJY*; "Bianweihui banbu bianqu xiaoxuexiao zanxing banfa" (Border Region Committee Promulgation Concerning Provisional Methods for Border Region Primary Schools), *Bianqu jiaoyu*, April 15, 1941, reprinted in *JCJCDJY*, 1:42-44; "Bianweihui fa 'Xiaoxue jiaoyu zanxing guicheng caoan'" (Border Region Committee Issued "Provisional Draft Regulations Concerning the Operation of Primary School Education"), *Xianxing faling huiji*, June 11, 1946, reprinted in *JCJCDJY*, 1:165-173; "Huabeiqu xiaoxue jiaoyu zanxing shishi banfa" (North China Region Primary School Education Provisional Methods for Implementation), *Jizhong jiaoyu*, June 30, 1949, reprinted in Wang Qian, ed., *Jin-Cha-Ji bianqu jiaoyu ziliao xuanbian: jiaoyu fangzhen zhengce fence* [Compendium of Jin-Cha-Ji Border Region Education Materials: Government Education Policies] (Shijiazhuang: Hebei Jiaoyu Chubanshe, 1990), 2:486; hereafter abbreviated as *JCJJUFZZC*.

[25] "1941 nian jiaoyu gongzuo zhong ying zhuyi de ji ge wenti" (Several Issue to Watch for Education Work in 1941), *Bianqu jiaoyu*, January 31, 1941, reprinted in *JCJJUFZZC*, 1:266.

[26] Guo Zhen, He Run,"Ji-Jin san zhuanqu xiaoxue jiaoyu jida fazhan" (Enormous Development in Ji-Jin's Third Prefecture Primary School Education), *Jin-Cha-Ji ribao*, April 18, 1946, reprinted in *JCJCDJY*, 1:154-156; Song Shaowen, "Bianweihui dui 'guanyu muqian jiaoyu gongzuo fangmian ji ge wenti de zhishi' de xiuzheng" (Revised

most cases, it was at the age of fifteen that individuals seeking an education attended "adult" classes. The 1941 Winter Learning Movement (*dongxue yundong*), for example, sorted males aged fifteen to forty-five into two groups: fifteen to twenty-five and twenty-five to forty-five. Females aged fifteen to thirty-five also attended "adult" classes.[27] For regular year-round classes, educators sometimes used age sixteen as the cut off, where students would move from attending primary school to a local "people's school" (*minxiao*).[28]

Chapter Overview

Chapter one sets the stage for the dissertation by analyzing how Communist youth and adults thought of and conceptualized children and childhood. Examining Chinese Communist Youth League (CYL) documents, which include the League's major publications *The Pioneer*, *China Youth*, and *Lenin Youth*, as well as internal Central Committee (CC) and regional League branch work reports, I argue that between 1922 and 1936 we witness what I refer to as the discursive gestation of an ideal-type Chinese communist child. Conceptually, the CYL adhered to a Marxist-Leninist epistemology that rejected the notion of a universal human nature. Instead, the CYL argued that, first, different social classes possessed different natures, and, second, that human nature was subject to change. More specifically, the CYL believed that children must receive an education that was both political in nature and incorporated them directly in

Edition of 'Border Region Committee Instructions Concerning a Few Issues Related to Education Work'), January 16, 1948, reprinted in *JCJJUFZZC*, 2:322-323; "Bianweihui guanyu muqian jiaoyu gongzuo fangmian ji ge wenti de zhishi" (Border Region Committee Instructions Concerning a Few Issues Related to Education Work), *Jiaoyu zhendi*, November 30, 1947, reprinted in JCJJUFZZC, 2:313; "Jin-Cha-Ji bianqu wenhua jiaoyu huiyi wenhua jiaoyu jueyian" (Jin-Cha-Ji Border Region Culture and Education Conference Resolutions on Culture and Education), *Bianqu jiaoyu*, June 16, 1940, reprinted in Jin-Cha-Ji kangri genjudi shiliao huibian, 1:831-839.

[27] "Guangfan kaizhan dongxue yundong gongbu dongxue yundong shishi dagang" (Working Outline for the Winter Learning Movement), November 19, 1941, *Jinchaji ribao*, reprinted in *JCJJUFZZC*, 1:312-318.

[28] Liu Aifeng, "Jizhong wu nian jiaoyu gongzuo de zongjie (1938 nian - 1942 nian)" (A Summary of Five Years of Education Work in Jizhong), April 5, 1942, reprinted in *JCJJUFZZC*, 1:379.

revolutionary struggle through active participation in mass politics. Such an education would, the CYL believed, shape children to become model future citizens and workers.

As chapter one demonstrates, the CYL's conception of the communist child was not purely an intellectual exercise. From the late 1920s onward, the CYL applied its notions of children and childhood to actual children in rural areas throughout south central China. A primary mechanism through which the CYL sought to train and educate children under its jurisdiction was the Communist Children's League (*Gongchanzhuyi ertongtuan*), a mass organization for children aged approximately eight to fourteen. The Children's League functioned as a form of extracurricular, informal education whereby children participated alongside youth and adults in a range of activities, including strikes, protests, and demonstrations. The Children's League also mobilized children as an important source of labor. In this capacity, children distributed propaganda, performed in street theater, toiled in the fields, and carried out paramilitary duties as a means to assist the Communist Party's Red Army.

While reports suggest that many children earnestly acquiesced to Communist prescriptions, the historical record demonstrates that the CYL and CCP often had great difficulty tempering the enthusiasm of the children they sought to empower. Herein lies one major argument that runs throughout the dissertation: that for all the zeal and fervor that motivated the Chinese Communist Children's Movement, the CYL and CCP faced incessant challenges concerning the training, education, and mobilization of rural children. Indeed, chapter one shows that from the very beginning, the CYL's empowerment of children often produced unintended consequences. Children adroitly deployed, for example, communist rhetoric to undercut established patterns of authority in order to pursue their own self-interest. In this regard, children challenged adult authority, destroyed property, desecrated sacred spaces, and even according to

some reports carried out acts of political violence. The historical record therefore indicates, I argue, that while many children happily assented to Party policy, many more acted in ways that were counterproductive to the CYL and CCP's primary agendas.

Chapters two and three move on to the main chronological periods under investigation in this dissertation: the Second Sino-Japanese War, also known as the War of Resistance, and the Chinese Civil War. Whereas chapter one demonstrates principally how Chinese Communist youth and adults had historically conceptualized an ideal-type communist child, these two chapters work in tandem to demonstrate how these leaders sought to realize this child in the flesh. As with the dissertation's remaining chapters, chapters two and three take as their case study the CCP's northern Jin-Cha-Ji (Shanxi-Chahar-Hebei) border region—a territory located west of Beijing and occupied for much of the war by the Japanese North China Area Army. Focusing on the institution of primary school education, chapter two argues that the CCP designed border region primary schools to serve a multi-faceted political agenda, which included contributing to war efforts, nation building, and constructing and expanding Party hegemony. Through the of lens top-down education policy, the first section of this chapter provides an overview of the border region's development while highlighting the challenges local cadres faced in reaching and incorporating into the state rural children. Throughout I argue that despite incessant hardship, border region education responded flexibly, pragmatically, and improvisationally in order to best reach and mobilize children so that they could help to fulfill the Party's political agenda.

The second section of chapter two shifts to examine wartime primary school textbooks. In contrast to the first section's analysis of top-down education policy, my examination of these textbooks tells us specifically what children learned in actual classroom environments. I argue

that wartime textbooks functioned as a form of political socialization, which sought to teach students more than just basic literacy. Indeed, wartime textbooks aimed to instruct children in multiple literacies, including grammatical, social, cultural, and political. Such an analysis shows that wartime primary school textbooks are ripe with clues that indicate that border region bureaucrats intended for children to learn about normative behavior, affective association, and political ideals. From these observations, I demonstrate that the CCP and border region government intended for children to play an instrumental role building a new nation and revolutionizing society.

Chapter three examines the second institutional pillar through which the CYL and CCP sought to shape its ideal communist child: the Anti-Japanese Children's League (*kangri ertongtuan*). Examining the formation, structure, and functions of the Children's League, I argue that this organization complemented primary schools as a form of informal extracurricular education. I argue that through their involvement in the League, children had opportunities—through participation in regular local activities, regional summer camps, and Children's Day celebrations—to apply to the real world the different social, political, and cultural literacies they acquired in their classrooms.

While I highlight throughout chapter three when possible the activities and responses of the children themselves, this chapter approaches the Children's League largely from the perspective of the League's older sibling organization, the Anti-Japanese Youth National Salvation Federation (*Qingnian kangri jiuwang lianhehui*), or YNSF. The successor to the Chinese Communist Youth League, which the Party dissolved in late 1936, the YNSF was responsible for supervising the Children's League at the village and county level. As in other chapters, I argue that while the YNSF was successful in organizing, educating, and mobilizing

large numbers of rural children for a wide range of important endeavors, the YNSF—just like the CYL before it—faced great challenges in implementing policy and carrying out its responsibilities. In addition to confronting war-induced conflict and natural disasters, the YNSF suffered from many self-inflicted wounds, including personnel shortages, lackluster leadership, and poor morale. Yet of all these difficulties, perhaps the most overwhelming was the membership of the Children's League itself. I argue that in many regards the Children's League was a victim of its own success. That is, while the YNSF succeeded in providing hundreds of thousands—if not millions—of children with opportunities to exercise personal autonomy and agency, such empowerment was often a double-edged sword. Rather than blindly obeying their superiors, children, much like their predecessors in the pre-war period, adeptly instrumentalized Communist rhetoric and ideology to challenge hierarchies of power and march to the beat of their own drummer.

Chapters four and five shift the dissertation's focus from the thinking and institutions that shaped Chinese Communist approaches to children to the actual children themselves. It is true that the sources used here prevent us from knowing what precisely children thought and felt. Nor can we ascertain with exact certainty the degree to which children internalized Communist education and ideology. Nevertheless, I argue that a close reading of the historical record does provide us with at least both a basic understanding of what it was like to be a child growing up during the Chinese Communist revolution and how children responded to adult prescriptions. By examining children as historical actors, chapter four argues that children made significant contributions to the Communist revolution as agents of revolution and mediums of military manpower. As agents of revolution, children participated in mass politics, taught literacy to their parents and neighbors, performed in street theater, disciplined non-normative behaviors, and

cooperated in violent land reform, where they attacked and overthrew local elites. As a form of military manpower, children's labor was essential to the local economy and in carrying out important paramilitary responsibilities.

Throughout the dissertation I argue that crucial to the CCP's success was the construction and promotion of a culture of war and the inculcation of a militarized consciousness. Children were both objects and agents of these endeavors. Chapter two, for example, analyzes the role of war and political violence in primary school textbooks. Similarly, chapter three examines the military training children received as members of the Children's League. Building on these chapters' examination of how important institutions initiated a pedagogy of militarization, chapter four turns to look at its practice. Using cadre-authored documents, pedagogical journals, and teacher work reports, chapter four complements the earlier chapters' top-down perspective by providing a bottom-up view of what actually took place in primary school classrooms. Relying on adult-authored reports and observations of children in educational spaces, I investigate how both how education cadres and teachers implemented government policies while also showing how students applied their newfound knowledge to the real world.

Chapter four argues that primary school and Children's League initiatives to shape and harness children's emotions for nation-building and war-related endeavors appear to have been largely successful. As primary school textbooks suggested they should, children wielded emotions such as fearlessness, hate, and loyalty to confront occupying soldiers, surveil friends and family, and in some cases risked their lives to safeguard government cadres and communist army soldiers. Likewise, the historical record suggests that the education children received instilled within them a sense of purpose and drive, which motivated them to carry out various

war-related endeavors, such as enduring life-threatening situations to distribute propaganda or carry out reconnaissance and espionage activities.

While much of chapters one through four focus largely on children in general as a social group, the dissertation's final chapter, chapter five, homes in on specific youngsters. I do this in order to share as much as possible both these children's lived experiences and—however mediated—their voices. As I argue throughout the dissertation, a wide variety of children emerge from the historical record. Chapter five frames this spectrum of children as martyrs, models, and miscreants. Each is an exemplary category. Indeed, these children appear in the historical record because adults felt their actions, stories, and voices conveyed something worth documenting and sharing.

Chapter five argues that these martyrs, models, and miscreants are articulations of certain adult anxieties. During the height of Japanese repression, for example, adults regularly remarked on the incredible hardship, suffering, and violence children endured. In some cases, children willingly "martyred" themselves to safeguard their local communities and Communist cadres. Similarly, following the Second Sino-Japanese War's end, as the Communist's recovered territory formerly under the control of Japanese, collaborators, and Nationalists, the children that populate the historical record are what I term models and miscreants. The former were lauded for demonstrating politically and socially appropriate behavior, and therefore illustrated for others unfamiliar with Communist norms what behaviors an ideal child should exhibit. On the other hand, miscreants appear as playful, mischievous, and disloyal. I refer to this group as miscreants not only because the primary sources characterize them as such, but because they are the true outliers of the historical record. That is, they display no loyalty to the Party or nation. They have

not “sacrificed” their lives for their family or local community. And nor do they exhibit any commendable attributes.

Martyrs, models, and miscreants, I argue, each represent a point along a spectrum. Martyrs and miscreants fall along opposite poles. Martyrs represent largely voiceless children, whose representations adults utilized to galvanize communities and build resistance to the Japanese. Miscreants, in contrast, are diametrically opposite of the martyrs. While some miscreants indeed transformed from mischief-makers to loyal schoolchildren, and hence discursively demonstrate for reading audiences the transformative power of border region education, children that resolutely resisted border region attempts to reform non-normative behavior indicate the limits of state power. Finally, models, who fall along the middle area of the spectrum, may provide us with the most informative window into the lived experience of border region children. With this group, I am interested most in these children’s assent to border region norms. Whereas some readers might discard such accounts as merely propaganda, I argue that a close reading of these sources demonstrates how and why children willingly chose to acquiesce and conform to dominant cultural trends.

CHAPTER 2: The Birth of the Chinese Communist Child, 1922-1936

> Altogether, the "little devils" were one thing in Red China with which it was hard to find anything seriously wrong. Their spirit was superb. I suspected that more than once an older man, looking at them, forgot his pessimism and was heartened to think that he was fighting for the future of lads like those. They were invariably cheerful and optimistic…regardless of the weariness of the day's march. They were patient, hard-working, bright, and eager to learn, and seeing them made you feel that China was not hopeless…. Here in the [Young] Vanguards was the future of China, if only this youth could be freed, shaped, made aware, and given a role to perform in the building of a new world. It sounds somewhat evangelical, I suppose, but nobody could see these heroic young lives without feeling that man in China is not born rotten, but with infinite possibilities of personality.[29]

These observations were recorded in 1936 by Edgar Snow, the first foreign correspondent to provide a full account of the Chinese Communist movement from its inception through the mid-1930s. Snow's travels and encounters culminated in 1937 with his publication of *Red Star Over China*, a volume that remains to this day a classic account of the Chinese Communist Party's (CCP) rise to power. Notable are both Snow's interviews with top Party leadership, including Mao Zedong, and countless conversations with ordinary Chinese individuals that supported and fought for the CCP. Of these supporters, regularly overlooked by *Red Star Over China*'s scholarly readers—but not by Snow himself—is the first generation of children and youth to be fully raised within the Chinese socialist system. As Snow noted in the quotation above, and in multiple other places through the book, the Communist's "little devils" performed—albeit perhaps unknowingly—an emotional labor that, as Snow wrote, "made you feel that China was not hopeless, that no nation was more hopeless than its youth." Unbeknownst to Snow, however, was that contrary to his observations, the project of freeing, shaping, making aware, and giving to China's children and youth a role "to perform in the building of a new world" had long been underway.

[29] Edgar Snow, *Red Star Over China* (New York: Grove Press, 1968), 327.

This chapter argues that between 1922 and 1936 we witness what I term the discursive gestation of an ideal-type Chinese communist child. This occurred through a two-step process: conception and birth. The Chinese Communist Youth League's (CYL) intellectual conception of the communist child was the product of the greater Communist movement's Marxist-Leninist epistemology. The CYL's interpretation of age as a category of organization followed Karl Marx and Frederick Engels in rejecting the notion of a universal human nature.[30] Instead, the two focused on what Donald Munro has termed "the malleability of man." This posits that, first, different social classes have different natures, and, second, that human nature is subject to change.[31] Adding to this, the CYL drew on Vladimir Lenin, who stressed the importance of educating and enlightening the masses through political education and mobilizing their active participation in revolutionary struggle, both of which altered the masses' social nature.[32] In this regard, children were viewed as a form of human capital—future citizens and workers—that required immediate training and education.

The birth of the communist child, I argue, took place when the CYL began applying its imagined ideals concerning children as a social group and childhood as a phase of human

[30] Karl Marx: "In its reality the nature of man depends upon the ensemble of social relations." Norman Geras, *Marx and Human Nature: Refutation of a Legend* (London: Verso Books, 1983). Fredrick Engels: "It is the prime basic condition for all human existence, and this to such an extent that, in a sense, we have to say that labour created man himself." Frederick Engels, "The Part Played by Labour in the Transition from Ape to Man," May-June 1876, https://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1876/part-played-labour/index.htm, accessed July 21, 2020. Mao Zedong: "… human nature only exists in the concrete; in a class society human nature has a class character, and human nature in the abstract, going beyond class, does not exist." Mao Zedong, *Talks at the Yan'an Forum on Literature and Art*, "Conclusion," May 23, 1942, in *Mao's Road to Power: Revolution Writings, Volume VIII: From Rectification to Coalition Government 1942-July 1945*, ed., Stuart Schram, Timothy Cheek, and Roderick MacFarquhar (New York: Routledge, 2015), 125.
[31] Donald J. Munro, *The Concept of Man in Contemporary China* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1977); Sigrid Schmalzer, *The People's Peking Man: Popular Science and Human Identity in Twentieth Century China* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2008), 7-8.
[32] Munro, *Concept of Man*, 19, 24-25; Vladimir Lenin, *Essential Works of Lenin: "What Is to Be Done?" and Other Writings*, ed. Henry M. Christman (New York: Dover, 1987), 53-127. Aminda M. Smith, *Thought Reform and China's Dangerous Classes: Reeducation, Resistance, and the People* (New York: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 2013), 25-26.

development to the organization and mobilization of flesh-and-blood children. Whereas the intellectual conception of an ideal-type communist child was purely discursive, birth was marked by CYL attempts to realize the communist child in the flesh. To achieve these ends, the CYL established the Children's League, a mass organization for children aged approximately eight to fourteen.[33] The Children's League not only recruited, trained, and educated children in basic literacy and revolutionary politics, but mobilized them to participate alongside youth and adults in direct political action. As agents of revolution and sources of military manpower, children, among many other activities, participated in factory strikes, protests, and demonstrations, disseminated propaganda, performed in street theater, contributed to agricultural production, transported Red Army communications and materials, and surveilled friendly and enemy populations. On some occasions, children participated in political violence, where they fiercely confronted so-called class enemies and even committed murder.

This chapter's second major argument is that while the CYL successfully imagined an ideal-type communist child, mobilizing actual children produced mixed results. Since children themselves have not left behind any primary sources, this chapter relies on adult- and CYL-authored reports to assess how children responded to these policies and the extent to which they became "communist children." While countless newspaper articles, internal documents, and

[33] Documents throughout this period generally mark "children" as human beings between the ages of eight and fourteen. For representative examples, see "Nongcun qingnian gongzuo jueyian" (Resolution on Rural Youth Work), January 13, 1928, *Wuchan qingnian*, Issue 3, reprinted in *Zhongguo qingnian yundong lishi shiliao di 4 ce 1928 nian* [], ed., Gongqingtuan zhongyang bangongting (Gongqingtuan zhongyang bangongting, 1981), 4:547. Hereafter I have abbreviated all reprinted materials from these compendiums as *ZQYLS*, regardless of their editor. Note that the republication of these volumes over time means that some volumes have multiple editions. The year 1928, for examples, has editions published in 1957, 1958, 1960, and 1981. See also Bo Ping, "Quanguo suweiai daibiao dahui yu qingnian" (The National Soviet Congress and Youth), May 25, 1930, *Liening qingnian*, Volume 2, Issue 13, reprinted in *ZQYLS*, 7:524-525; "Ertong yundong jueyi (can an)" (Draft Resolution on the Children's Movement), December 11, 1930, reprinted in *ZQYLS*, 8:472; "C. Y. Gan dongbei tewei—guanyu tequ ertong gongzuo jueyi caoan" (Northeast Jiangxi Ad-hoc Chinese Communist Youth League Committee—Draft Resolution Concerning Children's Work in the Special Zone), May 21, 1931, reprinted in *ZQYLS*, 9:209.

work reports suggest that children enthusiastically participated in Party and CYL programs, these same accounts demonstrate that child empowerment produced unintended consequences: children challenged adult authority, destroyed property, and desecrated sacred spaces. According to some reports, the political violence these "little red devils" carried out was not always sanctioned by the Communist government. The historical record hence suggests, I argue, that while many children happily assented to Party policy, many more, once mobilized, worked against the CCP and CYL in pursuit of alternative agendas. In doing so, the chaos these children incited was often counterproductive and worked against broader state goals. Children, therefore, when mobilized, were difficult to control.

This chapter foregrounds the rest of the dissertation by tracing the discursive gestation of the communist child through two distinct stages. The first stage unfolded from 1922 to 1927. During this phase, the CYL used its Marxist-Leninist epistemology to conceive of its ideal-type communist child, while at the same time lying the foundation of the Children's League's general character. The general nature of the Children's League included the establishment among the membership of class solidarity, the League's embeddedness within adult mass organizations, and the involvement of children in direct political action. The second stage occurred between 1927 and 1936. This phase witnessed the Children's League's transition from an urban to rural setting, its distinct militarization, and an explicit and public engagement with Marxist-Leninist ideology. While the Children's League from the very beginning had always been a Communist organization, the First CCP-GMD United Front (1923-27) prompted the CCP and CYL to temper overt class-based agitations. Following the demise of this uneasy alliance in April 1927, however, the Children's League fully embraced a Communist ideology predicated on class

struggle. Hence, the invocation of Marxist-Leninist ideology became most pronounced in the post-1927 period.

The Early Years of the Communist Children's Movement, 1922-1927

Since its inception, the Children's League has been under the managerial purview of the Chinese Communist Youth League (CYL).[34] The CYL was first established as the Chinese Socialist Youth League (SYL) in August 1920, almost one year earlier than the Chinese Communist Party (CCP). Upon its founding, the SYL had the support of the Young Communist International (YCI). The umbrella organization for revolutionary youth leagues around the world—and institution parallel to the Communist International—the YCI remarked that the SYL was "the organization of revolutionary youth under the leadership of the Comintern," and "the best among those established in China."[35] With a membership in May 1922 of approximately 5,000 members, the SYL communicated with its constituency through publication of its official organ *The Pioneer* (*Xianqu*). This publication ran until August 1923, when it was replaced by *China Youth* (*Zhongguo qingnian*).

The Youth League's earliest record documenting the intent to incorporate children into the national revolution appears in a list of resolutions passed at the SYL's First National Congress, held May 5-10, 1922. Present at this Congress were SYL members recently returned from Moscow, where they had attended the YCI Congress, and YCI representative Sergei

[34] During the 1920s and much of the 1930s, the Children's League (*ertongtuan*) had a number of different names, including the Children's Labor League, (*laodong ertongtuan*), Labor Scouts (*laodong tongzijun*), and Communist Children's League (*gongchanzhuyi ertongtuan*).
[35] Sofia Graziani, "Youth and the Making of Modern China: A Study of the Communist Youth League's Organisation and Strategies in times of Revolution (1920-1937)," *European Journal of East Asian Studies*, No. 13 (2014): 130; Li Xiangjiu, Wang Xiaoshu, eds., *Zhongguo gongqingtuan shi* [A History of the Chinese Communist Youth League] (Changchun: Jilin renmin shubanshe, 1984).

Dalin.[36] While further research is needed to determine these individuals' precise roles in the SYL organization, Dalin had likely just attended the recent June 1921 Comintern and YCI congresses, both held in Moscow.[37] A summary report of the Comintern's and YCI's congresses tells us that while "the Communist children's movement and organizational questions were discussed," these issues were "solved only in a preliminary general way."[38] This likely explains why the SYL's First Congress made little progress in these regards.

Nonetheless, the First SYL Congress signaled two important developments in the discursive gestation of the Chinese communist child. First, the Congress identified "proletarian children" (*wuchanzhe zinü*) as the imagined beneficiaries of its child-centered policies. Such policies, according to a May 15, 1922, issue of *The Pioneer*, included bettering the livelihood of "child workers'" (*tonggong*) by improving working conditions and prohibiting employment of young children.[39] The second major development involved articulating the need for a children's mass organization through which youngsters could be incorporated into direct political action. Borrowing from already available models, the Congress proposed that the SYL establish a Scouting (*tongzijun*) association. While the Congress recognized that the Scouts represented "the best preparatory organization" for this endeavor, membership was concerned about the ideological incongruence associated with a socialist organization adopting an imperialist institution. Despite this cognitive dissonance, the SYL argued that it would be more advantageous to the SYL's position to adopt the Scouting model, and "from a position within,

[36] Viktor Vladimirovich Privalov, *The Young Communist International and Its Origins* (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1971), 157. Privalov reports that Chinese delegates were present, but he does not provide names. Graziani notes Dalin's presence. See Graziani, "Youth and the Making of Modern China," 134.
[37] These included the Comintern's Third Congress and the YCI's Second Congress.
[38] Young Communist League (Great Britain), *A Short History of the Young Communist International* (London: Dorrit Press), 18. The exact year of publication is unknown. English-language editions published in London include 1928, 1929, and one unspecified year in the 1930s.
[39] "Zhongguo shehuizhuyi qingniantuan di yi ci quanguo daibiao dahui wenjian" (Documents from the Chinese Socialist Youth League's First National Congress), May 15, 1922, *The Pioneer*, reprinted in *ZQYLS*, 1:135-36.

render [it] our own."[40] The SYL's use of local Scouting organizations in order to recruit and grow the ranks of proletarian children did not last long.

A watershed moment in the conception of the communist child is the Young Communist International's Third World Congress. Held in Moscow from December 4 through 16, 1922, 121 delegates from 38 organizations around the world attended the event.[41] This Congress was the first to devote significant attention to children as members and participants in the global communist movement. Indeed, the YCI's Executive Committee compiled and published for this Congress a booklet titled *The Child of the Worker: A Collection of Facts and the Remedy*.[42] In a section titled "The Organization of Child Workers," the YCI outlined the importance of children to the revolution:

> The struggle for the soul of the proletarian child is quite as important as the struggle for his physical well-being. The first and greatest duty that the revolutionary proletariat owe to their children is to keep them in the spirit of proletarian solidarity and revolutionary energy; to keep them within the class and to educate them for the class. As proletarian parents are often themselves in need of education they are not capable of undertaking the revolutionary education of their children. Therefore, they must call into existence organizations which will care for this revolutionary education—**Communist Children's Groups**.[43]

As we see here, the Third World Congress built on earlier calls for a children's organization by delineating in more specific terms the rationale and goals for such an organization. This text stated, for example, that Communist Children's Group's "greatest duty" was to foster the qualities of class solidarity and a revolutionary spirit by way of education. On this front, it is noteworthy that the YCI intended for Communist Children's Groups to provide education and

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[40] Ibid., 139-41.
[41] V. I. Lenin, *Collected Works*, Volume 33, August 1921-March 1923 (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1973), 446, https://www.marxists.org/archive/lenin/works/1922/dec/04.htm, accessed June 18, 2017.
[42] Executive Committee of the Young Communist International, ed., *The Child of the Worker: A Collection of Facts and the Remedy* (Berlin-Schoeneberg: Publishing House of the Young International, 1923).
[43] My emphasis. Ibid., 48.

training on behalf of parents, who, as the text asserted, "are often themselves…not capable of undertaking the revolutionary education of their children." In this regard, the Congress indicated its intention to serve, at least to some degree, as a surrogate parent.

Most conspicuous is the Congress' stated intention to frame children's worldview according to Marxist-Leninist ideology. The text stated, for example, that the YCI must strive "to plant in the souls of our children the seeds of socialism, of a revolutionary conception of life." Arguing that the YCI was in the midst of "a bitter revolutionary struggle," children would be needed "in the course of a few years…to help us in the struggle." To achieve these ends, the YCI urged its Communist Children's Groups to engage children in play, teach them to read and work, and chaperone them on excursions. Moreover, these groups were not only to be "the nursery from which the Communist children will go forth to their schools, to their tenement homes, and to their play grounds [sic]," but were to employ children in present-day struggles. The YCI declared that children were "to take up in the schools the battle against the influences of the church and of nationalism, of every institution to the workers."[44] Communist Children's Groups were therefore not only preparatory organizations that trained future citizens and workers, but training grounds that sought to employ children in present-day anti-capitalist, anti-imperial, and anti-bourgeois activities.

For those present at the Third World Congress that may have doubted children's capacity to understand communism or to participate in contemporary struggle, the YCI reported on the accomplishments of actual "proletarian children." In Germany, for example, children had demonstrated that they "are by nature, fighters…. [They] are spurred to action by what they have heard. Without outside pressure, the children in Germany have openly professed their

[44] Ibid., 49-50.

Communism….” In one reported case, school children had refused “to sing national anthems and to participate in patriotic school celebrations….” The section ended by encouraging League members to help rouse and strengthen “the proletarian class consciousness of the children” by having “them participate in the proletarian mass meetings and demonstrations.” Through these experiences, children would learn to “practice proletarian solidarity,” a willingness to sacrifice, how to govern and discipline themselves, and how to subordinate themselves to their elected leaders.[45]

Finally, the YCI intended for Communist Children’s Groups to serve as the constitutive counterweight to liberal democratic and nationalist youth organizations. The YCI emphasized, for example, the importance of drawing children into the communist movement so as to counteract “bourgeois” institutions, which included “nationalist unions, military organizations, religious, free thought, pacifist, political, [and] boy scout organizations.” Such organizations existed, wrote the YCI, for the special purpose of poisoning the minds of the young workers,” rendering them into “more profitable objects for future exploitation.”[46] The alternative, therefore, was to provide education derived “from and through the struggle.”[47] Again, the YCI here emphasized the need to involve children in direct political action. Similarly, the YCI explicitly stated that children should receive education that that made “them conscious and determined fighters” against capitalism and for the proletariat, the revolution, and building a new society.[48]

The Chinese SYL wasted no time in relaying the YCI’s message to its membership. In May 1923, *The Pioneer* devoted its entire eighteenth edition to discussing the YCI’s Third World

[45] Ibid., 51-53.
[46] The Executive Committee of the Young Communist International, ed., *The Programs of the Y.C.I.* (Berlin-Schoeneberg: Publishing House of the Young International, 1923), 28-30.
[47] Ibid., 15.
[48] Ibid., 39-41.

Congress. In fact, *The Pioneer* appears to have lifted a few lines verbatim from *The Child of the Worker* booklet. *The Pioneer*'s editor wrote, for example, that the objective of "Communist Children's Groups is to plant in the pure and tender minds of children the seed of Communism so as to cultivate future cadres for the Young Communist International."[49] We see in this opening line the transmission of several ideas. First, the need for "Communist Children's Groups." To be sure, these were organizations for young children that facilitated class solidarity and "revolutionary" education. Second is the shared essentialization of children as highly impressionable; hence the ease at which Youth League members were capable of "planting" the seeds of socialism and cultivating a "revolutionary conception of life." Finally, congruent in both the SYL and YCI's thinking is the conceptualization of children as vital participants in present and future struggles for the express purpose of building a global communist society.

Documents from the SYL's Second National Congress, held August 20-25, 1923, show the SYL clarifying its position concerning the improvement of children's livelihood. In contrast to the First Congress, the Second enumerated a list of issues targeting urban child laborers. Among other issues, these included demanding equal pay for equal work, limiting the age of child laborers, restricting shifts for child laborers to no more than six hours, prohibiting night shifts and other dangerous work circumstances, banning the employment of children under age thirteen, requiring compulsory education, thirty-six consecutive hours of rest per week without the garnishment of wages, support for the establishment of workers' clubs (*gongren julebu*), and improved factory and dormitory sanitation. Additionally, the Second Congress passed a "Resolution on Peasant Movements," which emphasized "rural children" (*nongcun ertong*) as a target constituency. This resolution underscored the importance of reforming institutions that

[49] "Ertong gongchanzhuyi zuzhi yundong jueyian" (Resolution on Communist Organization for Children), *Xianqu*, Issue 18 (1923): 2.

predominately targeted young rural girls (*younian nüzi*). Such issues included the abolition of foot binding, early marriage, and adopting female children to raise as a future wives (*tong yang xi*). Similarly, this resolution emphasized all children's right to education. Proposed avenues included establishing primary school and supplemental education—the latter in the form of periodicals and reading rooms—public lectures given in the vernacular, and creating a network of primary school instructors. This resolution concluded by reiterating that providing to youth, peasants, and students education adhering to both "Communist principles" and "theories of national revolution" remained one of the League's fundamental responsibilities.[50]

Although the League failed to make any meaningful quantitative achievements prior to 1924, this early period of the Communist Children's Movement is significant for several reasons.[51] First is the articulation of a particular child that is rooted in class-based Marxist-Leninist ideology. This is the aforementioned "proletarian child." As documented above, this child was of the working class, labored alongside adults in a factory setting, and was exploited by industrial capitalism. Moreover, this child stood in stark contrast to "bourgeois" children, who, from what we see above, were indoctrinated not only through capitalist-sponsored education, but also through participation in religious extracurricular organizations such as the YMCA. And even though the SYL had yet to clearly articulate these matters, the juxtaposition of the proletarian child with a bourgeois child established the existence of acute ideological discrepancies concerning upbringing, education, and use of leisure time. Indeed, as the SYL emphasized in its Second Congress, the provision of a "Communist education" that instructed

[50] "Zhongguo shehuizhuyi qingniantuan di er ci quanguo daibiao dahui wenjian" (Documents from the Chinese Socialist Youth League's Second National Congress), August 25, 1923, reprinted in *ZQYLS*, 1:363-364.
[51] Notes from the First and Second Congresses repeatedly acknowledge these failures. See "Ertong gongchanzhuyi zuzhi yundong jueyian" (Resolution on Communist Organization for Children), *Xianqu*, Issue 18 (1923): 2; "Zhongguo shehuizhuyi qingniantuan di er ci quanguo daibiao dahui wenjian" (Documents from the Chinese Socialist Youth League's Second National Congress), August 25, 1923, reprinted in *ZQYLS*, 1:362.

children on the principles of national revolution was paramount to the League's social program. Lastly, the other major trend that emerges at this juncture is children's direct involvement in the communist movement. While the SYL had yet to articulate its own vision for how children were to contribute to the revolution, it is clear from the YCI's Third Congress that Communist Children Groups were to lead youngsters in building world communism alongside adults. As such, the proletarian children contributed not just as *becomings*—as future citizens and workers-in-the-making—but also as *beings*; as active agents of revolution fully capable of making immediate contributions.

Like the CCP, the CYL and its Communist Children's Groups experienced significant growth during the later years of the First United Front. From late 1924 through April 1927, we witness the growth and expansion throughout central China of Communist Children's Groups, membership for which reportedly reached over 150,000. Consistent with the policies and objectives visited above, these groups educated children according to Marxist-Leninist principles while also involving them in direct political action.

The CYL's very first Communist Children's Group appears to be the "Workers' Scouts" (*Laodong tongzijun*), established in Anyuan, Jiangxi province, which the CYL established during the second half of 1924. After the CCP carried out a successful miners' strike in February 1922, Anyuan became a hotbed of communist activity from the advent of the strike until local warlords brutally suppressed the mining town's labor movement in August 1925. Claiming the largest contingent of CYL members in the country, Anyuan provided the Youth League with the ideal location to experiment with organizing children. While the ages of the Scouts' sixty-four members are unclear, Anyuan Department of Education documents indicate the group recruited

directly from the Anyuan's Workers' Children's primary school. Ninety-six percent of these students were between the ages of five and fourteen.[52]

Consistent with previous Youth League directives, education provided to the Workers' Scouts was inflected by Marxist-Leninist ideology. Anyuan primary school textbooks and Department of Education reports show, for example, that these children learned about the proletariat's "instinctive struggle for survival" and how "capitalists exploit the proletariat." One lesson even included a verbatim reproduction of Chen Duxiu's essay on "Labor Consciousness."[53] Similarly, Anyuan Department of Education Head, Liu Yi, reported that the founding principle behind the Scouts was to "cultivate in workers' children [*gongren zidi*] a lively and courageous spirit." In comparing the Workers' Scouts to its urban counterparts, Liu attested that while the Workers' Scouts lacked the same financial and material resources as "the Scouts styled after the capitalists and flunkies of imperialism," the spirt of Anyuan's Workers' Scouts was "much greater!"[54]

Also in congruence with past directives was the Youth League's incorporation of children into direct political action. Youth League reports on the Workers' Scouts extracurricular activities demonstrate that the CYL incorporated children into the broader labor movement unfolding throughout China during this period. Children participated in commemorating important days, such as May Day, the Republic of China's National Day, and the anniversaries of Anyuan miners' strike and the Russian Revolution. On these and other days, Workers' Scouts performed plays, paraded, and distributed propaganda pamphlets. In a personal memoir, one

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[52] Liu Yi, "Jiaoyu weiyuanhui baogao," August 1923 to November 1924, reprinted in Zhonggong Pingxiang chengshi *Anyuan lukuang gongren yundong* bianzuanzu, ed., *Anyuan lukuang gongren yundong shang* [The Anyuan Miners' Movement, Part 1] (Beijing: Zhonggong dangshi chubanshe, 1991), 1:346, 356, hereafter abbreviated as ALGY.
[53] Anyuan lukuang gongrenhui jiaoyugu, eds., *Xiaoxue guoyu jiaokeshu* (Primary School Language Textbook), 1924, reprinted in *ALGY*, 2:776-808.
[54] Liu Yi, "Jiaoyu weiyuanhui baogao," August 1923 to November 1924, reprinted in *ALGY*, 1:343.

former Scout recalled "disseminating information that warned others about capitalists, sub-contractors, and warlords." Workers' Scouts also used stenciled wax paper to paint slogans on buildings such as police stations, chambers of commerce, and military barracks.[55] One CYL report quantified that during the May Thirtieth Movement, Scouts distributed approximately 15,000 leaflets.[56] Another report noted that on April 9, 1925, over 200 Anyuan Scouts and primary school students attended a local memorial service for the recently deceased leader of the Republic of China's founding father Sun Yat-sen. Much to locals' surprise, following the event three children gave public lectures. The author of this report noted that "it is uncommon to see children lecture in this way, and so naturally it garnered the special attention of local passersby. Approximately 300 people stopped to listen to [the children] speak."[57] Scouts also traveled to nearby villages to solicit donations for disaster relief and kept watch for union-busting patrols during Party meetings.[58]

While the CCP-led movement in Anyuan was short-lived, the experience of translating policies originally designed for an urban setting into a rural context was significant. As Elizabeth Perry has shown, one of the most important legacies of the Anyuan period was that it helped to spread throughout neighboring provinces both communist revolutionary ideals and a general approach toward organizing the rural masses.[59] Indeed, reports indicate that in the months

[55] "Gongren julebu de xiao zhanshi" (The Little Soldiers of the Workers' Club), Zhonggong Pingxiang kuangwuju weiyuanhui xuanchuanbu, ed. *Hongse Anyuan* [Red Anyuan] (Nanchang: Jiangxi renmin chubanshe, 1981), 443-47; Wang Yaonan, *Wang Yaonan huiyilu* (The Memoir of Wang Yaonan) (Beijing: Zhonggong dangshi chubanshe, 2011), 1-17.
[56] Wu Jingzhong, "Zhongguo gongchanzhuyi qingniantuan anyuan diwei xuanchuanbu baogao" (Chinese Communist Youth League Anyuan Prefectural Committee Propaganda Bureau Report)," August 1925, reprinted in *ALGY*, 1:491; "Jiaoyu Weiyuanhui Baogao" (Education Committee Report), reprinted in *ALGY*, 1:351-53; *Hongse Anyuan*, 189.
[57] Wu Jingzhong, "Zhongguo gongchanzhuyi qingniantuan anyuan diwei xuanchuanbu baogao" (Chinese Communist Youth League Anyuan Prefectural Committee Propaganda Bureau Report)," reprinted in *ALGY*, 1:441.
[58] *Hongse Anyuan*, 189, 443-47; Wang Yaonan, *Wang Yaonan huiyilu*, 1-17.
[59] Elizabeth J. Perry, *Anyuan: Mining China's Revolutionary Tradition* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2012), 128.

following the suppression of the Anyuan movement, Communist Children's Groups—thereafter called Children's Leagues (*ertongtuan*)—began surfacing throughout central China. For example, a CYL Hunan District Committee report published July 8, 1926, documented that Children's Leagues were active in a Changsha Cotton Mill (300 members), and the cities of Changsha (500 members), Weiyang (50 members), and Anyuan (80-90 members). At the time of publication, additional Children's Leagues were reportedly being established in Liling, Ningxiang, and Changde.[60] By April 1927, the CYL reported that membership in the Children's League had swelled to over 150,000. Credited for this massive growth was Chiang Kai-shek and the Chinese Nationalist Party's (GMD) military unification of much of Republican-era China. Known as the Northern Expedition (1926-1927), this campaign, in which the CCP also participated, helped to facilitate the growth of Party-led workers' unions, of which the Children's Leagues were often affiliated. According to this report, Hubei province alone constituted almost half of the League's membership, with approximately 65,000 children.[61]

In addition to the Children's League's growing ranks, these immediate post-Anyuan years provide us with our first recorded observations of CYL-organized children in action. Two *China Youth* articles, for example, detail how members of local Children's Leagues were "becoming red" (*chihua*). The first account reports children's "enthusiastic participation" in mass movements, their "majestic and martial" singing, and their commitment to propagandizing the communist cause. "When visiting other townships," the author wrote, Children's League members carried "with them their propaganda [materials] and badge, they sing revolutionary

[60] Fu Langju and Mi Fan, "Zhongguo gongchanzhuyi qingniantuan Hunan quwei qi ge yue lai gongzuo zhi gaikuang baogao" (Chinese Communist Youth League Hunan District Committee Report on the General Conditions of the Past Seven Months), July 8, 1926, reprinted in *ALGY*, 1:582.
[61] Lei Zhengxian and Zheng Zilai, eds., *Da geming shiqi de qingnian yundong* (The Youth Movement of the Great Revolutionary Period) (Wuhan: Wuhan daxue chubanshe, 1997), 192; Graziani, "Youth and the Making of Modern China," 142.

songs loudly, and engage local country folk in discussion regarding the meaning of national revolution…. They…visit local schools in order to speak with their peers; to meet with and organize them, and to teach them songs." The article concluded that upon departing one village, "children aged seven and up were belting out these songs so loudly that the melodies reverberated throughout the sleepy village."[62] The second *China Youth* article echoed these sentiments. Reporting on a Children's League in Liling, Hunan province, the author had observed children singing, distributing propaganda pamphlets, and giving lectures, the latter which beckoned their fathers, mothers, aunts and uncles to "come and strike at our enemies, the imperialists and warlords!" In addition to describing children's activities, the author expounded on the youngsters' nature. Local children, the author wrote, possessed "pure minds with simple and unsophisticated thinking… They are not only the future backbone of society, but the revolution's reserve forces. It is a fact that their communal spirit and revolutionary consciousness is second not even to that of the revolutionary youths!"[63]

Of these authors' observations, most noteworthy are the characteristics the children purportedly acquired when "becoming red." While neither author detailed youngsters unassociated with the Youth League, both did remark that Children's League members were "enthusiastic," "majestic," and "martial." Children's involvement with the communist movement—which is specifically what marked them as "red"—invigorated these children to become conduits of revolution. They engaged adults, their family members, and peers through organization, instruction on "national revolution," and teaching them songs. Moreover, these children had reportedly acquired at least a rudimentary class consciousness. According to one

[62] "Huangmei de ertongtuan" (The Children's League of Huangmei), *Zhongguo qingnian*, Volume 6, Issue 5 (1926): 137-38.
[63] Zeng Shuzhi, "Liling de ertong yundong" (The Child Movement in Liling), *Zhongguo qingnian*, Volume 6, Issue 13 (1926): 345.

author, the children clearly delineated an "us" versus "them" mentality, which differentiated local "country folk" from "imperialists" and "warlords." Yet despite these precocious attributes, age remained a salient category of organization. The second author alludes, for example, to the innocence and potential promise of childhood when he described their "pure minds and unsophisticated thinking." Likewise, he described Children's League members as the "future backbone of society." Similarly, though these children possessed a "revolutionary consciousness" that was second to none, they nonetheless constituted the "revolution's reserve forces." As reserves, these children, who would not be the first to be dispatched to the front lines, lied in wait should they have been called upon.

The Children's League in the Rural Soviets, 1927-1934

In April 1927, shortly after the Northern Expedition had successfully taken Shanghai, the GMD turned on the CCP. Known as the White Terror, this event witnessed the widespread slaughter and arrest of Communist cadres, with over 10,000 communists murdered in just the first twenty days.[64] While it is unclear what fate befell Children's League members, the CYL reported at its Fifth Congress in July 1928 that the "proletarian children's movement" (*wuchan ertong yundong*) had been "completely decimated in urban areas."[65] In the wake of the White Terror, the CCP and CYL retreated from the cities and took refuge in the rural countryside, establishing what would come to be known as the soviet base areas. These bases, the CCP Central Committee planned, would later serve as launch points for future urban assaults.

[64] Barbara Barnouin and Changgeng Yu, *Zhou Enlai: A Political Life* (Hong Kong: Chinese University Press, 2006), 38.
[65] "Zhongguo gongchanzhuyi qingniantuan di wu ci quanguo daibiao dahui wenjian" (Documents from the Chinese Communist Youth League's Fifth Congress), July 1928, *Liening qingnian*, Volume 1, Number 8, reprinted in *ZQYLS*, 4:151-152.

While the Communist Children's Movement continued to evolve in all respects, its most conspicuous development following April 1927 concerned the CYL's unequivocal usage of Marxist-Leninist ideology to interpret age as a category of organization. Long before Mao Zedong outlined for the CCP his official take on human nature in May 1942, the CCP and CYL had agreed upon the roles age and class played in shaping lived experience. In a joint conference held in October 1928, the Party and the League followed after Karl Marx and Frederick Engels in rejecting the notion of a universal human nature. As discussed in this chapter's introduction, the CYL followed Marx and Engels' belief that different social classes possessed different natures, and, following Lenin, that this nature could be transformed through political education and participation in revolutionary struggle.[66]

This is not to say that the CCP and CYL discounted age altogether. Indeed, the joint conference acknowledged that youth differed with respect to their physiology, psychology, and position in society. These differences led to "suffering and demands" that were fundamentally different from that of adults. Specific examples, the document elaborates, included the degree of physiological development, which a harsh working environment could affect adversely, and the need for education and entertainment.[67] Nevertheless, the document emphasized that

> what is necessary for us to understand is that proletarian youth are a part of the entirety of the proletarian class. The objective of proletarian youth is ultimately the same as that of

[66] That the CCP and CYL had agreed on a common interpretation of age as a category of organization long before Mao Zedong's rise to power challenges scholarship concluding that these developments occurred only as early as the 1950s. Both Margaret Mih Tillman and Mary Farquhar, for example, both correctly argue that the Maoist model of human nature greatly shaped pedagogical approaches in the People's Republic of China from the early 1950s forward. However, as I demonstrate here, the origins of this model pre-date Mao's rise to power. See Tillman, *Raising China's Revolutionaries* and Mary Ann Farquhar, *Children's Literature in China: From Lu Xun to Mao Zedong* (New York: M.E. Sharpe, 1999).

[67] The Chinese Communist Party held their Sixth Congress from June to July, the CYL their Fifth Congress in July, the Comintern held its Sixth Congress from July to August, and the Young Communist International held their Fifth Congress in early October. "Dangtuan liang zhongyang lianxihuiyi duiyu C. Y. gongzuo jueyi" (Resolutions Concerning Communist Youth League Work from the Joint Conference of the Chinese Communist Party and Communist Youth League Central Committees, Circular 17, Number 1), November 16, 1928, reprinted in *ZQYLS*, 4:324.

> the proletarian class: to overthrow the capitalist system, to establish world communism, and in this way completely liberate one's self. As a result, the particular needs of the proletarian youth cannot be separated from those of the whole proletarian class. As such, the paramount task of the CYL is to lead and draw into [the League] the vast numbers of working youth so that they may actively participate in the revolutionary struggle, and through the revolutionary struggle achieve the special needs of the youth.[68]

As a joint CCP-CYL declaration, this passage is important in demonstrating congruency in how the Party and the Youth League viewed age. In short, we see here that both organizations acknowledged age as a legitimate category of organization. The statement recognizes, for example, that youth possessed their own unique experiences and needs. However, within the context of industrial capitalism, youth both exacerbated and made more acute exploitations derivative first and foremost by class. As a result, age as a category of organization was—much like gender—ultimately subordinate to class. Therefore, this passage concludes, it was only through direct participation in the revolutionary struggle and the emancipation of the proletarian class as a whole that youth, adolescents, and children could liberate themselves, and hence address their own distinct needs.

The CYL's exaltation of class as the primary lens through which human nature should be understood significantly impacted children under communist jurisdiction. It shaped, for example, the ways in which the CYL approached improving children's physical wellbeing and their education. The CYL often framed the former as addressing "children's interests." These efforts targeted children in urban and rural settings and included limiting children's work hours and ensuring "equal pay for equal work." Likewise, the Soviet government prohibited child betrothal (*tongyangxi*), foot binding (*chanzu*), corporeal punishment, and the employment of "hired

[68] Ibid., 4:325. Under the direction of the Comintern, the CCP, and hence the CYL, remained committed first and foremost to urban revolution. Therefore, while the post-1927 period increasingly acknowledges the importance of "rural youth," much of the rhetoric remained directed toward the urban proletariat youth.

workers" (*gugong*) under the age of fourteen.[69] Class also infused children's education. Documents from the Youth League's Fifth Congress, for example, show that the CYL Central Committee (CC) called on League members to impose on children "a communist education."[70] The CYL's rank and file responded by enrolling children—regardless of sex—in "Lenin Primary Schools" (*Liening xiaoxue*), where students read not from traditional Confucian literacy primers, but the Soviet-government authored *Communist Child's Reader* (*Gongchan ertong duben*).[71]

Class and Communist ideology also permeated the CYL's organization of children as a social group. Building on its pre-1927 predecessor, the now *Communist* Children's League—organized in accordance with guidelines provided by the Young Communist International (*Shaogong guoji*)—was the mass organization for children aged seven to fifteen.[72] The overt class-inflected nature of the post-1927 Children's League differentiated it from its pre-1927

[69] "Suqu tuan di yi ci daibiao dahui wenjian" (Documents from the Soviet Area Chinese Communist Youth League's First Congress), January 25, 1932, reprinted in *ZQYLS*, 10:131; "Zhongyang suqu ertong ganbu huiyi jueyian" (Resolution of the Soviet Area Central Committee Children's Bureau Cadres Conference), August 1932, reprinted in *ZQYLS*, 11:432.

[70] "Zhongguo gongchanzhuyi qingniantuan di wu ci quanguo daibiao dahui wenjian" (Documents from the Chinese Communist Youth League's Fifth Congress), July 1928, *Liening qingnian*, Volume 1, Number 8, reprinted in *ZQYLS*, 4:197-200.

[71] "Suqu tuan di yi ci daibiao dahui wenjian" (Documents from the Soviet Area Chinese Communist Youth League's First Congress), January 25, 1932, reprinted in *ZQYLS*, 10:131-133; "Zhongyang suqu ertong ganbu huiyi jueyian" (Resolution of the Soviet Area Central Committee Children's Bureau Cadres Conference), August 1932, reprinted in *ZQYLS*, 11:431-432; "Suqu zhongyang ertongju guanyu chunji chongfengji zhong ertong yundong de jueding" (Soviet Area Children's Bureau Central Committee Decision Concerning the Children's Movement Amid the Spring Assault Season), January 5, 1933, reprinted in *ZQYLS*, 12:9-10.

[72] Within the bureaucratic hierarchy, the Children's League was an "auxiliary of the Youth League" under the direct leadership of the CYL Executive Committee (*ganshihui*). At the lowest level of organization, the CYL organized Children's League members into squads (*xiaodui*), which took as their unit of organization (*danwei*) the natural village (*cun*). Collectively, a number of squads then composed a troop (*dadui*), which were organized around a conglomeration of natural villages known as a township (*xiang*). Youth League-appointed Children's Bureau cadres served as the troop and squad leaders. Children's Leagues at the village level were to get together once every two to three days to carry out political and cultural education, as well as military-style training (*junshixing de xunlian*). The former included vaguely termed "revolutionary knowledge" (*geming de zhishi*), and the latter calisthenics and learning to fight with quarter staves (*mugun cao*) and spears (*suobiao*). See "Suqu tuan di yi ci daibiao dahui wenjian" (Documents from the Soviet Area Chinese Communist Youth League's First Congress), January 25, 1932, reprinted in *ZQYLS*, 10:131; "Zhongyang suqu ertong ganbu huiyi jueyian" (Resolution of the Soviet Area Central Committee Children's Bureau Cadres Conference), August 1932, reprinted in *ZQYLS*, 11:433-435; "Suqu zhongyang ertongju guanyu chunji chongfengji zhong ertong yundong de jueding" (Soviet Area Children's Bureau Central Committee Decision Concerning the Children's Movement Amid the Spring Assault Season), January 5, 1933, reprinted in *ZQYLS*, 12:11.

iteration. CYL documents emphasize, for example, that the Children's League was to recruit "all laboring and poor peasant children." In contrast, the children of landlord and rich peasant families were barred from joining. This was not merely rhetoric. The CYL brass often targeted specific localities, criticizing them for enlisting landlord and rich peasant children, hence ordering immediate "purges."[73] Similarly, in its attempts to build global class solidarity, the Children's League followed "International Child Workers' Ceremonial Protocol," which included a five-finger salute, with each finger "representing the earth's five great continents: Asia, Europe, America, Africa-Latin America [*yafeila zhou*], and Australia." By holding the saluting hand above their heads, children indicated their collective subordination to "the global proletarian struggle." Through the salute, children identified themselves as "internationalists" (*guojizhuyizhe*) and "little Bolsheviks" (*xiao buersheweike*). Children demonstrated their allegiance to the global proletarian struggle by reciting the "International Child Workers' Slogan." This committed "child workers to building a communist world" by attacking imperialism, the Chinese Nationalist Party, landlords, and capitalists, and by supporting the Soviet and Red Army.[74]

While it is impossible to determine how many members the Children's League had at any given time, a handful of sources provide some estimates. One conspicuous trend is that urban membership remained relatively flat and always lagged behind rural membership. Shanghai, for example, never appears to have eclipsed the 300-member mark. In fact, the CYL CC reported in

[73] This was not just rhetoric. Calling out the locality of Yongding, the CYL remarked that "some Children's Leagues have not yet cleansed their ranks of rich peasant children" (*youxie ertongtuan nei haiyou funong zidi meiyou xiqing*). "Zhongyang suqu ertong ganbu huiyi jueyian" (Resolution of the Soviet Area Central Committee Children's Bureau Cadres Conference), August 1932, reprinted in *ZQYLS*, 11:434. Other instances of the CYL demanding purges of the Chidlren's League can be found "Suqu tuan di yi ci daibiao dahui wenjian" (Documents from the Soviet Area Chinese Communist Youth League's First Congress), January 25, 1932, reprinted in *ZQYLS*, 10:133.
[74] "C. Y. Gan dongbei tewei baogao di wu hao" (Northeast Jiangxi Ad-hoc Committee of the Chinese Communist Youth League, Report Number Five), June 20, 1931, reprinted in *ZQYLS*, 9:232.

March 1930, shortly before the Nationalist Party's crackdown on underground Party activity in the city, that national membership across all urban areas had reached only 8,000. That urban Children's Leagues failed to grow is undoubtedly due to the fact that the largest contingents of CCP and CYL members throughout the 1930s were in rural areas. Moreover, that the GMD actively sought out, arrested, tortured, and murdered communists and their sympathizers certainly discouraged the recruitment, training, and growth of Children's Leagues in urban areas.

In contrast, by March 1930 enlistments in rural Children's Leagues had reportedly surpassed 40,000.[75] A little over one year later, in May 1931, the CYL's Ad-hoc Committee of the Hunan-Hubei-Jiangxi Soviet Area claimed significant growth. Admittedly with "no statistics on which to base its estimate," it is difficult to surmise how the committee reached the conclusion that its area had reached "no fewer than 180,000 members."[76] The lack of evidence may be one reason why the region revised its September 1932 total to "approximately 100,000."[77] No other Soviet Area claimed such high numbers. Northwest Anhui, in September 1931, reported a membership of 1,333.[78] Throughout the first half of 1931, the Fujian-Guangdong-Jiangxi and northwest Jiangxi territories reported 20,879 and 32,801, respectively.[79]

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[75] The count for urban areas across was as follows: Jiangsu 3,000; Hubei 2,000; Guangdong 1,000; Shunzhi 500; Manzhou 300; Henan 200; Shandong 200; 800 elsewhere. For members in the countryside, the count was as follows: Guangdong 10,000; Hubei 10,000; Jiangxi 5,000; Fujian 5,000; Hunan 2,000; Henan 1,000; Jiangsu 1,000; Shunzhi 500; elsewhere 5,500. See "Zhongguo gongchanzhuyi qingniantuan zhongyang tonggao wu zi di bashier hao—yonghu quanguo suweiai dahui" (Chinese Communist Youth League Circular 5, Number 82—Support the National Soviet Conference), March 16, 1930, reprinted in *ZQYLS*, 7:266-268.

[76] "C. Y. Xiang-E-Gan qu tewei you E'dong gei shaogong baogao" (Report to the Young Communist International from the Ad-hoc Hunan-Hubei-Jiangxi Area Chinese Communist Youth League Committee), May 15, 1931, reprinted in *ZQYLS*, 9:185-186.

[77] "XX tongzhi guanyu Xiang-E-Gan gongzuo de baogao" (Comrade XX's Work Report on the Hunan-Hubei-Jiangxi [Soviet Area]), September 3, 1932, reprinted in *ZQYLS*, 11:462.

[78] "C. Y. Wanxibei tewei baogao" (Report by the Northwest Anhui Ad-hoc Committee of the Chinese Communist Youth League), September 14, 1931, reprinted in *ZQYLS*, 9:362.

[79] "Shaogong Min-Yue-Gan shengwei xiang suqu tuan daibiao dahui de yi nian lai gongzuo shumian baogao" (Fujian-Guangdong-Jiangxi Provincial Committee of the Young Communist International Report to the Soviet Area Chinese Communist Youth League Congress Concerning Work Over the Last Year), January 12, 1932, reprinted in *ZQYLS*, 10:82-99; "Tuan Gan dongbei shengwei baogao" (Northeast Jiangxi Provincial Committee of the Chinese Communist Youth League Report), May 17, 1932, reprinted in *ZQYLS*, 10:627, 635.

Children's Leagues remained virtually non-existent in north China. An inspection tour report of Hebei province—the geographic area we will turn to in the following chapters—from May 1932 noted enlistment of only 1,213 children, the bulk of whom were reportedly in cities.[80]

Given that the vast majority of China's population still resided in rural areas, why did membership in the countryside remain so low? While rampant warlordism, incessant GMD military pressure, and violent land revolution all certainly played some role in the Party and CYL's popular reception, the simplest explanation comes from within the Youth League itself. As one cadre put it, "children's work has been implemented incorrectly. Children are uninterested in their work, and hence are unwilling to join the Children's League."[81] Indeed, the historical record—across all localities and levels of bureaucracies—incessantly bemoans widespread CYL inactivity and inefficiency. The Northeast Jiangxi Committee, for example, lamented on multiple occasions the CYL CC's failure to respond to multiple requests for assistance. Without directives, funds, or experience, the committee had no direction for carrying out its work locally.[82] When resources and personnel could be mobilized, upper level bureaucrats denigrated their subordinates as uneducated, inexperienced, uninterested, and irresponsible, particularly with regards to children's work.[83] Provincial-level bureaus echoed such sentiments, remarking "insufficient" CYL involvement in mass work, the "sluggish" development of

[80] "XX tongzhi xunshi hebei baogao" (Comrade XX's Hebei Province Inspection Tour Report), May 7, 1932, reprinted in *ZQYLS*, 10:537-539.
[81] "C. Y. Xiang-E-Gan qu tewei you E'dong gei shaogong baogao" (Report to the Young Communist International from the Ad-hoc Hunan-Hubei-Jiangxi Area Chinese Communist Youth League Committee), May 15, 1931, reprinted in *ZQYLS*, 9:185-186.
[82] "C. Y. Gan dongbei tewei baogao" (Report by the Northeast Jiangxi Ad-hoc Committee), April 20, 1931, reprinted in *ZQYLS*, 9:159.
[83] "Zhongguo gongchan qingniantuan E-Yu-Wan qu zhongyang fenju di yi ci kuoda huiyi jueyi" (First Enlarged Meeting of the Hubei-Henan-Anhui Branch Chinese Communist Youth League Central Committee), August 9, 1931, reprinted in *ZQYLS*, 9:321; "C. Y. Wanxibei tewei baogao" (Report by the Northwest Anhui Ad-hoc Committee of the Chinese Communist Youth League), September 14, 1931, reprinted in *ZQYLS*, 9:361; "Gan dongbei tuan shengwei guanyu ertongtuan gongzuo jueyi" (Northeast Jiangxi Provincial Committee of the Chinese Communist Youth League Resolution on Children's League Work), March 25, 1932, reprinted in *ZQYLS*, 10:324.

Children's Leagues, and an overall lack of leadership.[84] In January 1933, the Children's Bureau of the Soviet Area Central Committee remarked that "at every level the CYL has both ignored and lacked an understanding of the Children's Movement. As a result, even [the movement's] scant achievements are frail and infrequent."[85] Later the same year, just as the vice grip of the Nationalist Party's fifth—and final—encirclement campaign had begun to suffocate the communists' rural soviets, minutes from a Joint Conference of Children's Bureau Secretaries suggest the CYL as a whole continued to lack the resources, personnel, and political will necessary achieve the goals set in 1931.[86]

And even when CYL members did mobilize Children's Leagues, children's involvement rarely appears to have pleased the Youth League brass. Local CYL branches, for example, assembled children "without regard for their education or training, and [failed to] lead them in the particular struggles necessary to realize their personal liberation." Moreover, Youth League cadres purportedly "rejected the political meaning of the children's movement" and "refused to lead children's participation in political work."[87] The CYL committee in western Fujian, for example, criticized its League for assigning children only to complete "odd-job tasks," and

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[84] "C. Y. Gan dongbei shengwei di er ci ge xian zuzhibu lianhe juiyian" (Second Joint Resolution of the Northeast Jiangxi Provincial and County Committees' Organization Departments), February 28, 1932, reprinted in *ZQYLS*, 10:232-233; Zuo Shuang, "Ertong yundong de zhuanbian yu ganbu wenti" (The Transformation of the Children's Movement and Cadre Problem), March 25, 1932, *Qingnian shihua*, Number 13, reprinted in *ZQYLS*, 10:331; "C. Y. Gan dongbei shengwei si yuefen gongzuo zongjie yu wu yuefen gongzuo zhongxin" (Northeast Jiangxi Provincial Committee of the Chinese Communist Youth League's Summary of April's Work and May's Central Work), May 10, 1932, reprinted in *ZQYLS*, 10:561; "Qingniantuan Xiang-Gan shengwei gei shaogong zhongyang baogao" (The Hunan-Jiangxi Provincial Committee of the Chinese Communist Youth League Report to the Central Committee of the Young Communist International), December 30, 1932, reprinted in *ZQYLS*, 11:750.

[85] "Suqu zhongyang ertongju guanyu chunji chongfengji zhong ertong yundong de jueding" (Soviet Area Children's Bureau Central Committee Decision Concerning the Children's Movement Amid the Spring Assault Season), January 5, 1933, reprinted in *ZQYLS*, 12:7.

[86] Pi Xian, "Muqian suqu gongchan ertongtuan de gongzuo—si sheng xian yishang ertongju shuji lianxihui de zongjie" (Present-day Work of the Soviet Area Communist Children's League—A Summary of the Joint Conference of Children's Bureau Secretaries from Across More than Four Provinces and Counties), November 5, 1933, *Liening qingnian*, Volume 2, Number 9, reprinted in *ZQYLS*, 12:290-292.

[87] "Qingnian qunzhong yundong gaiyao" (An Outline of the Youth Masses Campaign), September 1, 1930, reprinted in *ZQYLS*, 8:148.

therefore failed to involve children in the completion of "central work."[88] In localities such as the Hubei-Henan-Anhui soviet area, the CYL and Children's Leagues were only involved in recruiting soldiers for the Red Army. Their involvement in other work, the local CC commented, was either "increasingly lax" or "non-existent."[89]

While further research is needed, the uneven presence and activity of Youth League and Children's League branches throughout the Soviet areas was likely contingent on a host of local factors. As the historiography concerning the Second Sino-Japanese War—a much more well-studied period than the Soviet era—has shown, the social ecology of differing regions played a crucial role in shaping the extent to which the CCP exerted influence over local communities. Such factors included already established governing authorities—such as the GMD—and the extent of their power, the presence and amenability of local lineage organizations, secret societies, warlords, and bandits, tenancy rates, and historical trends in village insularity and economic self-reliance. For the Soviet period, areas that boasted active CYL branches and Children's League likely possessed a social ecology that was more amenable to the CCP and CYL influence.

This is not to say that the Communist Children's Movement was a failure. On the contrary, reports across multiple territories indicate that many local CYL branches succeeded in carrying out the movement. Indeed, the historical record demonstrates that Children's League members acted on their local communities and affected change. One way in which they did so was through their provision of emotional labor. For the Red Army, for example, they arranged

[88] "Zhongguo gongchan qingniantuan minxi tewei di yi ci daibiao dahui wenjian" (Documents from the First Congress of the Ad-Hoc Committee of the Western Fujian Chinese Communist Youth League), September 19, 1930, reprinted in *ZQYLS*, 8:243.
[89] "Zhongguo gongchan qingniantuan E-Yu-Wan qu zhongyang fenju di yi ci kuoda huiyi jueyi" (First Enlarged Meeting of the Hubei-Henan-Anhui Branch Chinese Communist Youth League Central Committee), August 9, 1931, reprinted in *ZQYLS*, 9:322.

welcome receptions for soldiers returning from the front lines and departure ceremonies for those leaving on new assignments. They boosted troop morale by visiting military camps to sing, play games, perform plays, dance, and give speeches, and they comforted convalescent soldiers at military hospitals. As part of their schoolwork, children wrote letters to active duty soldiers, who the youngsters encouraged to "bravely kill the enemy."[90] Not all of children's emotional labor was positive. It could also be coercive. In their local communities, children encouraged older males, such as their fathers and older brothers, to enlist in the Red Army. Children's Leagues also formed "humiliation teams," which attempted to persuade army deserters to return to their posts. In cases where the deserter was unwilling to return, children were encouraged to "ridicule and shame him."[91]

Children's Leagues also held regular troop gatherings, often called "military reviews" (*jianyue*). At these events, children carried out "military drills" (*junshi xunlian*), where they marched and conducted "guerrilla warfare maneuvers" (*youji zhanshi de yanxi*); the latter included training with quarterstaffs and sabers. Some Children's Leagues apparently enjoyed this aspect of the organization so much that they "took the initiative to rehearse on their own." Some Leagues even practiced how to "kill using the bayonet."[92] Prior to Children's Day, which the CCP began celebrating annually in 1933,[93] Children's Leagues gathered to commemorate

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[90] "Suqu zhongyang ertongju guanyu chunji chongfengji zhong ertong yundong de jueding" (Soviet Area Children's Bureau Central Committee Decision Concerning the Children's Movement Amid the Spring Assault Season), January 5, 1933, reprinted in *ZQYLS*, 12:8.

[91] For Mao's comments, see Mao Zedong, "Investigation of Changgang Township," November 18, 1933, 618, in *Mao's Road to Power: The Rise and Fall of the Chinese Soviet Republic, 1931-1934*, eds., Stuart Schram and Nancy Jane Hodes (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992). For CYL CC remarks, see "Zhongyang suqu ertong ganbu huiyi jueyian" (Resolution of the Soviet Area Central Committee Children's Bureau Cadres Conference), August 1932, reprinted in *ZQYLS*, 11:432.

[92] "Tuan Gan dongbei shengwei baogao" (Northeast Jiangxi Provincial Committee of the Chinese Communist Youth League Report), May 17, 1932, reprinted in *ZQYLS*, 10:636.

[93] The CYL's first call for celebrating Children's Day (*ertongjie*) did not come until January 1933. See "Suqu zhongyang ertongju guanyu chunji chongfengji zhong ertong yundong de jueding" (Soviet Area Children's Bureau Central Committee Decision Concerning the Children's Movement Amid the Spring Assault Season), January 5, 1933, reprinted in *ZQYLS*, 12:10-11.

occasions that included International Youth Day, Labor Day, and anniversaries of events such as the October Revolution and May Thirtieth Incident.[94] In addition to showcasing for local audiences their military prowess, children on these occasions gave speeches, played organized games, and participated in friendly competitions for awards and honors.[95]

Children acted as agents of revolution by carrying out the CYL's social reform program. This included practicing forms of hygienic modernity. Children formed "hygiene teams" (*ertong weishengdui*), which modeled for local communities the ideals of personal cleanliness. Such behavior included eating at fixed times, regularly bathing, washing clothes, trimming hair and nails, brushing teeth, and abstaining from vices such as smoking and drinking alcohol.[96] In addition to managing their own bodies, members of the Children's Leagues worked to sanitize public and private spaces. Children promoted the flooding of private homes with sunlight in order to eradicate flies, mosquitoes, and other harmful pests. They encouraged neighbors to relocate outdoors chamber pots customarily stored inside. Children even encouraged sick neighbors to practice social distancing, whereby they coaxed individuals suffering from disease to both seek a diagnosis from a doctor and refrain from visiting public places. As a matter of

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[94] "Gongqingtuan Jiangxi shengwei gongzuo baogao" (Work Report of the Jiangxi Provincial Committee of the Chinese Communist Youth League), January 3, 1929, reprinted in *ZQYLS*, 5:295; X Shi, "Jiangxi qingnian douzheng zhi xianshi yu qiantu" (The Jiangxi Youth Struggle: Present and Future), November 20, 1929, *Liening qingnian*, Volume 2, Issue 4, reprinted in *ZQYLS*, 6:436; "C. Y. Gan dongbei tewei baogao di wu hao" (Northeast Jiangxi Ad-hoc Committee of the Chinese Communist Youth League, Report Number Five), June 20, 1931, reprinted in *ZQYLS*, 9:234; "Shaogong Min-Yue-Gan shengwei xiang suqu tuan daibiao dahui de yi nian lai gongzuo shumian baogao" (Fujian-Guangdong-Jiangxi Provincial Committee of the Young Communist International Report to the Soviet Area Chinese Communist Youth League Congress Concerning Work Over the Last Year), January 12, 1932, reprinted in *ZQYLS*, 10:96.

[95] "E-Yu-Wan tongzituan daibiao dahui shenghuo" (Life at the Hebei-Henan-Anhui Children's League Congress), January 27, 1932, *Liening qingnian*, Volume 5, Number 1, reprinted in *ZQYLS*, 10:149; "Xiang-E-Gan tuan linshi shengwei gei suqu tuan zhongyangju de baogao" (Hunan-Hubei-Jiangxi Chinese Communist Youth League Provisional Provincial Committee Report to the Soviet Area Chinese Communist Youth League Central Committee Office), March 1932, reprinted in *ZQYLS*, 10:361; "Shaogong gan dongbei shengzhiwei kuodahui jueyian" (Resolution of the Enlarged Congress of the Northeast Jiangxi Provincial Committee of the Young Communist International), June 18, 1932, reprinted in *ZQYLS*, 11:66.

[96] "Zhongyang suqu ertong ganbu huiyi jueyian" (Resolution of the Soviet Area Central Committee Children's Bureau Cadres Conference), August 1932, reprinted in *ZQYLS*, 11:431.

providing peer support, and a means to surveil friendly populations, children formed inspection teams, which monitored local areas for infractions concerning these matters.[97]

Another way children initiated social reform was by actively opposing superstition and religion. As a means of inculcating local communities with "scientific knowledge," children promoted Marx's argument that religion was the opium of the masses. Children learned, for example, that religion was an "anesthetic" used by landlords and capitalists "to confuse workers and peasants."[98] In carrying out anti-superstition and anti-religion campaigns, children discouraged their parents from praying and observing religious holy days. While the scale to which these endeavors succeeded is unknown, Children's Bureau records do document that some Children's League members may have gone too far in these efforts. The CYL CC exhorted its members, for example, to persuade children to privilege "explanation and persuasion" over methods that were "divorced from the masses, such as destroying Bodhisattva's or desecrating ancestral tombs."[99]

Children also participated in political violence. This was the product of the Marxist-Leninist interpretation of age combined with the pre-1927 precedent of involving children in revolutionary work. The reader will remember that from 1922 to 1927, Children's Leagues had been embedded in urban labor union cells, where children participated alongside adults in activities such as factory strikes and demonstrations. Participation in such "struggle," according to the CYL, provided children with the real-world education necessary to prepare youngsters for

[97] Ibid., 11:433; "Suqu zhongyang ertongju guanyu chunji chongfengji zhong ertong yundong de jueding" (Soviet Area Children's Bureau Central Committee Decision Concerning the Children's Movement Amid the Spring Assault Season), January 5, 1933, reprinted in *ZQYLS*, 12:10.
[98] "Zhongyang suqu ertong ganbu huiyi jueyian" (Resolution of the Soviet Area Central Committee Children's Bureau Cadres Conference), August 1932, reprinted in *ZQYLS*, 11:433.
[99] "Suqu zhongyang ertongju guanyu chunji chongfengji zhong ertong yundong de jueding" (Soviet Area Children's Bureau Central Committee Decision Concerning the Children's Movement Amid the Spring Assault Season), January 5, 1933, reprinted in *ZQYLS*, 12:10.

a life as future workers and citizens. Following April 1927, when CCP and CYL activities transitioned from an urban to rural setting, peasant unions and the communist's Red Army displaced worker unions as the primary revolutionary organization. Newly founded Children's Leagues, therefore, became ensconced in peasant unions and local Red Army units, where children assisted adults in carrying out tasks central to the Party's establishment of political and military control.

Evidence for children's participation in violent revolution appears as early as December 1928, when the CYL CC disseminated to its constituency a circular documenting recent examples of how Children's League members had participated "struggle." In rural Hunan and Hubei, for example, the document reports, children "assisted the peasant army in the arrest of local tyrants and landlords and aided in work to suppress counterrevolutionaries."[100] Similarly, in Guangdong, Hainan, and Hunan, Children's Leagues had reportedly contributed directly to "land revolution and guerrilla warfare" by "assisting the Red Army with work such as spying, transporting [communications], and propaganda work." In some cases, the document tells us, "older members [of the Children's League] … *participated in killing enemies*… [and] consolidating political power."[101]

This call for children's participation in violent revolution was widely propagated. Indeed, future publications called on the Children's League to not only carry out revolution through land reform, but even to assist the Red Army in fulfilling paramilitary responsibilities. Prescribed paramilitary responsibilities included transporting communications, collecting and purchasing ammunitions, monitoring nearby crossroads for passersby, inspecting travel documents,

[100] "Zhongguo gongchanzhuyi qingniantuan zhongyang tonggao wu zi di ershi hao—laodong ertong gongzuo" (Chinese Communist Youth League Central Committee Circular 5, Number 20—Child Workers' Work), December 6, 1928, reprinted in *ZQYLS*, 4:411-413.
[101] My emphasis. Ibid.

destroying "deceptive and arbitrary propaganda," and "surveilling the actions of all abnormal class elements."[102] Children's fulfillment of these auxiliary duties was apparently so well-received that *Lenin Youth* remarked that the Children's League constituted "a major and vital force" of the armed masses.[103] Less common, but well documented, are responsibilities that included "seizing political power" and helping "purge all reactionary forces."[104] In September 1930, for example, the CYL's flagship journal, *Lenin Youth*, encouraged the CYL to "organize Children's Leagues to participate in local insurrections." Reports suggest that children took these duties seriously. Too seriously, in fact. One cadre from the Hunan-Hubei-Jiangxi Soviet Area reported an incident involving children hot on the heels of an alleged enemy: "There was one case where children apprehended a counterrevolutionary," the report states. "Because of their young age, the children could not use swords. It was more convenient for them to use bamboo spears [to stab at] the counterrevolutionary. [The children] *pushed him into the water and drowned him*…. These actions demonstrate," the report concludes in an approving tone, "the ferocity of their mentality to struggle."[105]

[102] "Suqu zhongyang ertongju guanyu chunji chongfengji zhong ertong yundong de jueding" (Soviet Area Children's Bureau Central Committee Decision Concerning the Children's Movement Amid the Spring Assault Season), January 5, 1933, reprinted in *ZQYLS*, 12:9. While this specific text comes later in the Soviet Area period, as we have seen, calls for children to serve sentry duty had long been a part of the Chinese Communist tradition. For more recent reports, see "C. Y. Wanxibei tewei baogao" (Report by the Northwest Anhui Ad-hoc Committee of the Chinese Communist Youth League), September 14, 1931, reprinted in *ZQYLS*, 9:360; "Gan dongbei tuan shengwei guanyu ertongtuan gongzuo jueyi" (Northeast Jiangxi Provincial Committee of the Chinese Communist Youth League Resolution on Children's League Work), March 25, 1932, reprinted in *ZQYLS*, 10:323; "Tuan Gan dongbei shengwei baogao" (Northeast Jiangxi Provincial Committee of the Chinese Communist Youth League Report), May 17, 1932, reprinted in *ZQYLS*, 10:624; "XX tongzhi guanyu Xiang-E-Gan gongzuo de baogao" (Comrade XX's Work Report on the Hunan-Hubei-Jiangxi [Soviet Area]), September 3, 1932, reprinted in *ZQYLS*, 11:456, 462-463.
[103] Sen Bao, "Suqu qingnian yingyong de canjia er ci zhanzheng" (Soviet-area Youth Courageously Participate in the Second Battle), October 10, 1931, *Liening qingnian*, Number 10, reprinted in *ZQYLS*, 9:302-305.
[104] Yu Cheng, "Zuzhi qingnian nongmin canjia difang baodong" (Organize Rural Youth to Participate in Local Insurrection), April 10, 1930, *Liening qingnian*, reprinted in *ZQYLS*, 7:331.
[105] My emphasis. "XX tongzhi guanyu Xiang-E-Gan gongzuo de baogao" (Comrade XX's Work Report on the Hunan-Hubei-Jiangxi [Soviet Area]), September 3, 1932, reprinted in *ZQYLS*, 11:462-463.

While much of this rhetoric's tone was prideful, cadres knew all too well that children, once mobilized, could be difficult to control. The aforementioned accounts of children drowning a suspected counterrevolutionary was not an isolated incident of political violence. The same work report details a situation where a Children's League had formed—without the consent of the Soviet Government—"political investigation" (*zhengzhi zhentan*) and "search-and-arrest" teams (*zhenjidui*). These teams acted with the explicit purpose of capturing individuals affiliated with "reactionary parties." According to the report, these groups operated as follows. "Upon procuring a confession, they would arrest. After the arrest, they would interrogate. During the interrogation, they would beat. While beating, they would kill" (*yi gong jiu zhuo, yi zhuo jiu shen, yi shen jiu da, yi da jiu sha*). Such actions, the report concludes, "incited undue panic among the masses."[106] While the historical record indicates no other instances of homicide, the Soviet Area CYL did report that some bureaus had "made the mistake of involving children purely in military matters…to the extent that they had mobilized children to join the Red Army" (*dang hongjun*).[107]

Children in the Northwest Border Region, 1936

> I had never before seen so much personal dignity in any Chinese youngsters. This first encounter was only the beginning of a series of surprises that the Young Vanguards were to give me, for as I penetrated deeper into the soviet districts I was to discover in these red-cheeked "little red devils"—cheerful, gay, energetic, and loyal—the living spirit of an astonishing crusade of youth.[108]

[106] "XX tongzhi guanyu Xiang-E-Gan gongzuo de baogao" (Comrade XX's Work Report on the Hunan-Hubei-Jiangxi [Soviet Area]), September 3, 1932, reprinted in *ZQYLS*, 11:453. Other instances of children's involvement in "investigation work" (*zhentan gongzuo*) can be found here: "Tuan zhongyang guanyu ertong yundong jueyian" (Chinese Communist Youth League Central Committee Resolution on the Children's Movement), June 17, 1931, reprinted in *ZQYLS*, 9:230.
[107] "Suqu tuan di yi ci daibiao dahui wenjian" (Documents from the Soviet Area Chinese Communist Youth League's First Congress), January 25, 1932, reprinted in *ZQYLS*, 10:131.
[108] Snow, *Red Star Over China*, 69-70.

This chapter concludes by returning to Edgar Snow's *Red Star Over China*. One impetus that motivated Snow's reporting of the CCP was to discover who supported the Party and why. Like many foreigners in China at the time, Snow spent much of his time in developed urban centers under the governance of the Chinese Nationalists. As with his peers, Snow had initially supported Chiang Kai-shek and the GMD government only to become disillusioned over time with the Nationalist Party's corruption, inefficiency, and incessant capitulation to predatory imperial powers. These feelings of disenchantment intensified throughout the 1930s and hit their apex in the winter of 1935-36. Snow's travel to the CCP's Shaan-Gan-Ning base area, then, was a quest to see for himself—and for the world—not only what the Chinese Communists had to offer, but why it was that so many were flocking to support them.

The nature of Snow's inquiry led him to record countless conversations with ordinary Chinese individuals that he encountered throughout his travels. Many of these people were children and adolescents. Snow's observations, I argue, suggest that children and youth supported, worked for, and fought for the Communists for very practical reasons. First, these children received food, protection, and education. Second, the Communists' concern for children's general well-being meant that they were well treated and not physically abused. Third, along with the Party came measurable material improvements, including wireless technology and news from the outside world. These material developments legitimized the Communists as a force of change and therefore made children and youth amenable to the Party's cultural messaging. This amenability is evident in how the children and youth Snow encountered deployed the Party's Marxist-Leninist vocabulary. Taken together, I argue, these observations suggest that by the time of Snow's arrival in 1936, the "communist child" was alive and well in northwest China. Due to the paucity of direct observations adults made about children in

communist-held territories during this time, and the subsequent lack of children's own voices, I have included in full instances of Snow's text that help to elucidate the lived experience of children under Communist jurisdiction.

Most of the children and youth with whom Snow spoke belonged to what he called the Young Vanguards (*shaonian xianfengdui*), commonly known today as the Young Pioneers.[109] Snow described the Young Vanguards as a group of youngsters aged eleven to sixteen that was organized by the Communist Youth League. With a "model company" embedded in every Red Army encampment, the northwest Soviet districts were home to approximately 40,000 Young Vanguards.[110] These children and youths worked as "orderlies, mess boys, buglers, spies, radio operators, water carriers, propagandists, actors, [stable boys], nurses, secretaries, and even teachers." Snow observed that he had once seen "such a youngster, before a big map, lecturing a class of new recruits on world geography." Taken as a whole, Snow commented, "their fortitude was amazing, and their loyalty to the Red Army was the intense and unquestioning loyalty of the very young."[111]

> Most of them wore uniforms too big for them, with sleeves dangling to their knees and coats dragging nearly to the ground. They washed their hands and faces three times a day, they claimed, but they were always dirty, their noses were usually running, and they were often wiping them with a sleeve, and grinning. The world nevertheless was theirs: they had enough to eat, they had a blanket each, the leaders even had pistols…and broken-peaked caps a size or more too large, but with the red star. They were often of uncertain origin: many could not remember their parents, many were escaped apprentices, some had been slaves… Most of them were runaways from huts with too many mouths to feed, and all of them had made their own decisions to join. Sometimes a whole group of youngsters had run off to the Reds together…. many had actually participated in battles. It was said that in Kiangsi, after the main [Red] Army left, hundreds of Young Vanguards and Young Communists fought beside adult partisans, and even made bayonet charges—so that the White soldiers laughingly said they could grab their bayonets and pull them

[109] An important difference between the Young Pioneers of the 1930s and 1940s and the Young Pioneers of today is the age of its membership. Whereas today there is only one youth organization for children aged six to fourteen, prior to the establishment of the PRC there were two: the Children's League and the Young Pioneers.
[110] Snow, *Red Star Over China*, 322-323.
[111] Ibid., 324.

> into their trenches, they were so small and light. Many of the captured "Reds" in Chiang's reform schools for bandits in Kiangsi were youths from ten to fifteen years old.[112]

Several aspects of Snow's commentary are notable. First are these children's ages and ambiguous origins. As Snow notes, many had joined the CCP at such a young age that they had recollection of neither their geographic origins nor their own parents. Some children, undoubtedly either sold or "adopted" into apprenticeships and/or slavery, likely had no parents to claim them as biological kin. Though Snow noted that these children ranged in ages from eleven to sixteen, he remarks that many of these youngsters had joined the Communists in southcentral Jiangxi as late as 1934, two years prior to Snow's arrival in northwest Shaanxi. This indicates that some children whom Snow met joined the Communists at ages as young as nine to fourteen. The second noteworthy feature of this passage is the reasons given for the enthusiasm with which children joined the Communists. As Snow recorded, these children began following the Communists as a means to escape dire situations that likely included physical and emotional abuse, and, as Snow confirms, starvation. The Party provided children with clothing, enough to eat, a blanket to keep warm, and, perhaps most importantly, choice. As Snow repeatedly states, "the world… was theirs," and they "made their own decisions." A final consideration is that Snow confirms our earlier observations that children directly participated in political violence. He commented that Young Vanguard leaders "had pistols," some "had actually participated in battles," and others, fighting "beside adult partisans," had "even made bayonet charges." Snow reminds the reader of the children's fledgling stature by describing how these youngsters were literally manhandled by Nationalist troops.

[112] Ibid., 324

Red Star Over China documents multiple interviews from which we hear children's own voices. These interviews suggest that children and youth's allegiance to the Party was a matter of both pragmatism and principled conviction. En route to the Party's northwest base area, for example, Snow interviewed two teenagers he described as "hardly more than children." Named "Old Dog" and "Local Cousin," the youths had joined the Communists during the earlier Soviet period (1927-1934), traveling with the CCP and CYL over 5,000 miles from Fujian and Jiangxi, to China's northwest. When Snow asked the two whether they liked the Red Army, "they looked at [him] in genuine amazement" as if it had "never occurred to either of them that anyone could not like the Red Army." Old Dog remarked that the Red Army had taught him to read and write, to operate a radio, and to shoot a rifle. Moreover, he added, "The Red Army helps the poor." Local Cousin added that the Red Army "is good to us and we are never beaten…. Here everybody is the same…. Here everybody fights to help the poor, and to save China. The Red Army fights the landlords and the White bandits and the Red Army is anti-Japanese. Why should anyone not like such an army as this?" Other youths eavesdropping on the interview echoed Old Dog and Local Cousin's sentiment.[113]

On another occasion, Snow recorded having the following conversation with small children:

> "What is a communist?" I asked.
> "He is a citizen who helps the Red Army fight the White bandits and the Japanese," one youngster of nine or ten piped up.
> "What else?"
> "He helps fight the landlords and the capitalists!"
> "But what is a capitalist?" That silenced one child, but another came forward: "A capitalist is a man who does not work, but makes others work for him."
> Oversimplification, perhaps, but I went on: "Are there any landlords or capitalists here?"
> "No!" They all shrieked together. "They've all run away!"
> "Run away? From what?"

[113] Ibid., 82-84.

"From our Red Army!"[114]

Once Snow reached the Shaan-Gan-Ning base area, he spent much of his time speaking with local villagers and learning about their attitudes toward the Communists. In one such exchange, a farmer acknowledged that the locals had helped the Red Army to commit numerous "crimes" against the area's previous "White," or Chinese Nationalist, administration. The man admitted that should the GMD return and seek reprisals against the Communists, locals would have no choice but to abandon their homes and retreat. Listening in on this conversation was "a barefoot youth in his teens," who felt compelled to interject. "You call these things crimes, grandfather? These are patriotic acts! Why do we do them? Isn't it because our Red Army is a poor people's army and fights for our rights?" The boy, Snow writes, continued enthusiastically:

> Did we have free school in Chou Chia before? Did we ever get news of the world before the Red brought us wireless technology? Who told us what the world is like? You say the cooperative has no cloth, but did we ever have a cooperative before? And how about your farm, wasn't there a big mortgage on it to landlord Wang? My sister starved to death three years ago, but haven't we had plenty to eat since the Reds came? You say it's bitter, but it isn't bitter for us young people if we can learn to read! It isn't bitter for us Young Vanguards when we learn to use a rifle and fight the traitors and Japan![115]

A final account of Snow's interaction with children and youth comes when he stumbled across a group of Young Vanguards. Assuming the children must be homesick, Snow was shocked to discover that these were no "mama's boy[s]." One fifteen-year-old with whom he spoke remarked that he had been with the Reds for four years, joining them in the south prior to the Long March. "Four years!" Snow exclaimed incredulously. "Then you must have been only eleven when you became a Red? And you made the Long March?"

> "Right," he responded with a comical swagger. "I have been a [part of the Red Army] for four years."
> "Why did you join?" I asked.

[114] Ibid., 85.
[115] Ibid., 244.

> "My family lived near Changchow, in Fukien. I used to cut wood in the mountains, and in the winter I went there to collect bark. I often heard the villagers talk about the Red Army. They said it helped the poor people, and I liked that. Our house was very poor. We were six people, my parents and three brothers, older than I. We owned no land. Rent ate more than half our crop, so we never had enough. In the winter, we cooked bark for soup and saved our grain for planting in the spring. I was always hungry. One year the Reds came very close to Changchow. I climbed over the mountains and went to ask them to help our house because we were very poor. They were good to me. They sent me to school for a while, and I had plenty to eat. After a few months the Red Army captured Changchow, and went to my village. All the landlords and moneylenders and officials were driven out. My family was given land and did not have to pay the tax collectors and landlords any more. They were happy and they were proud of me. Two of my brothers joined the Red Army.[116]

In each of these interviews we gain a sense of how both pragmatism and principled conviction earned for the CCP and CYL children's and youth's support. Almost all of the children interviewed here commented that the Party had provided them with a basic education. Children learned to read and write, how to operate a radio and shoot a rifle, and, for the first time, of the world outside their local villages. Material improvements included clothing, enough food to eat, land to till, and the elimination of debt. Moreover, the Party provided organization and discipline, through agricultural cooperatives, the Young Vanguards, and the Red Army, all of which helped to build a sense of community and common purpose. One child remarked that the Party treated everyone fairly and that because he was not beaten that he felt respected.

While children spoke most often of pragmatic improvements, we should pay equal attention to how these youngsters appear to have internalized and deployed the Party's legitimizing narrative. In addition to satisfying these children's basic physical needs, providing security and belonging, and building self-esteem, the Party and Red Army, according to the interviewees, fought landlords, capitalists, moneylenders, and the GMD. They did so "to help the poor" and to "save China." Moreover, by embedding the children in the Red Army and training them as "orderlies, mess boys, buglers, spies, radio operators, water carriers, propagandists,

[116] Ibid., 322-323.

actors, [stable boys], nurses, secretaries, and even teachers," the Party provided children with a personal stake in the revolutionary movement. We can see this in how these children talk about "our army" and "our rights." Indeed, that children appear to have internalized this narrative is evident not only in the reasons they give for supporting the Party, but in their deployment of the narrative's ideological vocabulary, which included words such as citizen, landlord, capitalist, white bandit, and traitor.

Conclusion

This chapter has demonstrated that between 1922 and 1936, the CYL targeted and organized children aged seven to fourteen in efforts to incorporate them and their labor into the Chinese Communist revolution. Children were important as forms of human capital—future workers and citizens that required education and training in order to carry on the revolution. They were also crucial sources of labor. Throughout the 1920s and 1930s, the Communist movement suffered from critical personnel and financial shortages. Children therefore became important sources of labor, contributing to the revolution by carrying out a variety of logistical tasks.

From 1922 to 1927, the CYL incorporated children into the Communist revolution through the Children's League, the general aims of which included improving children's livelihood, instilling class consciousness, providing training and education, and encouraging children's participation in direct political action. In this urban phase of the Communist movement, Children's Leagues were embedded in adult labor and workers' unions. Children's involvement in political action reflected this, with youngsters participating in factory strikes and demonstrations, distributing propaganda, and performing in street theater.

Whereas this first phase of the Communist Children's Movement reflected an engagement with Communist principles, the nature of the CCP-GMD United Front required the CCP downplay class struggle. This was clearly discarded following the collapse of that alliance and is evident during the post-1927 period in the Party's inconspicuous embrace of Marxism-Leninism as an epistemology. For example, the CCP and CYL's decision to subordinate age to class prompted the involvement of the Children's League's involvement in revolutionary work. Combined with the Communists dire need for labor, Children's Leagues in the rural Soviets—now embedded in worker and peasant unions and Red Army units—contributed to agricultural production, transported material and communications, performed reconnaissance activities, solicited donations, sold government bonds, and participated in a range of social reform campaigns. The progressive escalation of children's involvement in revolutionary work prompted children's participation in political violence. As the historical record demonstrates, children assisted the Red Army in arresting individuals judged to be obstructionists and class enemies. Children also helped adults in investigating, arresting, purging, and suppressing so-called counterrevolutionaries. In some instances, these activities included violent confrontation where children killed the targets of their efforts.

CHAPTER 3: Polemical Pedagogy: Educating Little Revolutionaries

This chapter focuses on the institution of primary school education with the objective of demonstrating how state actors sought to shape the wartime communist child. It argues that the CCP designed border region primary school education first and foremost to serve the Party's multi-faceted political agenda. From 1937 to 1948, this included servicing multiple war efforts, nation building, and constructing and expanding Party hegemony. This chapter is divided into two sections. Section one examines top-down education policy. Throughout the Second Sino-Japanese War and Chinese Civil War, border region education faced numerous hardships. From 1937 to 1945, these included reaching and enrolling children into newly established or rehabilitated schools, material shortages, and convincing parents of education's utility. Following the war with Japan, border region education continued to face these challenges in addition to those associated with rapid territorial expansion and land reform. Throughout the first section of this chapter, I argue that border region education responded flexibly, pragmatically, and improvisationally to these challenges so as to best reach and mobilize children to serve the Party's political agenda.

I conclude section one by arguing that the border region government not only succeeded in reaching and enrolling rural children in state-sponsored primary schools, but that this process initiated a comprehensive institutionalization of childhood on an unparalleled scale. By "institutionalization," I mean the incorporation of China's children into recently established institutions that sought to both provide structure to their lives while also mobilizing their labor for a wide range of political objectives.[117] As we will see, the Jin-Cha-Ji border region

[117] The two main institutions were primary school education and the extracurricular Anti-Japanese Children's League. The latter is discussed in chapter three.

community suffered greatly throughout the war. Despite incessant hardship, the government was incredibly successful in its efforts to expand the institution of education and enroll local children in local primary schools. Estimates indicate that prior to the war's outbreak, primary schools in central and west Hebei enrolled between 200,000 to 300,000 students, which constituted 20 to 30 percent of eligible school-aged children. By June 1946, these two territories alone swelled to an enrollment figure of over 835,000, which constituted 70 to 90 percent of school-aged children. In June 1946, the border region as a whole, which expanded eastward after the Japanese surrender, had enrolled 1,464,784 million children.[118] The Jin-Cha-Ji border region was just one of nineteen border regions throughout China. In 1949, approximately 24 million children were enrolled in primary schools, well over double the 10.3 million enrolled during the 1930-31 school year.[119]

The second section of this chapter examines primary school textbooks published during the Second Sino-Japanese War.[120] As with other state-sponsored education endeavors around the globe at this time, border region education sought to use primary schools as a means to strengthen the nation by incorporating children—viewed as future citizens and workers—into the state and inculcating in them the dominant ideology of the state. As a form of political socialization, primary school education sought to integrate Chinese children into structures and networks that would foster a prescribed identity attached to civil society and the burgeoning

[118] For a breakdown of primary school enrollment figures in early 1946, see "Bianqu xiaoxuexiao zaoshou rikou de pohuai yu fuxing jianshe jihua" (Border Region Primary School Education, Its Destruction by the Japanese, and a Plan for Its Rebuilding), April 30, 1946, reprinted in *JCJCDJY*, 1:157-162. For statistics on number of schools and students by geographical area, see Cao Jianying, *Jin-Cha-Ji bianqu jiaoyushi* [A History of Education in the Jin-Cha-Ji Border Region] (Shijiazhuang: Hebei jiaoyu chubanshe, 1995), 281-283.
[119] Suzanne Pepper, *Radicalism and Education Reform in Twentieth-Century China: The Search for an Ideal Development Model* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1996).
[120] Source limitations preclude me from making anything more than general observations about the period following the end of the Second Sino-Japanese War in 1945. A detailed analysis of the post-1945 period must be reserved for elsewhere.

socialist state.[121] In contrast to the instructions and reports that detail top-down education policy, textbooks tell us specifically what children learned in actual classroom environments.

Textbooks do more than demonstrate a society's efforts at teaching basic literacy. As scholars working on other contexts have demonstrated, primary school textbooks teach multiple literacies: grammatical, social, cultural, and political.[122] Moreover, the text and images used to construct these textbooks are laden with cues about everything including normative behavior, affective association, and political ideals. As such, textbooks help us to answer fundamental questions about the intersection of the state, society, and childhood. What counted as basic and necessary knowledge? What did it mean to be Chinese? What were the rights and duties of children as human beings, students, and citizens? What was the correct attitude toward the past and traditional Chinese culture? How could society solve social problems and resist imperialism?[123] As with other scholars of Republican-era textbooks, I focus here specifically on Language (*Guoyu*) and General Knowledge (*Changshi*) textbooks, as these deal directly with social, cultural, and political topics. By doing so, I have chosen not to engage with those focused on subjects such as math or science. Similarly, whereas the first section of this chapter discusses educational policy, my reading of border region textbooks examines these pedagogical tools as mediums of political socialization.[124]

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[121] Olga Dror, "Love, Hatred, and Heroism: Socializing Children in North Vietnam during Wartime, 1965-75," *The Journal of the History of Childhood and Youth*, Volume 9, Number 3 (Fall 2016): 426; Tracy H. Koon, *Believe, Obey, Fight: Political Socialization of Youth in Fascist Italy, 1922-1943* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1985).
[122] Julie K. deGraffenried, "Learning More than Letters: Alphabet Books in the Soviet Union and the United States During World War II," in *War and Childhood in the Era of the Two World Wars*, eds., Mischa Honeck and James Marten (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2019).
[123] Peter G. Zarrow, *Educating China: Knowledge, Society, and Textbooks in a Modernizing World, 1902-1937* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015), 6.
[124] Ibid.

As I argue below, the content and aims of border region textbooks in many ways were congruent with those published throughout urban areas during China's Republican period (1912-1949). Education in the border regions, for example, sought to instill in children a sense of citizenship by emphasizing national identity, social and cultural membership, and encouraging children to exercise their rights by participating in political events.[125] Similarly, citizenship discourse in border region textbooks sought to establish children as members of a national community. Expanding on the dominant Confucian tradition whereby individual identity was conceived largely in relation to one's familial relationships, Republican-era citizenship discourse taught children to think and behave not merely as a member of a family, but as a national citizen. As citizens, Chinese children possessed rights and obligations to the nation while also remaining firmly embedded in familial and local relationships.[126]

Despite these similarities, border region textbooks and the education they promoted were in many ways radically different from those found in urban classrooms. First, despite the Second United Front (1937-1945), which tempered to some degree the CCP and GMD's otherwise hostile relationship, border region textbooks promoted a Marxist-Leninist interpretation of recent Chinese history, the causes and developments of the Second Sino-Japanese War, and other contemporary events. In this way, the Chinese Communist Party continued to apply its interpretation of Marxist-Leninist doctrine—which we examined in chapter one—to how it organized, educated, and sought to mobilize children. Embedded in primary school textbook narratives, for example, were calls for radical social change and egalitarianism, which contrasted with other curricular efforts that emphasized social harmony and adherence to hierarchy. A

[125] Robert J. Culp, *Articulating Citizenship: Civic Education and Student Politics in Southeastern China, 1912-1940* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Asia Center, 2007), 9.
[126] Zarrow, *Educating China*, 78-79.

second difference concerning border region education and textbooks was that they specifically targeted the historically underserved rural peasant population. Finally, and most conspicuously, border region education took every effort to prepare and mobilize children for confronting the everyday violence that was endemic throughout Japanese-occupied north China during this period.

Border Region Education Policy

Border region primary school education policy progressed through five distinct and sometimes overlapping stages: rehabilitation and reorganization (1937-1940), guerrilla education (1941-1943), the "mass line" (1944-48), expansion and land reform (1946-48), and demobilization and demilitarization (1948-1949). Due to source limitations, I deal here only with the first four of these stages.[127] Following the July 7, 1937, Marco Polo Bridge Incident, which marked the beginning of Japan's full-scale invasion, a political vacuum opened up in north China. As the Japanese Imperial Army pushed the Chinese Nationalist Party and its governing apparatus southward, an opportunity emerged for the Chinese Communist Party to fill this void and establish political and military control in the region. Under its "behind enemy lines" policy, the Party dispatched large numbers of troops from its wartime capital in Yan'an into the northern provinces of Shanxi, Hebei, Henan, Chahar, and Shandong. These soldiers, who would later become the Eighth Route Army (ERA), sought to establish a politico-military presence, organize

[127] It is clear that the border region began to demilitarize education in north China following 1945. However, without a robust enough source base I am unable to make authoritative conclusions concerning the hows and whys of this process. In particular, for the sources I use here and throughout the dissertation, archival materials are organized according to mainland border region chronology. Since the Jin-Cha-Ji (Shanxi-Chahar-Hebei) border region officially ended in September 1948, when it was merged with the Jin-Ji-Lu-Yu (Hebei-Shanxi-Hubei-Shandong) border region to form the North China People's Government, "border region" archival materials cease to exist after this date. An analysis of the important transition period from 1948 to 1953 will have to be taken up other scholars.

agricultural production, and arm the local populations to defend their homes.[128] Factors such as the Nationalist government's vacancy of north China, the relative absence of the Japanese army, which had deployed southward to battle the retreating GMD, and an already robust network of communist members and sympathizers in the region helped to facilitate the Party's rapid expansion.[129]

To help build legitimacy among the population for its rule and realize its goals of establishing control, improving agricultural production, and organizing local resistance, the border region government carried out a variety of tasks it deemed as "education work" (*jiaoyu gongzuo*). This catchall phrase encompassed the establishment of educational spaces, classroom-based instruction, and the general dissemination of information and knowledge to the rural populace. This work was further divided into two subcategories: school-based teaching (*xuexiao jiaoyu*) and social education (*shehui jiaoyu*). The former included formal institutional education found in primary, middle, and cadre schools. The latter concerned informal, part-time, and seasonal education. Education work often overlapped with "culture and propaganda work" (*wenhua xuanchuan gongzuo*), which concerned the writing, printing, and distribution of newspapers, magazines, and pedagogical journals, as well as the production and performance of street theater and lectures.[130]

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[128] Yang Kuisong, "Nationalist and Community Guerrilla Warfare in North China," in *The Battle for China: Essays on the Military History of the Sino-Japanese War of 1937-1945*, eds., Mark Peattie, Edward Drea, and Hans van de Ven (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2011), 310.

[129] For Party presence in rural Hebei in the 1920s and early 1930s, see Kathleen Hartford, "Fits and Starts: The Communist Party in Rural Hebei, 1921-1936," in Tony Saich, ed., *New Perspectives on the Chinese Revolution* (New York: Routledge, 1995). For pre-war Japanese policy in and Nationalist surrender of north China, see Marjorie Dryburgh, *North China and Japanese Expansion, 1933-1937: Regional Power and National Interest* (Richmond: Curzon, 2000).

[130] See also Song Shaowen, "Bianqu wenhua jiaoyu gongzuo ying nuli de fangxiang ji dangqiang de ji ge juti wenti" (The Direction in which Border Region Culture and Education Work Should Strive, as well as Some Present Problems), *Bianqu jiaoyu*, August 1, 1940, reprinted in *JCJJUFZZC*, 1:154.

At the broadest level, the main objective of education work was to serve politics, and the pre-eminent political task during this period was to service war. First against Japan (1937-45), and then against the Nationalists (1946-49). This is evident in the Party documents published immediately following Japan's full-scale invasion. In August 1937, for example, the CCP Central Committee had written an "anti-Japanese education policy" into its "Top Ten Guiding Principles for Resisting the Japanese and National Salvation," which would direct Party policy throughout the Second Sino-Japanese War.[131] Cadres throughout the Jin-Cha-Ji border region bureaucracy reiterated the need for education—including that provided to children in primary schools—to serve politics. Liu Aifeng, Department of Education Head from the early 1940s, remarked that "the misconception that we should educate for education's sake must be discarded. [Education work] must make an immediate, political impact."[132] Cheng Fangwu, Dean of Northern Associated University (*Huabei lianda*) stated that educators must help children to recognize both "the current state of the war" and "their particular responsibilities" to wartime endeavors.[133] The region's highest political officer, Song Shaowen, wrote in multiple directives and articles that border region children were receiving "national defense" and "anti-Japanese resistance" education. He, too, noted that education was not for education's sake, but was "a tool to service the nation," and that education work was central to the mobilization of all border region people, including children.[134]

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[131] Mao Zedong, "For the Mobilization of All the Nation's Forces for Victory in the War of Resistance," August 25, 1937, https://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/mao/selected-works/volume-2/mswv2_02.htm.
[132] Liu Aifeng, "Jizhong wu nian jiaoyu gongzuo de zongjie (1938 nian - 1942 nian)" (A Summary of Five Years of Education Work in Jizhong), April 5, 1942, reprinted in *JCJJUFZZC*, 1:348.
[133] Cheng Fangwu, "Guanyu bianqu de jiaoyu gongzuo" (On Border Region Education Work), February 1, 1940, *Bianqu jiaoyu*, reprinted in *JCJJUFZZC*, 1:99-100.
[134] Song Shaowen, "Zhu bianqu xuelian de chengli" (Celebrating the Founding of the Border Region Students' Federation), *Kangdibao*, May 18, 1940, reprinted in *JCJJUFZZC*, 1:124; Song Shaowen, "Bianqu wenhua jiaoyu gongzuo ying nuli de fangxiang ji dangqiang de ji ge juti wenti" (The Direction in which Border Region Culture and Education Work Should Strive, as well as Some Present Problems), *Bianqu jiaoyu*, August 1, 1940, reprinted in *JCJJUFZZC*, 1:150.

Statistics from late 1937 to mid-1940—a period when the border region government expanded its territory and influence more or less unchallenged—provide a baseline for two major political objectives. First, to the degree the government succeeded in rehabilitating and expanding access to primary school education. Second, to the degree the Party advanced its reach and incorporated—at least ostensibly—rural children into the bourgeoning socialist state. Data from 1937 indicates that prior to the war, central Hebei—the most prosperous and urbane area of the province—had 146 upper and 4,258 lower primary schools with at total enrollment of 183,604 students. Following the war's onset, eighty to ninety percent of these schools reportedly closed. By 1938, however, the border region government had rehabilitated or established 76 upper and 3,372 lower primary schools, and (re)enrolled 163,606 students. By August 1940, immediately prior to when the Japanese North Area Army began challenging the Party's unchecked expansion, statistics show that central Hebei was home to 178 upper and 3,142 lower primary schools, with a total of 316,342 students. At this time, data becomes available for the border region's territory located in northwest Hebei. While pre-war figures for this location are unavailable, documents from late 1939 report that the government had (re)established 1,014 upper and lower primary schools, with a total enrollment of 110,627 children. While this latter figure was just about one-third of central Hebei's numbers, the compiler remarked that enrollments had "more than doubled" since the pre-war period.[135] Presuming no major decrease in the 1939 numbers, the border region as a whole boasted a total enrollment in August 1940 of

[135] Compared to the more economically developed area of central Hebei, the northwest was less well-connected to infrastructure, relatively more rural, and sparsely populated, due largely to its more rugged, mountainous topography. These statistics refer to the Western Hebei region as *luxi*, or "west of the [Beiping-Shijiazhuang] tracks." This was the political designation for what became the Beiyue region prior to January 1, 1941. On this date, the three *luxi* regions of Western Hebei (Jixi), Northeast Shanxi (Jindongbei), and Southern Chahar (Yanbei), merged to become the Beiyue district. "San nian lai bianqu de wenhua jiaoyu shiye" (Three Years of Border Region Culture and Education Work), *Kangdi zhoubao*, autumn 1940, reprinted in *JCJJUFZZC*, 1:242; "Jizhong qu liang nian lai jiaoyu gongzuo de zongjie" (A Summary of Two Years' Education Work in Central Hebei), *Bianqu jiaoyu*, March 1, 1940, reprinted in *JCJCDJY*, 1:22-27.

426,969 students. If we are to trust the accuracy of these reports, they suggest that the Party, when compared to the pre-war government, was successful both in rehabilitating and establishing new schools, and in reaching more children than previous governments.[136]

Late 1940 marked a significant turning point for the border region government and its rural residents. With the mainland's eastern seaboard more or less consolidated under its power, and the Nationalists sequestered to southcentral China, the Japanese army turned its attention to the Communist army in north China. From late 1940 through 1943, Japan carried out its infamous scorched-early policy known as the Three Alls (loot all, burn all, kill all). This strategy called for the total annihilation of the border region, rendering the territory utterly inhospitable. During the policy's implementation, Japanese soldiers killed or carried off rural residents, looted, burned, or trampled grain, razed entire villages, slaughtered or stole livestock, cut down trees, destroyed irrigation works, and maintained strict control over villagers' movement. Moats stretching one yard deep divided counties, districts, and villages, all to restrict Communist forces. Between heavily armed fortifications known as blockhouses, the Japanese removed trees, buildings, and other obstacles that impeded line of sight and direct fire.[137]

A handful of statistics illustrate the magnitude of these operations. The four largest campaigns from August 1941 to September 1943 lasted between two to four months each and employed between 40,000 to 100,000 troops per operation. By December 1942, the Japanese had constructed throughout the border region 3,356 fortifications, over 897 *li* of walls, laid 26,905 *li*

[136] The simple truth is that there are no available documents we can use to verify or refute the border region's own statistics. It appears from the earliest reports that border region officials supported their own baseline data using the previous government's reports. Unfortunately, I was unable to access the archives that may have housed these reports during my research.

[137] Kathleen Hartford, "Repression and Communist Success: The Case of Jin-Cha-Ji, 1938-1943," in *Single Sparks: China's Rural Revolutions* (Armonk, N.Y.: M. E. Sharpe, 1989), eds., Kathleen Hartford and Steven M. Goldstein, 107-8; Yang, "Nationalist and Community Guerrilla Warfare in North China," 320-21.

of paved highways, and dug 7,885 *li* of ditches.[138] In some places, the blockade ditches spanned twenty feet wide and thirty feet deep. During the August 1941 campaign in the region's northern Beiyue and west-of-Beiping territories, 70,000 troops forced approximately 17,000 Chinese into draft labor brigades, razed 150,000 homes, and slaughtered over 10,000 heads of cattle. In late 1942, an attack on the Communists' model county of Pingshan, located in West Hebei, saw the Imperial Army burn over 60,000 houses, destroy over 58.5 million catties of grain, trample over 50,000 *mu* of crops—more than ten percent of the area's cultivatable land—murder 5,000 civilians, and drag off 20,000 men and women, the latter of which constituted approximately 8.5 percent of the county's population. The final campaign of 1942 concluded with the creation of a "no man's land" (*wurenqu*). From September to October, a cordon of 46,000 troops stretching approximately forty *li* began in the border region's northern territory. Marching slowly southward, the army created a drag net that either dispersed or eradicated all human communities in its path. In the end, the "no man's land" stretched approximately 700 *li* from east to west, and roughly eighty *li* from north to south. According to Hartford, while the border region suffered significant material damage and loss of life—at least 2.7 million civilians died according to historian Mitsuyoshi Himeta—these losses were far fewer than the Japanese had intended.[139]

Primary schools and their students were not immune from Japanese assaults. One report from central Hebei documents that between October 1939 and September 1940 Japanese soldiers arrested 151 primary school students. Of these, only 140 returned on bail. Of the other eleven, nine children were "martyred" (*xishengzhe*). The location of the remainder was unknown. Such

[138] One Chinese *li* is equal to approximately one-half kilometer. A cattie is one-half kilogram. A *mu* is approximately 0.165 acres of land.
[139] Hartford, "Repression and Communist Success," 107-109; Cao, 159-160; Herbert P. Bix, *Hirohito and the Making of Modern Japan* (New York: Harper Collins Publishers, 2000), 365-66, 657; June M. Grasso, Jay P. Corrin, Michael Kort, *Modernization and Revolution in China: From the Opium Wars to World Power* (Armonk, N.Y.: M. E. Sharpe, 2004), 129.

raids also endangered instructors. During the same spate of arrests, the Japanese detained 135 teachers, of whom 98 were released on bail. Of those not freed, twenty-four were listed as martyred and the whereabouts of thirteen remained unknown.[140] Another report recorded that for the year of 1940 alone, the Imperial Army executed thirty-six raids that explicitly targeted schools in the Beiyue District's fourth prefecture. In one of these attacks, one child was murdered. During these sweeps, soldiers either demolished or dismantled schools. In the cases of the latter, troops forced villagers to transport building materials such as bricks and wooden planks elsewhere to construct Japanese fortifications. School doors, walls, and desks became tables for enemy combatants or kindle for their fires.[141]

These conditions necessitated a change in education policy. During the early years of the border region's expansion and consolidation, teachers and students alike traveled to schools—sometimes several kilometers by foot—in order to attend lessons. Under the harsh circumstances of the Three Alls, however, villagers' mobility was both severely limited and surveilled. In response to these conditions, the government devised a strategy of "guerrilla education" (*youji jiaoyu*), a form of instruction whereby teachers and students worked together clandestinely to facilitate and receive government-sponsored education. While an official policy on guerrilla education had existed since the start of the war, specific strategies, approaches, and pedagogical responses developed in a robust manner only in mid- to late-1941, during the height of Japan's military repression.[142]

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[140] "Di saodang zhong Jizhong shiliu ge xian wo kangri jiaoyu shoudao cuihui pohuai biao" (Wreckage Suffered by the Anti-Japanese Education of Sixteen Jizhong Counties during the Enemy's Mopping Up Campaigns), September 1940, reprinted in *JCJCDJY*, 1:37.

[141] "Bianqu xiaoxuexiao zaoshou rikou de pohuai yu fuxing jianshe jihua" (Border Region Primary School Education, Its Destruction by the Japanese, and a Plan for Its Rebuilding), April 30, 1946, reprinted in *JCJCDJY*, 1:157-162.

[142] For the earliest articulation of guerrilla education, see "Bianweihui ling zhiding 'diqu jiaoyu shishi jihua gangyao'" (Border Region Executive Council General Outline for Implementing Education in Enemy Territory), July 31, 1939, reprinted in *JCJJUFZZC*, 1:51-61.

For the government, guerrilla education was as important—if not more so—than the guerrilla warfare the Communist army waged against Japanese soldiers. The inability to confront the Japanese army in conventional warfare led the Eight Route Army to deploy guerrilla warfare, a military strategy that sought to harass the occupying force and erode its soldiers' confidence. More crucially, however, guerrilla warfare demonstrated to domestic and global audiences the Communists' commitment to resistance, and hence garnered for the Party considerable popular support. Guerrilla education sought similar goals. While it aspired to evade altogether enemy attention, guerrilla education—like guerrilla warfare—sought to facilitate a political and psychological impact on members of the rural community. Specifically, it demonstrated the Party's presence alongside the peasantry throughout the harshest period of repression, fostered credibility and support among impressionable children and their parents, and persuaded those skeptical of the Party's commitment to the community to keep an open mind.[143]

A brief glimpse at how the border region government executed guerrilla education demonstrates the lengths to which the bureaucracy went in order to reach rural society's youngest members. It also illustrates how adults structured children's lives and the contexts in which youngsters received wartime education. The government provided guerrilla education through two types of institutions: "two-faced primary schools" (*liangmian xiaoxue*) and "underground primary schools" (*yinbi / dixia xiaoxue*). Two-faced schools included brick-and-mortal schools that operated in the open. Throughout the war with Japan, these were largely either former border region schools that had fallen under the administration of Japanese occupiers or schools newly established by the Japanese or their Chinese collaborators. In both cases, two-faced primary schools outwardly adhered to the prescribed Japanese or

[143] Hartford has made similar observations about the Eighth Route Army's role in the region. See Hartford, "Repression and Communist Success," 92-127.

collaborationist curriculum, yet inwardly worked undercover to follow as closely as possible the border region's anti-Japanese curriculum.[144] In contrast, underground primary schools operated on an improvisational basis in areas where onerous surveillance by Japanese and/or collaborationist occupiers forbade education of any kind.

Even under Japanese occupation, limited personnel and financial resources mandated that some teachers and students travel in order to attend lessons. In some areas, this required students to pass through enemy checkpoints. Part of underground schooling, therefore, was teaching students how to pass through these military inspections. In Quyang county, for example, one teacher coached his students to dress up as "peasants" and carry with them some realia that supported their case for travel, such as baskets for collecting fertilizer or commercial goods to ostensibly peddle at a local market. Some underground schools were literally located in tunnels beneath the earth's surface. One document reports an underground classroom measuring twenty-five meters long and eight meters wide, which could hold up to two hundred people.[145] Another common method of instruction took the formation of "small group teaching" (*fenzu jiaoxue*), where teachers dressed up as peasants or merchants, and under the pretense of selling their goods or services attracted a small group of child "customers," who received instruction for a short period. Following the lesson's end, these students dispersed and then met privately with their village peers, who they taught in turn.[146]

Two other features of guerrilla education demonstrate the improvisational nature of wartime schooling: students' "combat readiness" (*zhandouhua*) and material impoverishment.

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[144] Liu Songtao, "Jin-Cha-Ji de fannuhua jiaoyu de douzheng" (Jin-Cha-Ji's Anti-Slave Education Struggle), *Jiefangqu qunzhong jiaoyu jianshe de daolu*, November 1948, reprinted in *JCJCDJY*, 1:247.
[145] Ibid., 1:249-250.
[146] "Jizhong san nian lai de jiaoyu gongzuo" (Three Years of Education Work in Central Hebei), October 1, 1940, *Bianqu jiaoyu*, reprinted in *JCJJUFZZC*, 1:224-225; "Kangzhan san nian lai diwo zai jiaoyu zhanxian shang de douzheng" (Three Years on the Battle Lines of the Struggle for Education), *Bianqu jiaoyu*, November 16, 1940, reprinted in *JCJJUFZZC*, 1:235.

The nature of underground education required that students were always "combat ready." Much like guerrilla warfare, guerrilla education required that students and teachers be able to disperse at a moment's notice. Given the illegal nature of operating schools without the occupying government's explicit permission, detection could—and, in fact, did—lead to violent and even lethal reprisal. Several examples are particularly instructive. To facilitate students' speedy gathering and dispersal, one teacher divided his class into four groups. During their lessons, one student kept watch as a sentry, or "look out post" (*gangshao*). This child was often part of a broader network of child sentries, which alerted others along a chain of visual communications. In the chance that an enemy patrol approached as lessons were underway, students had predetermined how they would disband. To avoid unnecessary material losses, students knew where and how to store school supplies. During class, students kept all personal effects neatly organized and within arm's reach. In this way, students were prepared to make a swift departure at a moment's notice. In an article published in the pedagogical journal *Education Front*, the author remarked that these procedures were vital in guaranteeing student enrollment and attendance, suggesting that parents required certain assurances that teachers and the school administration were looking after their children's well-being. By prioritizing student safety, educators helped to mitigate parent fears and therefore increase overall enrollments.[147]

Throughout the Three Alls period, material impoverishment decreased teachers' and students' reliance on official pedagogical materials such as posters, maps, and cartoons, and furnishings such as desks, blackboards, and even physical school buildings. While in the early period of Japanese repression schools did initially rebuild and restock, hostile soldiers' incessant confiscation and destruction of these goods prompted local border region ingenuity. For

[147] Gao Mingyuan, "Jianchi zai jiaoyu zhendi de qianxian shang" (Perseverance on the Front Lines of Education), June 1, 1943, *Jiaoyu zhendi*, reprinted in *JCJCDJY*, 1:484-485.

example, teachers and students constructed desks and even school buildings in such a fashion that made their disassembly quick and simple, and hence facilitated the ease with which students could dismantle and store vital equipment. In resource-poor areas where a strong Japanese presence impeded reconstruction altogether, students took lessons in village squares, nearby caves, or, during a spate of sultry weather, in the shade of large trees. In the place of desks, students carried with them rolled up grass mats, which they placed on their laps, and teachers brought with them small blackboards, which they hung from trees or a nearby wall.[148] Similarly, teachers gathered pedagogical materials on an ad hoc basis. One teacher noted that for his "general knowledge" (*changshi*) class, for example, he selected reading materials from border region newspapers, where the content was "based on the political environment." For students' writing utensils, the same teacher provided students with stone debris from burnt housing (to use as a chalkboard) and clay, which students used to write.[149]

Beginning early 1944, the political and military situation in north China evolved rapidly. Fearful that war with the Soviet Union was looming, the Japanese army began preparing the Ichigo Offensive, a campaign which sought a decisive final victory over the Chinese Nationalists that would free material and personnel resources to engage the Soviets in the north. While it was impossible for the Party to predict that the Japanese would surrender just over one year later, several changes in the North China Area Army's position throughout the region suggested considerable shifts in Japan's military policy. These included withdrawing soldiers from deep in the rural countryside, a significant reduction in North China Area Army troop numbers, and the assumption of a largely defensive posture along the area's major transportation lines.

[148] Liu Aifeng, "Jizhong wu nian jiaoyu gongzuo de zongjie (1938 nian - 1942 nian)" (A Summary of Five Years of Education Work in Central Hebei), April 5, 1942, reprinted in *JCJJUFZZC*, 1:369-370.
[149] Gao Mingyuan, "Jianchi zai jiaoyu zhendi de qianxian shang" (Perseverance on the Front Lines of Education), June 1, 1943, *Jiaoyu zhendi*, reprinted in *JCJCDJY*, 1:483.

Complementing this withdrawal from north China were significant international developments, which Party leadership followed closely. These included the German army's February 1943 defeat at Stalingrad, the Allied forces successful invasion of Normandy in June 1944, and considerable Japanese casualties in the expanding Pacific War, including the Battle of Midway (June 1942) and the Gilbert and Marshall island campaigns (1943-1944). Taken together, these developments provided the Party's brass with the bravado to begin reclaiming territory from which the Japanese had begun withdrawing.

The government's territorial expansion exacerbated urgent demands that had plagued the border region since its inception. These included the need to recruit and train bureaucrats and soldiers, establish political and military authority, and demonstrate governmental legitimacy to newly incorporated communities. Undergirding each of these issues was the challenge of feeding the border region's population. As before, education policy shifted to fit the political climate and satisfy the government's most pressing needs. While the "masses manage, state supports" (*minban gongzhu*) policy had been around in some form much earlier, it only officially replaced guerrilla education in October 1944. Known simply as the *minban* policy, these guidelines aimed to empower the masses by handing over to their control management of local primary schools. At the village level, individuals would be responsible for establishing, managing, and funding schools, hiring teachers, and supervising class instruction. Whereas in the past the border region government had been involved to the greatest extent possible, in this new capacity the state would relegate itself to an ancillary, supportive role, providing leadership, teaching materials, and modest financial assistance. In short, the masses were—at least ostensibly—to establish their own schools, hire their own teachers, and implement a curriculum that benefited the conditions

of their local society. The only point on which the state retained a monopoly of control concerned textbooks, which the government would continue to provide.[150]

The *minban* policy helped to satisfy the moment's political needs in two major ways. First, by encouraging self-sufficiency, the government hoped that schools would become capable of managing and funding themselves. This would free up both personnel and financial resources, which the state could divert elsewhere. Second, by teaching children to become efficient agricultural producers, the state hoped that government education would win the support of local communities, and therefore prompt greater student enrollment. Bureaucrats argued that if children could demonstrate that education immediately benefited local villages, the state would not only prove its usefulness to parents and neighbors, but at the same time would create the increase in agricultural productivity needed to feed the border region's population. Liu Aifeng, the Department of Education Head, stated as much in an *Education Front* article when he remarked that "If this work is carried out effectively…we will make tremendous strides in earning the support of the peasant masses and attracting more school-aged children to enroll in school. [These efforts] will also have positive effects for producing relief efforts and educating children's minds and bodies."[151]

Often packaged as "combining production and education" (*shengchan jiaoyu*), the *minban* policy was part of a broader pattern of rural governance and mass mobilization known as the "mass line" (*qunzhong luxian*). According to Mao, the mass line meant that all correct leadership was necessarily "from the masses, to the masses." This required that bureaucrats "take

[150] "Bianweihui guanyu yanjiu yu shixing 'minban gongzhu' xiaoxue de zhishi" (Border Region Committee Instructions Concerning the Research and Trial Implementation of the 'Masses Manage, State Supports' Primary School Model), *Jin-Cha-Ji ribao*, October 8, 1944, reprinted in *JCJJUFZZC*, 2:116-117.
[151] Liu Aifeng, "Jiaqiang bianqu ertong de shengchan jiaoyu" (Strengthen Border Region Children's Production Education), *Jiaoyu zhendi*, May 1, 1943, reprinted in *JCJCDJY*, 1:392-393.

the ideas of the masses… and concentrate them… and then go to the masses and propagate and explain these ideas until the masses embrace them as their own."[152] At the same time, the *minban* policy reflected a broader critique of the urban China's cosmopolitan "new education" trend. Since the early 1940s, border region officials had argued that such education was wholly incompatible with life in China's rural hinterland. It was "the product of peacetime, of city life, and a high stage of capitalist mechanized production." The amalgamation of European, American, and Japanese traditions, "new education," these critics argued, required children to spend their formative years divorced from agricultural production and devoted entirely to the continuous study of "dozens of compulsory subjects, and hundreds of technical courses." The result was a system entirely disaggregated from the pragmatic needs of an impoverished rural environment "dominated by war, revolution, and the struggle for economic survival."[153]

As mentioned above, an urgent concern for the Party and the border region government was army recruitment. With civil war against the Nationalists brooding following Japan's surrender in August 1945, army strength become an increasingly pressing issue. At the time, leading officials believed that it was only by giving the peasants a material stake in the war—through radical land redistribution—that the CCP could mobilize a significant enough portion of the peasantry to defeat the Nationalists. Mao himself indicated as much in a December 28, 1945, publication. "Our Party must bring tangible material benefits to the people," wrote Mao, "only then will the masses support us and oppose the [Nationalist Party's] attacks. Otherwise, the masses will be unable to see clearly which of the two parties…is good and which is bad."[154] No

[152] Mao Zedong, "Some Questions Concerning Methods of Leadership," June 1, 1943, *Selected Works*, Vol. III, 119, https://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/mao/works/red-book/ch11.htm, accessed September 1, 2020.
[153] Pepper, *Radicalism and Education Reform in Twentieth-Century China*, 142.
[154] Suzanne Pepper, *Civil War in China: The Political Struggle* (Langham, Maryland: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 1999), 244; Mao Zedong, "Build Stable Base Areas in the Northeast," December 28, 1945, *Selected Works of Mao Tse-tung* (Peking: Foreign Language Press, 1967).

longer fearful that land reform would force disaffected landlords and rich peasants to ally with Japanese forces, the CCP therefore launched land reform as a means of demonstrating to the peasantry that they themselves were the beneficiaries of revolution. Mao later wrote that in this regard land reform was a tremendous success. In a circular written to the Central Committee in October 1948, Mao stated that between 1946 and 1948—the hightide of land reform in north China—the Party had mobilized approximately 1.6 million peasants that had obtained land to join the Communists' armed forces.[155]

While land reform in north China had officially begun in May 1946, the initial rolling out of the policy failed to meet the Party's expectations. In particular, too little land had been redistributed to the poorest of the peasantry. In an effort to correct this misstep, the Party held in September 1947 a conference where the Central Committee called for an intensified campaign that would completely abolish "the land ownership rights of all landlords" and decreed "equal distribution to all members of the rural population" except for former Japanese collaborators.[156]

In addition to land reform, the Central Committee called for Party rectification. The CC had strong evidence that earlier efforts at land redistribution had failed because elite interests had penetrated the Party and government bureaucracies. High-ranking cadre Liu Shaoqi reported that in the Jin-Cha-Ji area, "a large percent of cadres who work at the county levels of government or above are from landlord… [and] rich peasant families. At the district and village level, most cadres are from middle peasants, and in more than a few places, landlord and rich peasants still occupy the controlling positions directly and indirectly." According to Liu, while poor peasants and hired workers had constituted the Party's majority at the start of the Second Sino-Japanese

[155] Mao Zedong, "On the September Meeting—Circular of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China," October 10, 1948, *Selected Works*; Pepper, *Civil War in China*, 311.
[156] Frederick C. Teiwes, *Politics and Purges in China: Rectification and the Decline of Party Norms, 1950-1965*, 2nd ed. (New York: M. E. Sharpe, 1993).

War, those classes were "only a minor part of the Party now. And they are not at all influential." To complicate matters, Liu recorded that many landlords had "dropped their class status with the help" of Party cadres. These individuals were using the Party as a means of "protecting themselves and repressing the masses."[157] Because many cadres could not be tasked to objectively carry out land reform, the Party therefore tasked the Peasant Associations with investigating and re-classifying the Party's rank and file members.

As during every other major turning point since 1937, education policy shifted again to help carry out the Party's most urgent political and military needs. In this case, the border region government called on primary school teachers and students to take part in land reform. An executive order from the border region's highest governing authority issued instructions in November 1947 that explicitly called on primary school "teachers *and students* to participate in the [land reform] movement, to help the peasantry *fanshen*, and, from among the midst of the movement itself, learn from the masses."[158] Specific responsibilities included supporting the requests of Poor Peasant Leagues as they carried out investigations and redistributed land. Students were also asked to use every means and situation possible to propagandize and explain to the masses the new land reform law and the procedures for its implementation. Border region authorities asserted that for the duration of the land reform movement, politics should occupy the center of all lessons, while the study of other subjects should be minimized. Additionally, schools were to alter the teaching schedule so that more time was spent on mobilizing the masses and participating alongside the peasantry in land reform.[159]

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[157] Sun Feiyu, *Social Suffering and Political Confession: Suku in Modern China* (Hackensack, N.J.: World Scientific, 2013), 70-73, 315.
[158] Italics mine. "Bianweihui guanyu muqian jiaoyu gongzuo fangmian ji ge wenti de zhishi" (Border Region Committee Instructions Concerning a Few Issues Related to Education Work), *Jiaoyu zhendi*, November 30, 1947, reprinted in *JCJJUFZZC*, 2:312.
[159] Ibid., 2:313.

While we will discuss children's specific roles in both land reform and the re-classification of villagers' class status in chapter four, it is necessary to briefly note here that the twin processes of land reform and Party rectification sent shockwaves throughout the institution of education. Leading officials' call for children to directly "participate in struggle" (*canjia douzheng*) galvanized students to form their own Poor Peasant Leagues, through which they investigated and struggled against their own teachers and classmates.[160] On February 2, 1948, *Jin-Cha-Ji Daily*—north China's most widely circulated wartime newspaper and predecessor to today's *People's Daily*—reported that the "class struggle" taking place throughout the region's primary schools had "resulted in education work suffering unprecedented losses."[161]

Despite the Party Central Committee's rolling back of the campaign's more radical measures in late February, and repeated directives from the region's brass to halt "leftist" errors, the "extremely democratic phenomenon" that had "developed among the students" continued well into the summer.[162] As late as mid-July, a district-level official lamented that education work in his area had "collapsed." He described the area's approach toward all intellectuals as "too leftist." "All teachers," the cadre wrote, "regardless of their work were classified as landlords and rich peasants. They were strongly struggled against…. Many have either stopped working or resigned." To this, he added, land reform's emphasis on the plight of the peasant had caused a district-wide reduction in wages paid to teachers, who now earned less than that of the

[160] "Bianweihui guanyu muqian jiaoyu gongzuo fangmian ji ge wenti de zhishi" (Border Region Committee Instructions Concerning a Few Issues Related to Education Work), *Jiaoyu zhendi*, November 30, 1947, reprinted in *JCJJUFZZC*, 2:313; Luo Yuchuan, "Jizhong xingzheng gongshu dui ge ji xuexiao zai pingfen tudi guocheng zhong ruhe jinxing jiaoyu de zhishi" (Central Hebei Administrative Office Instructions Concerning Teaching during the Period of Equal Land Distribution), December 16, 1947, reprinted in *JCJJUFZZC*, 2:317-318.
[161] "Bu ying ba nongcun douzheng de yi tao ban dao xuexiao zhong qu" (The Method of Struggle Taking Place in the Countryside Should Not Be Used in Schools), *Jin-Cha-Ji ribao*, February 2, 1948, reprinted in *JCJJUFZZC*, 2:324.
[162] "Jiaqiang lingdao ban hao xiaoxue jiaoyu" (Strengthen Leadership, Manage Well Primary School Education), *Jizhong daobao*, June 6, 1948, reprinted in *JCJJUFZZC*, 2:328.

"common worker." Already subsisting on low salaries, teachers were therefore forced to change professions. The result, the official wrote, was that "children have nothing to study and teachers nothing to teach. Education work in my district is at a standstill." The document concluded:

> If the Party and the government do not immediately take seriously education work by correctly implementing policies concerning intellectuals, not only will the people's education suffer a great, unnecessary loss, but its collapse will jeopardize the success of the consolidation we have already achieved. This will isolate the Party from the laboring masses, making it difficult to support the front line and build a new society…. The correct handling of intellectuals, reorganization of education administration, and development of mass education is a matter of great urgency.[163]

This was not an isolated case. Statistics delivered by the border region's top official, Song Shaowen, to a representative assembly on the eve of the region's dissolution demonstrate that student enrollments had taken a great leap backwards as a result of land reform. Whereas figures from 1945-46 showed that Jin-Cha-Ji had enrolled 1,464,784 children, the much-expanded border region as of September 4, 1948, had a primary school student population of approximately 1,136,000; a 22.5 percent drop in total enrollments.[164] Due to the amalgamation of the Jin-Cha-Ji and Jin-Ji-Lu-Yu border regions on September 26, 1948, statistics thereafter incorporate the student bodies of both territories. The impact of land reform on primary school education in other north China border regions must be addressed elsewhere. Reports representing north China as a whole stated as their goal for target enrollments those reached in 1945-46,

[163] "Guanyu 'chongzheng jiaoyu xingzheng zuzhi jiaqiang zhishifenzi gongzuo kaizhan qunzhong jiaoyu' de yijian" (Suggestions Concerning 'The Reorganization of Education Administration, Strengthening of Intellectuals' Work, and Development of Community Education), July 14, 1948, reprinted in *JCJJUFZZC*, 2:338.
[164] Song's report states that this figure included 47,000 upper and 1,089,000 lower students across 677 upper and 17,458 lower primary schools. "Song Shaowen, Yang Xiufeng zai huabei rendaibiaohui shang baogao Jin-Cha-Ji, Jin-Ji-Lu-Yu bianqu zhengfu gongzuo" (Song Shaowen, Yang Xiufeng's Report to the North China People's Representative Conference Concerning the Work of the Jin-Cha-Ji and Jin-Ji-Lu-Yu Border Region Governments), *Qunzhong ribao*, September 4, 1948, reprinted in *JCJJUFZZC*, 2:383-384.

indicating the leadership's acknowledgement that, at least statistically, the institution's better days lie behind them.[165]

Despite these losses, on the eve of the People's Republic's founding, north China boasted an enrollment rate more than double that of the nation as a whole. At the North China Primary School Conference, top leaders stated that throughout the region approximately 60 to 70 percent of all school-aged children were enrolled in local primary schools. This far surpasses the national average reported for the 1949-50 academic year of 24.39 percent and is almost triple that of the pre-war period.[166]

Wartime Primary School Textbooks

Border region textbooks were unequivocal in stating that their aims were to prepare children for war, instill a national identity, and impart "revolutionary values." For the textbooks referenced here that remained fully intact, each listed in its opening pages a number of "editorial main points" (*bianji dayi*) to guide instructors.[167] From the earliest textbook consulted, which was published in 1938, these textbooks stated some variation of the following aims: imparting "basic knowledge and capabilities concerning the War of Resistance"; arousing children's national consciousness (*minzu yishi*) and War-of-Resistance mentality (*kangzhan qingxu*); improving children's "cultural and political knowledge"; fostering a "correct understanding of

[165] "Yi jiu si jiu nian huabei qu wenhua jiaoyu jihua" (North China's Culture and Education Plan for the Year 1949), *Huabei zhengbao*, February 24, 1949, reprinted in *JCJJUFZZC*, 2:448-449.
[166] These speeches were given by Dong Biwu, Chairman of the North China People's Government (*Huabei renmin zhengfu zhuxi*) and Chao Zhefu, Department of Education Head (*jiaoyu buzhang*) for the North China People's Government. See "Zai Huabei xiaoxue jiaoyu huiyi shang jianghua" (Speech Given at the North China Primary School Conference), *Huabei zhengbao* June 1, 1949, reprinted in *JCJJUFZZC*, 2:470-474; "Zai Huabei xiaoxue jiaoyu huiyi shang zongjie baogao" (Summary Report Given at the North China Primary School Conference), June 1, 1949, *Huabei zhengbao* reprinted in *JCJJUFZZC*, 2:475-483. The figure of 24.39 percent national enrollment among primary school children comes from Pepper, *Radicalism and Education Reform*, 78.
[167] As I mention in the introduction, many of these textbooks had missing pages, including covers.

the War of Resistance"; and "strengthening in children all forms of necessary War of Resistance knowledge and revolutionary values."[168] We should note here that textbook authors' mention of a "correct understanding" indicates the intention to write into textbooks a specific narrative of not only the war but of China's general historical and contemporary condition. Authors' usage of this narrative was done with the hope that children would internalize and therefore adopt as their own such an understanding.

At the grassroots level, the education primary school students received reflected the general ethos of politics and pragmatism that motivated top-down education policy. More specifically, it provided children with what they most needed to survive. Indeed, children learned the general knowledge required to function as productive members of rural society. This included, for example, how to contribute to agricultural production, basic hygiene, and polite behavior. At the same time, however, what children needed to survive under the conditions of total war and socialist revolution was vastly different than what was required during times of peace and stability. Indeed, the advent of the Second Sino-Japanese War not only required that the government prepare children for surviving in enemy-occupied territory, but that also given the region's labor shortage that the government enlist children's labor in nation- and Party-building efforts. In service of these endeavors, the state mobilized children as forms of agricultural labor, military manpower, and agents of revolution. As agricultural labor, children increased agricultural production, which fed local communities and male soldiers that were divorced from everyday farm work. In their roles as military manpower, child labor filled critical

[168] *Kangzhan shiqi xiaoxue guoyu keben, Volume 2*, 1938, Hebei Sheng Bowuguan [Hebei Provincial Museum], hereafter noted as HBSBWG, file no. 23546-L10905, unpaginated; *Changshi keben, Volume 3*, July 1940, HBSBWG, file no. 16072-L3431, unpaginated; *Changshi keben, Volume 2*, July 20, 1941, HBSBWG, file no. 14108-L1480, unpaginated, page two; *Kangzhan shiqi guoyu keben, Volume 2*, (Jin-Cha-Ji bianqu xingzheng weiyuanhui, 1941), reprinted in Wang Yongbing, et al., *Jin-Cha-Ji bianqu jiaoyu ziliao xuanbian* (Beijing: Beijing shifan daxue chubanshe, 1991), 646; hereafter abbreviated as JCJJZXB.

gaps in paramilitary responsibilities, especially at the local level. As agents of revolution, children contributed to the nation- and Party-building efforts that paved the way for the socialist revolution that took place during and after the war. In each of these capacities we see that the CCP progressed and extended its pre-war conceptualization of children and childhood, which, through a Marxist-Leninist lens, viewed children as active contributors to the communist revolution.

My analysis here argues that wartime primary school textbooks functioned as a form of political socialization whereby children learned normative behavior, affective associations, and political ideals that informed them how to think about themselves, their world, and their role within that world.[169] These narratives were congruent with the government's top-down education policies that sought to mobilize children for a range of wartime resistance and nation- and Party-building projects. In the service of these endeavors, primary school education not only inculcated in children the government's beliefs, attitudes, and values, but encouraged children to see themselves as agents of revolution whose conscious participation was instrumental in remaking their world. By doing so, the government aimed to empower children as rational actors and thereby enlist their minds and bodies in wartime resistance efforts and expanding Party power.

Textbooks supported these efforts primarily through a process of narrativization, whereby they provided children with new words, characters, conflicts, and storylines. Both a new vocabulary and historical narrative helped children to make sense of their world and view themselves as agents of revolution.[170] Textbooks set the stage for introducing these new concepts

[169] I borrow the term "political socialization" from Koon, *Believe, Obey, Fight*.
[170] Brian James DeMare, *Mao's Cultural Army: Drama Troupes in China's Rural Revolution* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015). Other scholars have termed this as a process of "exegetical bonding," an instructional method that resulted in a common understanding of shared experience. See David E. Apter and Tony Saich, *Revolutionary Discourse in Mao's Republic* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1994). While the methods, functions, and aims of DeMare, Apter, and Saich's narratives are similar, I prefer DeMare's jargon-free and theoretically unencumbered approach.

by narrating a Marxist-Leninist interpretation of China's recent history. Children learned, for example, about imperialism's role in the downfall of the Qing dynasty and the role labor solidarity played in initiating the New Culture and May Fourth movements. Congruent with the Marxist-Leninist interpretation of history, capitalism, imperialism, and foreign predation encouraged both Japan's encroachment on the Asian mainland in the early 1930s and its full-scale invasion on July 7, 1937.[171]

Throughout this narrative, a caste of heroes (e.g. workers, peasants, cadres, soldiers) and villains (e.g. enemies, traitors, reactionaries) emerge. Unsurprisingly, most conspicuous in this narrative is the emergence of the CCP, which, textbooks tell us, fought simultaneously against foreign imperialists, an inept Chinese Nationalist Party, and, most recently, the Japanese empire.[172] Closer to home, children learned to think of themselves and their neighbors as "compatriots" (*tongbao*), who, unlike "traitors" and "enemies," belonged to mass organizations that loyally followed the Communist Party and worked together to resist Japan and build a new China. Alongside the CCP emerge various subsets of workers, including soldiers, peasants, miners, and printers, who rely on each other's labor and skills to build a strong local society and resist Japanese imperialism.[173] Such texts demonstrate that in contrast to traditional Confucian education, which lauded the literate elite stratum of society, wartime border region education clearly valorized labor and the common people.[174]

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[171] For texts on September 18, 1931, see *Kangzhan shiqi xiaoxue guoyu keben*, *Volume 2*, Undated, HBSBWG, file no. 23546-L10905, 24-25; *Chuxiao guoyu keben*, *Volume 4*, January 1943, HBSBWG, file no. 22056-L9415, 23. For a text on the founding of the CCP in July 1921, see *Kangzhan shiqi chuxiao shying*, *guoyu keben*, *Volume 2* (Jin-Cha-Ji bianqu xingzheng weiyuanhui, 1941), reprinted in *JCJJZXB*, 659. For October 10, 1911, see *Chuxiao guoyu keben*, *Volume 4*, January 1943, HBSBWG, file no. 22056-L9415, 25.

[172] For example, see *Changshi keben*, *Volume 2*, July 20, 1941, HBSBWG, file no. 14108-L1480, 45.

[173] *Chuxiao guoyu keben*, *Volume 4*, January 1943, HBSBWG, file no. 22056-L9415, 1-2, 4.

[174] This is consistent with Mary Farquhar's findings in her study of revolutionary children's literature during the interwar and wartime period. See Farquhar, *Children's Literature in China*.

A major theme throughout all wartime primary school textbooks is the emergence of a "New China" (*xin Zhongguo*). Though at the time these textbooks were published China was still mired in war against Japan, this fact did not keep textbook authors from stating unequivocally that the people of the border region were simultaneously engaged in both resistance and building a more equitable society. Textbooks described New China as possessing three main attributes. First, it was "free" (*ziyou*), both in the sense of its independence from imperial aggression and as a place where all peoples, regardless of ethnicity, could prosper as equals. Secondly, New China was "democratic" (*minzhu*). Textbooks described this as "people having the right to govern the major affairs of the country" through the direct election of government officials. Additionally, "the people" possessed the rights of free speech, a free press, and freedom of assembly. Finally, New China was a "prosperous" (*xingfu*) country, where workers had jobs and farmers owned their own land. In this flourishing environment, everyone had enough food to eat, warm clothing to wear, and a house to live in. Everyone received an education and had ample leisure time.[175] While this New China had certainly not yet been realized at the time of publication, textbooks emphasized the socioeconomic policies and changes children were most likely to have encountered. Such initiatives included rent and interest reduction, assembly of mass organizations—which included the Children's League—mobilization of labor to increase agricultural production, and the establishment of agricultural cooperatives.[176] By referencing efforts taking place at the grassroots level, textbooks sought to demonstrate that while New China may not yet have arrived, border region society was incrementally working toward making this a reality. Moreover, textbooks credited the CCP with enacting these changes and improving, however slightly, people's livelihood.

[175] *Chuxiao guoyu keben*, *Volume 4*, January 1943, HBSBWG, file no. 22056-L9415, 31-33.
[176] *Chuxiao guoyu keben*, *Volume 3*, 1943, HBSBWG, file no. 23548-L10907, 1-2.

Textbooks constantly reminded students of the various changes that had and were taking place, pointing to the institutions established since the arrival of the CCP and its army. For children, the nearest reference point was their mass organization, the Anti-Japanese Children's League. Texts constantly use the Children's League as an example of how democracy works. Children's League members, for example, directly elected their own troop leaders (*tuanzhang*) through democratic elections where each member had one vote. Additionally, League members had the right to recall elected officials should such leaders become derelict in their duties. Similarly, Children's Leagues held regular meetings where they discussed not only upcoming events and activities, but where children could hold each other accountable for their pledged commitments.[177] As we will see in chapter three, each of these functions were written into League charters and actively encouraged both by children themselves and their direct supervisors, the Youth National Salvation Federation.

Central to the possibility of achieving a New China, textbooks state, was the CCP and its army. Indeed, wartime and post-war textbooks regularly narrate the Party and ERA's arrival in local areas as a momentous life-changing occasion. One story re-published in several textbooks, both during the War of Resistance and afterwards, demonstrates this point. The story, titled "The Date I Turned Over" (*Wo fanshen de nianyue*), is narrated in the first person and tells the account of how one young adult came to join the Communist movement. The (fictional) author writes that prior to joining the Red Army in August 1929 he was an "ignorant sixteen-year-old little devil," who "knew nothing of revolution, communism, warlordism, or feudal oppression." "From sunup to sundown," we are told, the author "thought of nothing but where [his] next meal would come from or how [he] would care for [his] parents." That all changed, however, when he one

[177] *Kangzhan shiqi chuxiao shying*, *guoyu keben*, *Volume 2* (Jin-Cha-Ji bianqu xingzheng weiyuanhui, 1941), reprinted in *JCJJZXB*, 656.

day heard that the Red Army had arrived in a neighboring village. According to rumors, the author tells us, the Red Army treated its soldiers well, provided food to eat and clean clothes to wear. They fought for ordinary people to rid the country of warlords and imperialists. Motivated to join this movement—much like the children Edgar Snow interviewed in the mid-1930s—the author ran away from home to join the Red Army. It was at this point that the author claims he was "enlightened by revolution" (*bei geming suo qifa*). Writing ostensibly from the vantage point of 1943, the author tells the reader that had it not been for "participating in the revolution" he likely would have faced an early death. "I may have starved or frozen to death. Perhaps a landlord would have beaten me to death, or I would have fallen ill and died. Instead, I feel completely content. Because as a member of the family that is revolution, I have food to eat and clothes to wear. I have an army, a political system, culture, and the knowledge of having struggled."[178]

Again, to demonstrate these changes in a concrete fashion, textbooks regularly use examples familiar to children to serve as reference points. In this case, the institution of education is often used to contrast life for children before and after the arrival of the Party and the ERA. Almost all of these texts follow a similar trope. An impoverished child desperately seeks out an education, typically under "feudal" conditions. In such an environment, the child attends a school where he or she is maltreated—typically verbally and physically abused—by the instructor and/or classmates. In some cases, the child is prohibited from attending classes because he or she is too "dirty" or lacks the money to buy books or simple school supplies. This all changes, however, once the Party and/or Eighth Route Army soldiers arrive. Under new

[178] *Guoyu keben*, *Volume 3*, *JCJJZXB*, 721-723. This was a common trope in other contexts as well, such as one speech made by labor hero Wu Manyou, which was reprinted in primary school textbooks. *Chuxiao guoyu keben*, *Volume 3*, 1943, HBSBWG, file no. 23548-L10907, 8-9. For other before-and-after examples, see *Changshi keben*, *Volume 2*, July 20, 1941, HBSBWG, file no. 14108-L1480, 49; *Guoyu keben*, *Volume 3*, reprinted in *JCJJZXB*, 699.

circumstances, the child attends a newly established or recently reformed school, where books are free, no tuition is charged, and all children are equal in the eyes of paternal instructors.[179]

Throughout this narrative of an emerging New China are war and revolution. These tropes were absolutely central to primary school education's goals of mobilizing children for nation- and Party-building and wartime resistance. War in particular, and the violence it wrought, was pivotal in inculcating in children a national consciousness, while simultaneously delineating the social groups that were to belong to this new society. In this regard, wartime primary school textbooks functioned not only as a means of political socialization, but also as mediums of political violence, understood here as violent intergroup confrontations based on and motivated by group affiliation.[180] Textbooks promoted political violence by delineating children's own (in) group against a range of purportedly nefarious "enemy" (*diren*) out groups. These out groups included not only the occupying Japanese soldiers, but also local Chinese. Constituting the latter were "traitors" (*hanjian*) that collaborated with Japanese governments, "reactionary" (*fandong*) parties that obstructed CCP policies and resistance, and local landlords and rich peasants, who self-servingly exploited the peasantry.

Textbooks emphasized and solidified in-group and out-group cleavages through their depictions of graphic violence. Several examples illustrate this point. In one short text, a boy named Xiao Hei, who is visiting his maternal grandmother's village, learns that Japanese soldiers

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[179] *Chuxiao guoyu keben*, *Volume 3*, 1943, HBSBWG, file no. 23548-L10907, 1; *Guoyu keben*, *Volume 3*, reprinted in *JCJJZXB*, 698-699. Indeed, this before-and-after narrative remains potent even today. For examples in textbooks published after the end of the War of Resistance, see *Gaoxiao guoyu keben*, *Volume 1*, December 1946, HBSBWG, file no. 16874-L4232, 17-18; *Guoyu keben*, *chuji xiaoxue shiyong*, *Volume 1* (Huabei renminbi zhengfu jiaoyubu shending, October 1948), HBSBWG, file no. 16875-L4234, 50; *Gaoxiao guoyu keben*, *Volume 3*, January 1948, HBSBWG, file no. 16881-L4240, 1-2; *Gaoxiao guoyu keben*, *Volume 3*, January 1948, HBSBWG, file no. 16881-L4240, 8-9. Many of these texts conveniently replace "Japanese" with "Chinese Nationalist Party," and place Chiang Kai-shek as the lead villain. For example, compare and contrast the fictional diary entries published in a 1942 textbook with those published in a 1948 edition. See *Guoyu keben*, *Volume 3*, reprinted in *JCJJZXB*, 713; *Gaoxiao guoyu keben*, *Volume 3*, January 1948, HBSBWG, file no. 16881-L4240, 54-57.

[180] Ed Cairns, *Children and Political Violence* (Cambridge, Mass.: Blackwell, 1996), 6.

have raided his hometown. Upon hearing of this tragedy, Xiao Hei rushes home, where he finds his home "burnt to the ground, all [his] food stolen, and his father and mother both dead—their bloody corpses lying on the ground." "Crying out loud," we are told, Xiao Hei "swore to avenge his father and mother." Accompanying the text is an image of a child standing over two limp adult figures, both of whom lie in a pool of blood. Behind the child and the two bodies are the charred ruins of village houses.[181] Stories such as these are prevalent throughout wartime textbooks and are included in textbooks written for all primary school levels, grades one through six.

Equally commonplace are short passages and songs that build on the themes of widespread destruction, murder, and assigning guilt. Examples of such rhymes include the following.

> The entire nation is united in resistance,
> Only traitors collude with the enemy,
> Sellout our ancestral land,
> Kill our compatriots.
> We must consider,
> To achieve victory,
> We should ferret out the traitors.[182]

> Who kills children's fathers and mothers?
> The Japanese!
> Who burns down children's houses?
> The Japanese!
> Beat away the Japanese,
> Never allow them again to hurt others![183]

> Reactionary party, truly evil,
> Colluding with enemies and collaborators to burn and kill,
> They destroy the border region.
> Reactionary party, no conscience,
> With all their hearts, they resist the Communist Party,
> They destroy the border region.

[181] *Chuxiao guoyu keben*, *Volume 4*, January 1943, HBSBWG, file no. 22056-L9415, 18.
[182] *Kangzhan shiqi xiaoxue guoyu keben*, *Volume 2*, 1938, HBSBWG, file no. 23546-L10905, 20.
[183] *Guoyu keben*, *Volume 1*, Undated, HBSBWG, file no. 18366-L5725, 48.

Take up knives, take up guns,
And defend our great border region![184]

Of these examples, we should note two important elements. First, as with the story of Xiao Hei, these poems attribute the destruction of the border region—its burning, looting, and the killing of its people—to Japanese soldiers and Chinese traitors. In doing so, the textbooks not only identify a problem present throughout the border region (i.e. widespread violence and destruction, hunger, coldness, homelessness, etc.), but assign blame. Second, and perhaps less apparent to the reader, is that each of these texts, including that of Xiao Hei, call upon children to take action and respond to these crimes. The first, for example, asks students to "ferret out the traitors," which, as we will see in later chapters, was an actual task assigned to members of the Anti-Japanese Children's League. The second rhyme instructs children to "beat away the Japanese," and to "never allow them again to hurt others." The final of these three poems asks children to "take up knives, take up guns, and defend our great border region." Much like the story of Xiao Hei, where the child swears an oath to defend his parents, these short texts call on children to take violent action against those who have attacked their villages, killed their family members, stolen their food, and burnt their homes to the ground.

This marks a clear departure from how the CCP mobilized children in the pre-war period. As we saw in chapter one, while sources suggest that between 1927 and 1934 children did carry out politically motivated physical violence, such instances appear to have been both rare and to have resulted from out-of-control situations where emotions ran high. In these cases, here, however, the border region government, through primary school textbooks, was explicitly calling on children to enact violent retribution. Indeed, poems throughout these textbooks could be incredibly straight forward. One such rhyme calls on "aggrieved" children to take up arms to

[184] Ibid., 55.

…kill the enemy,
One battle after another.
Even one hundred or infinite battles,
Kill! Kill! Kill! Kill until red blood flows voluminously!
Revolutionary spirit accompanies the struggle,
Guns and swords in my hands,
Forward on to kill the enemy,
Endlessly,
To achieve victory, we must struggle until the end![185]

Similarly, many of the fictional stories that populate these textbooks follow young male children that commit violent acts. One story, titled "Chu Zhaoer Kills Enemies," for example, tells the tale of a twelve-year-old boy who gleefully uses explosives to blow up a truck full of Japanese soldiers.[186] Another story focuses on a shepherd boy named Wang Erdan. One day while tending to his flock, Wang surreptitiously comes across a grenade. Immediately aware of how he must use this explosive, Wang hides the grenade in his shirt for three days, waiting for the perfect opportunity to use the device. One day while eating, Wang hears the sound of nearby gunfire, to which he giddily runs outside and begins tracking its origins. After catching a glimpse of unsuspecting Japanese soldiers, Wang unpins the grenade and hurls it at the men. The text tells us that "amidst the beautiful blast of the explosion, [Wang] could not help but smile as fire engulfed the two uniformed devils." As the "devils" burn lifelessly on ground, ERA troops enter the scene. After enthusiastically greeting the Communist troops, Wang tells the soldiers: "I want to join the ERA. Look! I used a grenade to kill two devils." After praising Wang as a "a brave little devil," the ERA soldiers warmly embrace Wang, who we learn "from that day forward served as a courageous little soldier for the ERA."[187]

[185] *Kangzhan shiqi xiaoxue guoyu keben*, *Volume 2*, 1938, HBSBWG, file no. 23546-L10905, 39.
[186] *Chuxiao guoyu keben*, *Volume 3*, 1943, HBSBWG, file no. 23548-L10907, 39-41.
[187] *Gaoxiao guoyu keben*, *Volume 1*, 1946, HBSBWG, file no. 183622-L5721, 1-2.

While the textbooks do not tell us how actual children responded to these calls for mobilization—this is the topic of chapters four and five—the discourse surrounding graphic violence present in these textbooks suggests two broader goals. First, it aimed to forge in children strong affective associations that strengthened their affiliation to local resistance groups while also cultivating a sense of a shared national identity. Second, by juxtaposing fictional patriotic characters—such as dutiful children and Eighth Route Army soldiers—against traitorous collaborators, this national identity that textbooks promoted came to be increasingly understood as demonstrating enthusiastic support for the CCP, its army, and the efforts of the border region government. Since loyalty as an emotional commitment is unobservable, textbooks' provision to children of numerous activities, behaviors, and patterns of speech whereby they could demonstrate and/or perform their allegiance was important in providing children with an outlet to express their devotion.

Equally important to cultivating in children a national consciousness was children's physical survival. While the militarization of border region society included the establishment of physical structures that served the military apparatus—such as barracks, trenches, fortifications and the like—it also required the creation of a militarized consciousness and a culture of war among rural individuals.[188] Kathleen Hartford has noted that while the rural populace's hate for the Japanese and approval of border region socioeconomic reforms helped to build support for the Party, these alone were insufficient in counteracting the terror that inhibited local resistance. Border region officials therefore deployed a series of measures that aimed to reduce fear and create courage.[189] The creation of a militarized consciousness and culture of war, I argue, were

[188] Louise P. Edwards, *Women Warriors and Wartime Spies of China* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2016), 2.
[189] Hartford, "Repression and Communist Success," 94.

central to these efforts. Wartime primary school textbooks are the ideal source for investigating how border region authorities tried to foster this militarized consciousness and culture of war among children. The textbooks discussed here tell us very specifically what authorities wanted children to think, know, and accomplish.[190]

The border region government's creation of a militarized consciousness and culture of war included two processes. The first process concerned the immediate and urgent need to prepare children for living within an environment of total war. Many textbooks, for example, instructed students how to respond to air raids and bombing. Children learned that "enemy airplanes are used to eradicate our country. [The enemy] often uses these planes to bomb our army and our people." These texts then provide students with a list of actions to take when an enemy airplane approached their villages. These included quickly evacuating the village and taking cover in nearby caves or under trees, dispersing to pre-determined evacuation locations, avoiding traveling in large groups or alongside roads and rivers, and, should a raid occur at night, to remain silent and immediately put out any lights or fires. All of this, the textbook assured children, would "reduce the danger of being bombed."[191]

Similarly, children learned about different types of poison gases, their physical and neurological effects, and how to detect whether local water supplies had been poisoned. Textbook passages covering chemical warfare, for example, instructed children that encountered poison gas "to cover your nose and head for high ground."[192] Finally, most textbooks instructed students on various aspects of first aid. While these texts addressed issues including treating

[190] Ross F. Collins, *Children, War, and Propaganda* (New York: Peter Lang, 2011), xv.
[191] *Changshi keben*, *Volume 3*, July 1940, HBSBWG, file no. 16072-L3431, 36-38. For other examples, see *Kangzhan shiqi chuxiao shying*, *guoyu keben*, *Volume 2* (Jin-Cha-Ji bianqu xingzheng weiyuanhui, 1941), reprinted in *JCJJZXB*, 652.
[192] *Changshi keben*, *Volume 3*, July 1940, HBSBWG, file no. 16072-L3431, 39-41; *Kangzhan shiqi chuxiao shying*, *guoyu keben*, *Volume 2* (Jin-Cha-Ji bianqu xingzheng weiyuanhui, 1941), reprinted in *JCJJZXB*, 652.

burns, food poisoning, and providing CPR, always listed as the first ailment that children should learn to treat was gunshot wounds. When treating a wounded soldier, textbooks wrote, children were instructed to "apply pressure to stop the bleeding and quickly transport [the sufferer] to the nearest medic."[193] On transportation, textbooks informed children of how they were to move injured soldiers from the front lines to nearby doctors. As members of "stretcher" or "transportation teams" (*danjiadui*, *yunshudui*), children were informed that they would encounter "soldiers that had been wounded on the frontlines by bullets, and therefore needed to be moved to the rear areas to receive medical treatment." Because these soldiers were injured, stretcher teams' movement need be "quick but also steady to avoid aggravating the wound."[194]

Such textbook passages were not ornamental but served to provide children with practical instruction to help them and—through the children's own dissemination of the material—their families avoid injury and death. Indeed, these textbooks quizzed children on the passages they had read with exercises such as the one included below. This exercise asked children to identify an error in each sentence and replace the error with the correct content. For clarity, I have underlined the error and placed in parentheses the correct answer.

1. When enemy planes come, do not aimlessly <u>laugh</u> (run about).
2. When enemy planes spray poison gas, we must take cover in <u>low</u> (high) ground.
3. When enemy planes come, they drop <u>snowballs</u> (bombs).
4. When enemy planes come, traitors will <u>fire machine guns</u> (signal to planes where the targets are).
5. Traitors carry <u>candy</u> (poison) with them.[195]

In addition to these exercises, textbooks provided stories of fictional children who did or did not heed the advice given. These were intended to demonstrate to children what the consequences

[193] *Changshi keben*, *Volume 3*, July 1940, HBSBWG, file no. 16072-L3431, 44.
[194] *Changshi keben*, *Volume 2*, July 20, 1941, HBSBWG, file no. 14108-L1480, 1.
[195] *Kangzhan shiqi chuxiao shying*, *guoyu keben*, *Volume 2* (Jin-Cha-Ji bianqu xingzheng weiyuanhui, 1941), reprinted in *JCJJZXB*, 655.

were for not obeying their teachers or other government officials. In one story, a boy named Little Tian faithfully passed on to his family everything he learned in class about defending against air raids and poison gas. Sure enough, Little Tian's village is one day attacked by Japanese airplanes, which drop bombs and spray the village with poison gas. Because Little Tian's family knew exactly how to respond, not one member of the boy's family was injured. On the contrary, many of Little Tian's neighbors, who ran about aimlessly and disregarded official instructions, were killed.[196]

Children were also instructed to avoid contact with Japanese soldiers. As we will discuss in more detail in chapters four and five, the border region required children to swear a "Five Don'ts" (*wu bu*) oath. The Five Don'ts forbid children from speaking to, appearing before, or giving information to the Japanese, the latter included cadre or supply bunker whereabouts.[197] Prevalent throughout these texts are warnings that Japanese soldiers would often try to establish warm relations with children by offering them candy. Textbooks warned children that such candy contained poison.[198] As with other forms of instruction, fictional stories served to demonstrate the consequences of failing to heed this advice. In one story titled "The Children Who Were Fooled," published in several textbook editions, a group of children not only accept Japanese soldiers' gifts of candy, but also agree to attend a nearby school that the troops have opened. Much to these children's surprise, the first few days of classes go surprisingly well, with the children enjoying their lessons and fattening up on candy and other treats. However, the text

[196] *Kangzhan shiqi chuxiao shying*, *guoyu keben*, *Volume 2* (Jin-Cha-Ji bianqu xingzheng weiyuanhui, 1941), reprinted in *JCJJZXB*, 653.
[197] *Chuxiao guoyu keben*, *Volume 3*, 1943, HBSBWG, file no. 23548-L10907, 4-5.
[198] *Kangzhan shiqi chuxiao shying*, *guoyu keben*, *Volume 2* (Jin-Cha-Ji bianqu xingzheng weiyuanhui, 1941), reprinted in *JCJJZXB*, 654.

informs us that one day during class, "the devils drove up in a car and kidnapped the children, taking them away from their homes forever."[199]

A second process contributing to the fostering a militarized consciousness and culture of war concerned were textbooks' attempt to cultivate among children warm affections for Eighth Route Army soldiers. Because a successful guerrilla warfare strategy required that rural villagers and Communist Party soldiers worked and lived together, it was imperative that children both got along with and supported these troops. Indeed, the creation of warm relations between soldiers and villagers had been central to Communist success during the Red Army's early years in Jiangxi. This is evident in Mao's "Three Disciplines and Eight Points" (*san da jilü, ba xiang zhuyi*), which established a strict code of conduct concerning soldiers' interactions with local populations. Soldiers were required, for example, to turn in all captured or accommodated items, pay for any damaged property, and treat captives fairly. Likewise, soldiers were forbidden from hitting or swearing at people, damaging crops, and "taking liberties with women."[200]

Whereas these points required soldiers to adhere to a specific code of conduct, primary school textbooks invited children to view ERA soldiers in a positive and affection manner. As with other content, much of this messaging came in the form of rhymes and songs. In a poem titled "With Whom Are You Close?" (*He shei qin*) one textbook provided children with several reasons why ERA soldiers should be the individuals with whom students could be the most intimate.

> With whom are you close?
> The Eighth Route Army and New Fourth Army.
> Why are you close [to them]?

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[199] *Chuxiao guoyu keben*, *Volume 4*, January 1943, HBSBWG, file no. 22056-L9415, 17; *Kangzhan shiqi chuxiao shying*, *guoyu keben*, *Volume 2* (Jin-Cha-Ji bianqu xingzheng weiyuanhui, 1941), reprinted in *JCJJZXB*, 659.
[200] Lin Biao, "Long Live the Victory of People's War," September 3, 1965, https://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/lin-biao/1965/09/peoples_war/index.htm, accessed June 25, 2019.

Because they save the people,
Save the people and kill the enemy.
And who is not affectionate with their own family members?[201]

The Eighth Route Army and New Fourth Army,
Are the masses own army.
They can produce, they can fight.
Without them,
We could not defeat the Japanese.[202]

In both of these poems we see that children should produce warm affections for soldiers because they not only save the people and "kill the enemy," but because they contribute to society alongside the masses by providing their labor to agricultural production. Additionally, we are told that if it were not for these armies, China would never defeat the Japanese. In fact, these poems do not stop at just inviting children to think kindly of soldiers, but to consider them as family. We see this in the final line of the first poem, which invites children to think of these soldiers as their own kin, asking rhetorically and in a matter-of-fact manner that, of course, one should be close to their own family.

While chapters four and five discuss in more detail how children contributed to wartime and revolutionary efforts as historical actors, it is worth noting here the activities that textbooks prompted children to carry out. As textbooks suggested, participation in such activities demonstrated children's patriotic allegiance to the Chinese nation and War of Resistance. Some activities were relatively benign. These included distributing propaganda,[203] afforestation efforts,[204] teaching literacy to parents and grandparents,[205] and helping military dependents (*kangshu*) with chores such as collecting firewood and gathering and transporting water, standing

[201] *Guoyu keben*, *Volume 1*, Undated, HBSBWG, file no. 18366-L5725, 49.
[202] Ibid., 50. For other examples, see *Kangzhan shiqi chuxiao shiyong*, *guoyu keben*, *Volume 2*, (Wartime Lower Primary School Language Textbook, Number Two), 1940, reprinted in *JCJCDJY*, 1:268.
[203] *Kangzhan shiqi xiaoxue guoyu keben*, *Volume 2*, 1938, HBSBWG, file no. 23546-L10905, 2.
[204] *Guoyu keben*, *Volume 5*, Undated, HBSBWG, file no. 22055-L9414, 4-5.
[205] *Kangzhan shiqi chuxiao shying*, *guoyu keben*, *Volume 2* (Jin-Cha-Ji bianqu xingzheng weiyuanhui, 1941), reprinted in *JCJJZXB*, 661.

sentry duty in order to keep "bad people" from using nearby roads[206] Similar to assisting military dependents, children were expected to pay respects to active-duty soldiers by working their farmland, fixing them tea and rice, and gifting them pork and lamb. Textbooks encouraged students to prompt their neighbors to do the same.[207] As with other content, fictional stories illustrated for children what these activities may look like in the real world. In one story titled "Children Bring Gifts to Injured Soldiers," a child named Guo Guang leads his Children's League troop to visit convalescent soldiers. Prior to visiting the soldiers, Guo and his crew solicit cash donations from local villagers to in order to purchase the soldiers treats and gifts. Then, when at the hospital, the children sing the men songs. Boosted by the children's efforts, one soldier exclaims that the group of men have been motivated to "recover much faster" so as to "return to the front line to kill the enemy."[208]

Less innocuous enterprises included destroying infrastructure, standing guard at nearby crossroads, and spying. In a chapter titled "How to Destroy Enemy Communications," for example, one textbook instructs children to destroy roads and bridges, cut telephone wire, and throw up obstacles to impede convenient transportation.[209] Additionally, textbooks took serious efforts to teach children to read and interpret travel documents (*lutiao*). Prevalent throughout wartime textbooks are chapters that instruct students how to read and include what specific information sentries were to look for. Such chapters went so far as to re-produce official border region travel documents in the textbooks themselves so that students could have first-hand experience reading them. Textbooks instructed children to corroborate individuals' names, rank

[206] *Guoyu keben*, *Volume 1*, Undated, HBSBWG, file no. 18366-L5725, 40-41; *Kangzhan shiqi xiaoxue guoyu keben*, *Volume 2*, Undated, HBSBWG, file no. 23546-L10905, 8.
[207] *Kangzhan shiqi xiaoxue guoyu keben*, *Volume 2*, 1938, HBSBWG, file no. 23546-L10905, 29; *Guoyu keben*, *Volume 5*, Undated, HBSBWG, file no. 22055-L9414, 6.
[208] *Chuxiao guoyu keben*, *Volume 4*, January 1943, HBSBWG, file no. 22056-L9415, 31.
[209] *Changshi keben*, *Volume 2*, July 20, 1941, HBSBWG, file no. 14108-L1480, 4-5.

and position, any firearms they may be in possession of, the purpose of their travel, and the roads on which they were permitted to travel. In cases where an individual's testimony did not match that written on the documentation, children were to detain the traveler and report the issue at once to the nearest cadre office.[210] As we will see in chapters four and five, children regularly challenged and detained passersby whose stories were incongruent with their documentation. Finally, textbooks encouraged children to spy on enemy activities and encampments. In a chapter titled, "The Masses Help the Army to Investigate," one textbook, noting the "extreme significance of wartime investigation work [*zhencha gongzuo*]," called on the masses to "help the army to investigate the enemy's situation." The chapter goes so far as to list the specific categories of information that the army requires. This includes knowledge of enemy's actions (e.g. if an army is on patrol, was it a Japanese or puppet army, where were they traveling, what were they doing, what was their combat strength), the enemy's physical location and how well armed they were, and enemy encampments (e.g. where were they physically located, to what roads did they have access, what patterns did they exhibit).[211]

Conclusion

This chapter has examined the institution of primary school education. In doing so, it has demonstrated how the nascent socialist state, led by the Chinese Communist Party, reached rural children in north China. I have examined here two aspects of primary school education. Section one of this chapter analyzed the institution from the top down. This section argued that border region education sought primarily to serve the CCP's multi-faceted political agenda, which

[210] *Kangzhan shiqi xiaoxue guoyu keben*, *Volume 2*, Undated, HBSBWG, file no. 23546-L10905, 19; *Guoyu keben*, *Volume 5*, Undated, HBSBWG, file no. 22055-L9414, 9-11.
[211] *Changshi keben*, *Volume 2*, July 20, 1941, HBSBWG, file no. 14108-L1480, 6-7.

included servicing multiple war efforts, nation building, and expanding Party hegemony. The establishment of primary schools throughout the north China, I have shown, was not without its challenges. Indeed, the border region government faced innumerable hardships, which included a destabilizing war and enemy occupation. Despite these difficulties, I argue, the border region bureaucracy responded flexibly, pragmatically, and improvisationally, so as to continue providing education to rural children. Successful strategies included guerrilla education, whereby students and teachers worked together to clandestinely facilitate government-sponsored education. Children received their education by attending "two-faced" and/or "underground" primary schools. In order for lessons in these educational spaces to be carried out successfully, students had to learn to pass through enemy checkpoints, they had to be "combat ready," and some students even had to stand watch as sentries so as to detect surprise raids. Primary schools also faced extreme financial and personnel limitations. Teachers overcame these challenges by collecting materials on an ad hoc basis. For example, teachers used debris from nearby wreckages as writing utensils or chalkboards, and clipped articles from newspapers to use as teaching material. Following the war with Japan, and in preparation for the CCP's Civil War against the Nationalists, the border region government encouraged local villages to become self-sufficient. Local schools were encouraged to hire their own teachers, print their own textbooks, and establish commonly worked agriculture plots so as to raise funds to support their schools and children's education.

This first section concluded by demonstrating that compared to previous governments in north China, the border region government succeeded in reaching a much larger segment of eligible children. While further research is needed to corroborate the statistics provided here, numerous reports suggest that the border region government grew enrollment from 20 to 30

percent to 70 to 90 percent of school-aged children. Throughout the process of establishing schools and enrolling children, the border region government carried out, I argue, a comprehensive institutionalization of childhood, which incorporated rural children into the bourgeoning socialist state.

The second section of this chapter examined wartime primary school textbooks. These sources complement the top-down view by illustrating what children actually learned in educational spaces. I have argued that while these textbooks taught literacy, border region education had much broader goals in mind. These included teaching children normative behavior, affective associations, and political ideals. Textbooks did this primarily through narrativization, which provided students with new words, characters, conflicts, and storylines. Through a Marxist-Leninist interpretation of China's recent history and contemporary events, textbooks invited children to think of their world and themselves in ways that advanced the CCP's political agenda of wartime resistance, nation building, and constructing and expanding Party hegemony.

War and revolution advanced these objectives in several ways. The violence that occurred throughout the war, which border region children observed firsthand, was pivotal, I argue, in inculcating in children a national consciousness. It did this primarily by delineating the in and out groups of the emerging New China. In this way, textbooks functioned not merely as a medium of political socialization, but also as a form of political violence. The graphic violence promoted throughout these textbooks solidified in-group and out-group cleavages. Textbooks not only attributed the widespread material destruction and physical violence occurring throughout children's homes to specific groups, but called on children to take action against these pernicious perpetrators. Repeatedly, these textbooks called on children to enact violent retribution. At the

same time, textbook violence juxtaposed loathsome enemies and opportunistic traitors against selfless soldiers and dutiful children. By doing so, these stories illustrated for children how they might demonstrate an otherwise indemonstrable loyalty to the Chinese nation. Textbooks did this specifically by providing children with numerous activities, behaviors, and patterns of speech.

Finally, primary school textbooks were concerned with children's physical safety and survival. With much of north China literally a warzone, children needed a militarized consciousness that taught them how to confront certain scenarios common within an environment of total war. Children learned how to behave during enemy air raids and what poison gas was. They learned how to stave the bleeding of a gunshot wound and best practices for transporting an injured soldier for immediate medical treatment. Fictional stories throughout these textbooks demonstrated the promises and perils for heading their teachers' instruction. Children who shared their knowledge with their parents survived attacks unscathed. On the other hand, children who accepted candy from traitors or attended Japanese schools were abducted and never heard from again. Textbooks also mobilized children's labor in efforts to aid wartime resistance efforts and build Party hegemony. Such activities, which we will turn to in detail in later chapters, included distributing propaganda, planting trees, teaching literacy, helping military dependents, paying respects to active-duty and convalescent soldiers, destroying infrastructure, standing guard to examine travel documents, and spying on enemy populations.

CHAPTER 4: "Always Prepared": The Anti-Japanese Children's League

> "Children rise up! Learn to be free and liberated Chinese citizens. Learn from under the oppression of Japanese imperialism a way to seize freedom and liberation. Make yourself into a new master of a new era!" Mao Zedong, October 1938, dedication to the newly published magazine *Border Region Children*

This chapter examines the formation, structure, and function of the Anti-Japanese Children's League (*kangri ertongtuan*), a mass organization for children aged approximately eight to fourteen. I argue here that whereas primary schools provided formal education, children's extracurricular involvement in the Children's League was a medium of informal education, which Stephanie Olsen defines as "anything that serves to educate outside of a formal school setting. This could be through a vast and systematic network administered by large religious or social authorities, or it could be as minute as a gesture or a look to tell a child that his/her behavior does not conform to the norm."[212] Siding with Olsen, I argue that pairing analyses of formal and informal education provides us with a more holistic understanding of children's lived experiences. This is particularly instructive when we acknowledge that it was through the Children's League that children applied to the real world the various social, political, and cultural literacies they acquired in their primary school classrooms, which we discussed in chapter two.

This chapter argues that the Children's League structured children's minds and bodies in several ways. Concerning children's bodies, the Children's League, like primary school education, emphasized physical education and hygiene. After school activities, at League-led summer camps or during annual Children's Day celebrations, children learned and participated

[212] Stephanie Olsen, *Juvenile Nation: Youth, Emotions, and the Making of the Modern British Citizen, 1880-1914* (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2014), 7-8.

in a number of choreographed demonstrations that sought to strengthen their bodies, discipline their minds, and illustrate their capacity for growth and learning. Concerning their minds, Children's Leagues reinforced in children particular government values, concerns, and ambitions. By targeting children's bodies and minds, the government deployed formal and informal education as a means of "social interventionism" whereby the state sought a quantitative and qualitative improvement of the nation's human population.[213] Furthermore, working in tandem, primary schools and the Children's League established a normative model of childhood that the peasantry was expected to follow. The border region government's efforts to educate, protect, and value rural children in these ways demonstrate the state's participation in a broader transnational pattern of institutionalizing childhood, which unfolded throughout the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.[214]

In this regard, Children's Leagues functioned as a means of social control and discipline, or what Tracy Koon has termed political socialization: the process by which the young acquire the beliefs, attitudes, and values of their political system.[215] Like other uniformed youth movements around the world, the Children's League strove to build character, understood here not as personal distinctiveness, but as conventional strength and virtue.[216] In the context of the Communist revolution, this meant cultivating a "revolutionary outlook on life" (*geming rensheng guan*). In addition to organizing and educating its members, the Children's League mobilized children's bodies and labor for a myriad of war-related duties, such as agricultural production,

[213] Hoffmann, *Stalinist Values*.
[214] Zelizer, *Pricing the Priceless Child.*
[215] Koon, *Believe, Obey, Fight*.
[216] David I. Macleod, *Building Character in the American Boy: The Boy Scouts, YMCA, and Their Forerunners, 1870-1920* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1983).

transporting ammunitions and material, selling war bonds, and spying on friendly and enemy populations.

Finally, I argue that while the Children's League was successful in organizing, educating, and mobilizing huge numbers of rural children for a wide range of critical endeavors, these processes were not without their challenges. The Youth National Salvation Federation (YNSF), which was responsible for leading the Children's League, faced innumerable difficulties in carrying out these responsibilities. In addition to war-related conflict and natural disasters, the YNSF cadres suffered from inadequate personnel, inconsistent leadership, and, at times, lackadaisical motivation. Of all these challenges, however, perhaps none were as trying as the children themselves. I argue that the Children's League's success in affording children opportunities to exercise personal autonomy and agency was a double-edged sword. Indeed, the deployment of age grading—whereby adults organized school classes and youth organizations based on children's physical age—helped to build strong connections and solidarity among the children. However, rather than simply marching lockstep to the rhythm set by parents, teachers, and YNSF cadres, children adroitly used the Children's League to undercut established hierarchies of power and achieve self-interest. We see, for example, that children demonstrated their attainment of a "revolutionary outlook" by struggling against teachers whom they deemed disagreeable. Likewise, through their participation in the League, children self-organized and protested actions that they determined to be unfair or unjust. In this regard, I join other historians of childhood that view youth organizations as intergenerational bodies that are not so much products of adult ideas, but of a "tenuous social contract shaped by the interplay of adult prescriptions and youth practices." Like other uniformed youth movements operating throughout the world during the World War II period, the Children's League possessed a hybrid culture that

demonstrated a struggle between adult intentions and children's desire to exercise as much autonomy as possible.[217]

Mass Organizations and Mass Mobilization

The Chinese Communist Party's mobilization of children, through the Anti-Japanese Children's League, was part of a broader pattern of mobilizing society as a whole. The CCP's response to Japan's 1937 invasion was to wage a "People's War" (*renmin zhanzheng*). Developing throughout the 1930s, this Maoist doctrine argued that while weapons were an important factor in war, it was people that were "the decisive factor." In his May 1938 article titled "On Protracted War," Mao wrote that the "contest of strength is not only a contest of military and economic power, but also a contest of human power and morale."[218] While Mao did not use the term "People's War" explicitly until the final year of the War of Resistance, he did write that the Party had deployed the concept as early as 1931. For him, the people's war was a cross-class coalition that worked "wholeheartedly [to] perform various tasks in support of the armed forces."[219]

We can categorize these tasks into three groups. First were military- and defense-related tasks. These included rallying people to join the army, transporting food to the front lines, caring for soldiers and their families, mobilizing guerrilla units and local self-defense corps, laying land mines, gathering intelligence, combing out traitors and spies, and other duties that took "direct part in the army's operations." The second group of tasks were related to agricultural and

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[217] Jay Mechling, "Children in Scouting and Other Organizations," in *The Routledge History of Childhood in the Western World*, Paula Fass, ed., (Routledge: New York, 2013), 428; Mischa Honeck and James Marten, eds., *War and Childhood in the Era of the Two World Wars* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2019), 136.
[218] Mao Zedong, May 1938, "On Protracted War," *Selected Works of Mao Zedong*, https://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/mao/selected-works/volume-2/mswv2_09.htm, accessed April 10, 2021.
[219] Mao Zedong, "On Coalition Government," April 24, 1945, *Selected Military Writings of Mao Tse-tung*, https://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/mao/selected-works/volume-3/mswv3_25.htm, accessed April 10, 2021.

economic production. Mao declared that this work required the mobilization of "everybody for the production of grain and other necessities." To achieve this, Mao stated, "all government institutions and schools…devote their free time to production," to support both themselves and the army.[220]

The final group of tasks included various political, economic, cultural, and health work. For Mao and other top leaders, the political aim of the war was not just to "drive out Japanese imperialism," but to "build a new China."[221] Nie Rongzhen, a top Jin-Cha-Ji military official, echoed this sentiment in his 1984 memoir. He stated that the construction of base areas was not simply about Japanese resistance or armed struggle. It was simultaneously "the construction of a democratic government…and improving the people's lives. It was about the reformation of the old society and the construction of a new."[222] The enormity of these twin processes—war and nation-building—demanded, Mao argued, the mobilization of *all* Chinese, regardless of class, sex, or age. To win the war and build China anew required, Mao concluded, the whole of the "workers, peasants, youth, women, *children*, merchants and professional people."[223]

To achieve these tasks, the Party organized rural society into various mass organizations, nongovernmental bodies that enlisted large numbers of village residents and involved them in policy implementation.[224] Across north China, the largest civil organizations belonged to

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[220] Ibid.
[221] Mao Zedong, May 1938, "On Protracted War," *Selected Works of Mao Zedong*, https://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/mao/selected-works/volume-2/mswv2_09.htm, accessed April 10, 2021.
[222] Nie Rongzhen, *Nie Rongzhen huiyilu* (Nie Rongzhen's Memoir) (Beijing: Jiefangjun chubanshe, 1984), 454-460; Cao, 3-4.
[223] Author's emphasis. Mao Zedong, May 1938, "Problems of Strategy in Guerrilla War Against Japan," *Selected Works of Mao Zedong*, https://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/mao/selected-works/volume-2/mswv2_08.htm, accessed April 10, 2021.
[224] Kathleen J. Hartford, "Step by Step: Reform, Resistance, and Revolution in Chin-Ch'a-Chi Border Region, 1937-1945" (PhD diss., University of Michigan, 1980), 419.

peasants, women, children, youth, and workers.[225] Mass organizations had several objectives. At the outset, they sought to transform the peasantry from being a group that irregularly united in common interest to one that was permanent with shared interests, attitudes, and experiences. These groups, which developed and trained local leadership to manage from below, were to be voluntary in nature. They promoted peasant interests and class solidarity, both as a means to improve peasant livelihood and prevent elite subversion or manipulation. At the same time, while the primary objective in establishing mass organizations was to establish a foundation for peasant power, the Party also wanted to make that power amenable to Party influence.[226]

Senior military officer, Peng Dehuai, outlined in late 1942 four criteria these associations were to meet in order to be considered successful mass mobilization organizations. First, a mass organization must involve the active participation of broad swathes of the population in the struggle for clearly identified political and economic interests. Second, participation must be voluntary and based on the belief that local leadership will achieve the organization's goals. Third, involvement in the organization would naturally lead to a "transformation in thought," whereby the masses' discarded "feudal" thinking associated with karma, fate, superstition, and feudal morality. Finally, mass organizations loyally followed the Communist Party, supporting its political recommendations.[227]

Organizationally, each mass organization maintained a hierarchy that stretched from its representative assembly at the border region level down through the prefectural, district, county, and village levels. Of all civil associations (e.g. women's, youth's, peasants, etc.), the only

[225] To these associations we can add military organizations, such as the general militia and local self-defense organizations. For our purposes here, we will focus only on the civil organizations.
[226] Ibid., 395-398.
[227] Peng Dehuai, "Guanyu Huabei genjudi gongzuo de baogao" [A Report Concerning Work in North China Base Areas], late 1942; Hartford, "Step by Step," 401-402.

exception to this structure was the Children's League, which had direct representation only at the village and district levels. From the county level upwards, the local Youth National Salvation Federation represented League interests. While mass organizations operated independently from both government and Party control, as the Jin-Cha-Ji representative assembly promulgated in January 1938, various mechanisms provided the Party with opportunities to communicate with civil organizations and spread influence. Regarding contact with the government, for example, joint and consultative conferences provided opportunities for mass organization cadres to deliberate policy with government officials. At lower levels, the government liaised with mass organizations through organs of the Civil Administration Department. While contact between mass organizations and the Party was less institutional, through its Mass Movement Bureau, the Party maintained informal, but regular, contacts with mass associations.[228]

The Jin-Cha-Ji Anti-Japanese Children's League

The bureaucratic infrastructure that gave rise to the Jin-Cha-Ji Anti-Japanese Children's League was the product of a multi-step, multi-year process. It began in late 1935 and ended between 1938 and 1940. It started with the Party rebranding its youth organization under a Second United Front policy and concluded with the establishment of local Children's Leagues throughout north Chinese villages. Following in 1935 massive nation-wide protests that became known as the December Nineth Movement, the Chinese Communist Party adopted a Second United Front policy. While the Chinese Nationalist Party would not agree to this policy until late 1936, the CCP was determined to use the momentum of the December Ninth Movement—which protested increasing GMD accommodation to Japanese encroachment in north China—to

[228] Hartford, "Step by Step," 425-426.

contrast itself with the GMD by framing the Party as a reliable bulwark against Japanese imperialism. Given its intent to once again form a cross-class, cross-ideological coalition to resist Japan and defend national integrity, the CCP disbanded the Communist Youth League and assembled in its place two organizations. First was the Northwest Youth National Salvation Federation (*Xibei qingnian jiuguo lianhehui*).[229] Striving to build a non-partisan coalition, the Communists established the YNSF as the United Front organization for all youth-related endeavors—military recruitment, education and culture work, general improvement of livelihood, etc.—throughout Communist base areas and border regions. As a United Front organization, the YNSF differed—at least ostensibly—from the CYL in that it recruited youth across the ideological and political spectrum. The second organization, which strove to maintain Party control over the youth movement by supervising and directing the YNSF, was the Central Youth Work Committee (*Zhongyang qingnian weiyuanhui*), often referred to as simply the Youth Department (*Qingnian bu*). The Youth Department maintained strict supervision over the YNSF and Children's Leagues throughout the Second Sino-Japanese War.[230]

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[229] Preparation for the YNSF began as early as February 1937. See "Xibei qingnian jiuguo lianhehui choubeihui guanyu zhaoji xibei qingnian jiuguo daibiao dahui de jueding" (Northwestern Youth National Salvation Federation Preparatory Committee Decision on Convening the Northwestern Youth National Salvation Federation Congress), February 13, 1937, *Xin zhonghua bao*, No. 329, reprinted in *ZQYLS*, 13:381-382.

[230] As early as September 17, 1938, the Northern Bureau of the Party Central Committee issued a notice instructing members "to establish at all levels" local Youth Work Committees, so as to coordinate work between the Party and the YNSF. The Youth Work Committee regularly issued directives and proposals for its members to implement through their direct participation in the YNSF. They also included direction to intervene directly in children's formal and informal education. In preparation for one YNSF Congress, the Youth Work Committee charged its members with "assisting…children's education, inside and outside of school." The proposal urged YNSF members to "use every possible means to supervise curricular content" and to build "solidarity with primary school teachers." The Party's Northern Bureau Central Committee echoed this sentiment. Shortly after the publication of a Youth Work Committee's proposal, the Central Committee issued its own directive. This directive stated that the YNSF "and the children under its authority should be the first to act as helpers for the Party and government's citizen education. They both should participate in all citizen education activities and serve as models for all other youth and children." By numerous accounts, YNSF members were active directors of the Children's League and its membership. Journalists and cadres alike wrote that the YNSF took an active part in children's primary school education, going so far as to create educational materials. YNSF also led Children's League activities after class. For representative documents, see "Zhonggong zhongyang beifangju guanyu jianli ge ji dang de qingnian gongzuo weiyuanhui de tongzhi" (Northern Branch of the Chinese Communist Party Central Committee Notice Concerning the Establishment at Every Level Central Youth Work Committees), September 17, 1938, reprinted in *ZQYLS*, 14:155;

The reader will remember from chapter two that following the Marco Polo Bridge Incident on July 7, 1937, which marked Japan's full-scale invasion of China, a power vacuum opened in north China as the Japanese army drove the Chinese Nationalist governing apparatus from the region. The CCP and its army filled this vacuum, establishing throughout north Chinese villages both its own government and mass organizations. The YNSF and its membership were integral both to the CCP's expansion and its consolidation of power.[231] Through a cross-class coalition, the CCP established political and military control in the Jin-Cha-Ji border region as early as November 1937. This coalition formally established a regionwide government in January 1938, when 148 representatives from various mass organizations assembled to convene a the Jin-Cha-Ji Military, Political, and People's Representative Assembly. The Jin-Cha-Ji YNSF was officially founded shortly after this meeting.[232]

"Zhonggong zhongyang beifangju qingwei guanyu Huabei muqian qingyun gongzuo de zhishi" (Youth Committee of the Chinese Communist Party Central Committee Northern Bureau Directive Concerning the Present-day Work of North China's Youth Movement), April 24, 1939, reprinted in *ZQYLS*, 14:459-461; "Zhonggong zhongyang beifangju qingwei dui zhaokai bianqu qingnian daibiao dahui de tiyi" (Youth Committee of the Chinese Communist Party Central Committee Northern Bureau Proposal Concerning Convening the Border Region Youth Congress), April 21, 1940, reprinted in *ZQYLS*, 14:821-822; "Zhonggong zhongyang beifang fenju guanyu guomin jiaoyu de zhishi" (Chinese Communist Party Central Committee Northern Branch Office Instructions Concerning Citizen Education), April 20, 1940, reprinted in *JCJJUFZZC*, 1:122; Xia Yang, "Jin-Cha-Ji bianqu de haizimen" (Children of the Jin-Cha-Ji Border Region), *Xin zhonghua bao*, April 2, 1940, reprinted in *JCJCDJY*, 1:435; "Kangzhan san nian lai diwo zai jiaoyu zhanxian shang de douzheng" (Three Years on the Battle Lines of the Struggle for Education), *Bianqu jiaoyu*, November 16, 1940, reprinted in *JCJJUFZZC*, 1:235.

[231] "Xibei qingnian jiuguo lianhehui jinji dongyuan tongzhi" (Northwest National Salvation Youth Federation Notice Concerning the Urgency of Mobilization), July 10, 1937, reprinted in *ZQYLS*, 13:532-533.

[232] The Jin-Cha-Ji Youth National Salvation Federation was established alongside other mass organizations between March 3 to 6, 1938. It held its first Congress on May 16, 1938, in Wutai county, Shanxi province. The Congress elected Qi Yiding and Zhou Jingxue to serve as the organization's first Chairman and Deputy Chairman, respectively. The YNSF's highest authoritative body was its Congress, which elected nine to thirteen members to serve on an Executive Committee (*zhiwei*). This Executive Committee then selected a Standing Committee (*changwei*) of five to seven members. The Standing Committee elected a Chairman (*zhuren*) to head the entire organization. The Congress included six departments: propaganda, organization, education, military training, a secretariat, and a Children's Department (*ertongbu*). The management of the Children's League fell under the purview of the YNSF Children's Department. For organizational structure see Zhonggong zhongyang zuzhi bu, Zhonggong zhongyang dangshi yanjiushi, Zhongyang dang'anguan, eds., *Zhongguo gongchandang zuzhishi ziliao, di 3 juan, kangri zhanzheng shiqi, 1937.7-1945.8 shang* [Materials on the Organizational History of the Chinese Communist Party, Volume 3: The Anti-Japanese War of Resistance Period, July 1937 to August 1945 Part 1] (Beijing: Zhonggong dangshi chubanshe, 2000), 3:1:174. For the JCJ YNSF organizing principles and charter, see "Jin-Cha-Ji bianqu qingjiuhui zuzhi jianzhang" (Jin-Cha-Ji Border Region Anti-Japanese Youth National Salvation Federation Organization and General Regulations), July 1938, reprinted in *ZQYLS*, 14:151-152.

A major task of the YNSF was carrying out a broad set of tasks categorized as "children's work" (*ertong gongzuo*). This wide-ranging assortment of responsibilities included the organization, education, and mobilization of children, as well as the qualitative improvement of children's physical, emotional, and political well-being.[233] Throughout the period from 1937 to 1948, the YNSF saw children's work as a developmental task. This is evident in the language YNSF leaders and cadres use throughout the historical record. They refer to children as the "future masters of New China" and the "next generation of nation builders." As a result, in carrying out children's work, the YNSF was tasked with the "honor" of assuming the "great and significant" task of helping children to "realize their potential" and therefore "cultivating a superior next generation" of citizens and workers.[234]

Despite the forward-looking nature of this rhetoric—that is, approaching children as *becomings*—the everyday activities of the YNSF were very much rooted in mobilizing children as *beings*, and therefore harnessing their labor to make material and immediate contributions to the war effort. This is abundantly clear when we examine how the YNSF, through the Anti-Japanese Children's League, organized, educated, and mobilized children. The first major document to outline and delineate these objectives, the "Instructions Concerning the Organization, Training, and Activities of the Children's League," demonstrates this in no

[233] More can be said on these latter tasks, though this discussion must be left for elsewhere. In short, "improving children's lives" (*gaishan ertong shenghuo*) involved realizing more equitable life outcomes by eradicating infanticide, child betrothal, and early marriage, and increasing the number of impoverished children enrolled in primary schools and enlisted in the Children's Leagues. These were all efforts the CCP had strove for since the mid-1920s. Similarly, the YNSF sought to improve children's political position (*zhengzhi diwei*) by encouraging adults to respect them as human beings and individuals that were capable of making important and concrete contributions to household and local economies. Organization, education, and mobilization sought to bolster these efforts by demonstrating to parents that all children—regardless of class or the level of education of their parents—were capable of learning, growing, and contributing. "Qingnian ertong jianjue yonghu shuangshi gangling gonggu yu kuada qingnian tongyizhanxian" (Youth and Children Steadfastly Support and Protect the Double Ten Outline to Consolidate and Expand the Youth United Front), January 1941, HBSBWG, file no. 21353-L8712.

[234] "Ertong gongzuo jiang… tigang" (Outline Speech on Children's Work), August 1, 1940, HBSBWG, file no. 21416-L8775. The character following *jiang* is illegible. It is likely *hua*, *yan* or *zuo*, indicating that this was a draft outline for a speech, possibly to be presented at a district- or county-level meeting.

uncertain terms. These instructions outlined three broad goals: to organize and train the border region's children, to complement primary schools' curricular efforts, and to incorporate children into wartime resistance and nation-building efforts.[235] According to these instructions, children were to participate in training and education that included military drills, general political knowledge (*zhengzhi changshi*), and "life training" (*shenghuo xunlian*). As part of their military training, children were to march in formation, identify cardinal directions, know how to evacuate villages during air raids, detect poison in water supplies, carry out rescue operations, and transport wounded soldiers and military material. These activities were to be reinforced in the games children played, which, the document notes, "should mimic combat situations." For general political education, children were to learn about Sino-Japanese relations, Japan's "rapacious policies," the United Front, and resistance in the border regions. A category of learning termed "life training" sought to inculcate in children "ideal character attributes," which included: the capacity to bear hardships and work diligently, bravery and risk-taking, helping the small and weak, prioritizing the collective over the individual, punctuality, discipline, hygiene, and observation of "proper entertainment" (*zhengdang de yule*). Finally, Children's League members were to carry out six types of "work" (*gongzuo*). These included: organization, propaganda (e.g. performing plays, posting slogans, distributing pamphlets), education (e.g. promoting literacy, writing wall posters, investigating and recording statistics on truancy, enrolling village children in school), maintaining public order (*jiucha*) (e.g. serving sentry duty, checking passersby travel documents, investigating traitors), communications (e.g. networking with League members in neighboring villages to transmit news and documents), and general

[235] While the nature of the United Front policy restricted these documents from stating outright that children should also be building and expanding the Party's influence, the content of much of the Children's Leagues activities did just this. Much of the propaganda work children participated in, for example, credited the Party and its army for resistance efforts and improvements in locals' livelihood.

assistance (e.g. assisting with planting and harvesting seasons, selling national salvation bonds, and assisting military families).[236] Documents issued at later dates largely paraphrased and summarized these instructions, with only minor differences.[237]

YNSF documents make it clear that the Children's League was to function as a form of informal education. Indeed, YNSF documents explicitly state that the Children's League was to possess an "educational nature," which called upon children to complete real-world tasks and responsibilities as a means to learn practical skills that made an immediate contribution to local society.[238] As the aforementioned instructions make clear, the Children's League mobilized children's labor and participation in a broad range of extracurricular activities, including propaganda teams, drama and singing troupes, and local and regional military forces. As a result, these informal influences became at least as important as formal schooling itself. This is particularly instructive when we acknowledge that it was through these extracurricular activities that children applied the various social, political, and cultural literacies they acquired in their

[236] "Bianweihui guanyu ertongtuan zuzhi xunlian ji huodong gangyao de zhishi" (Border Region Committee Instructions Concerning the Organization, Training, and Activities of the Children's League), September 20, 1938, reprinted in *JCJJUFZZC*, 1:23-26.

[237] The July 1940 League Constitution differed in that it lowered the age from eight to fifteen to seven to fourteen. Second, unlike the "outline," which stated that teachers and YNSF members were to "force" (*qiangzhi*) children to join local Leagues, the Constitution simply states that "anti-Japanese children aged seven to fourteen all may join." This suggests that the government may have walked back its earlier policy of forcing all children to join the League. Third, the July 1940 Constitution specified a clear bureaucratic structure. See "Jin-Cha-Ji bianqu kangri ertongtuan tuanzhang" (Constitution of the Jin-Cha-Ji Anti-Japanese Children's League), July 1940, reprinted in Zhengxie Hebeisheng Weiyuanhui, eds., *Jin-Cha-Ji kangri genjudi shiliao huibian* [Collected Documents from the Jin-Cha-Ji Anti-Japanese Base Area] (Shijiazhuang: Hebei renmin chubanshe, 2015), 1:524-525, abbreviated here after as *JCJSLHB*. For a sample of other documents, see "Zhonghua qingnian jiuguo tuanti lianhe banshichu jianzhang" (General Regulations of the Office for the Alliance of Chinese Youth National Salvation Organizations), November 25, 1938, reprinted in *ZQYLS*, 14: 263, 272-273; "Zhonggong zhongyang qingwei guanyu ertong gongzuo de jueding" (Chinese Communist Party Central Youth Work Committee Decision Concerning Children's Work), March 4, 1939, reprinted in *ZQYLS*, 14:449; "Jin-Cha-Ji bianqu kangri ertongtuan gongzuo gangling" (Jin-Cha-Ji Border Region Anti-Japanese Children's League Work Program), July 1940, reprinted in *JCJSLHB*, 1:524.

[238] "Qingnian ertong jianjue yonghu shuangshi gangling gonggu yu kuada qingnian tongyizhanxian" (Youth and Children Steadfastly Support and Protect the Double Ten Outline to Consolidate and Expand the Youth United Front), January 1941, HBSBWG, file no. 21353-L8712.

primary school classrooms. Chapters four and five are devoted to examining these contributions in detail.

The reader will remember that though the war with Japan did not officially end until the summer of 1945, Japanese soldiers' gradual withdrawal from north China in 1943-44 prompted the border region government to expand its territory. As early as 1945, children's work no longer encompassed most of the military-related tasks outlined in the 1938 instructions discussed above. While children were still organized, educated, and mobilized, their labor became increasingly diverted to agricultural production, expanding Party hegemony, and building a socialist society. This shift is evident as early as March 1945, when the border region government published that "the goal of…children's work is to organize and train the great masses of children across the border region. To mold them into children that can write, calculate, and labor; that are healthy in mind and body; that study scientific knowledge. To cultivate in them the revolutionary thinking of new citizens and of the masters of new society." As during the war, children's work also included efforts to improve children's physical and emotional wellbeing through hygiene campaigns, improving disaster relief and welfare, and improving child mortality rates by eliminating preventable disease and introducing modern medicine.[239]

Challenges Faced by the Children's League

At the village level, the YNSF faced numerous difficulties regarding their organization and mobilization of local children. Chief among these was the war itself, which stymied YNSF

[239] "Bianweihui, kanglianhui wei jinian 'si si' ertongjie guanyu ertong gongzuo de lianhe zhishi" (Joint Instructions from the Border Region Committee and Anti-Japanese Association Concerning Children's Work and the Commemoration of Children's Day on April Fourth), *Xianxing faling huiji*, March 11, 1945, reprinted in *JCJJUFZZC*, 2:120-123. See also "Jin-Cha-Ji bianwei, qinglian guanyu 'si si' ertongjie gongzuo zhishi" (Jin-Cha-Ji Border Region Committee and the Youth Association Instructions Concerning April Fourth Children's Festival Work), March 28, 1947, reprinted in *JCJCDJY*, 1:189-191.

activities to different degrees. In some cases, children's work may have ceased only temporarily as an enemy unit passed through. On other occasions, extremely violent and destructive campaigns could create leadership vacuums and erode parents' willingness to allow their children outside the home. Under these circumstances, children's work could be suspended for months at a time.[240] Not all challenges, however, were manmade. YNSF activities could also be upset by natural disasters. During the fall of 1939, for example, unprecedented rainfall led to intense flooding, which damaged infrastructure, washed away recently harvested grain, and ruined the recently planted winter crops. One report documented that this tragedy exacerbated an already food-insecure population, and therefore created among the populace a "defeatist mentality" that made it difficult to organize the masses and win support for YNSF efforts.[241]

While external factors such as war and natural disaster certainly shaped the scope and frequency of YNSF activism, internal factors are more frequently discussed throughout the primary sources. More specifically, cadre work reports bemoan a lack of leadership, low levels of motivation, and inconsistent application of policy.[242] A report from Quyang county is particularly candid in addressing these shortcomings. As late as 1941, for example, some districts

[240] "Ertong gongzuo jiang… tigang" (Outline Speech on Children's Work), August 1, 1940, HBSBWG, file no. 21416-L8775.
[241] "Yi nian lai ertong gongzuo de zongjie" (A Summary of Children's Work Over the Last Year), undated, HBSBWG, file no. 21799-L9158.
[242] Common problems reported by YNSF leadership included insufficient personnel, inadequate communication between the rank-and-file and their superiors, cadres neglecting to emphasize children's political education, the carrying out of some work in only a perfunctorily or formalistic manner, and the failure of primary schools and their Children's League counterparts to work together in a complementary fashion. See "Qingnian ertong jianjue yonghu shuangshi gangling gonggu yu kuada qingnian tongyizhanxian" (Youth and Children Steadfastly Support and Protect the Double Ten Outline to Consolidate and Expand the Youth United Front), January 1941, HBSBWG, file no. 21353-L8712. This document is from Tang county. See also the following report from Wan county: "San nian lai ertong gongzuo zongjie" (A Summary of Three Years of Children's Work), May 2, 1941, HBSBWG, file no. 21323-L8682. Regarding motivation, report authors often lament that while major annual events such as Children's Day or summer camps ushered in periods of intense activity and enthusiasm, interest in children's work as a whole tapered off shortly after these occasions passed. One report noted that leadership failed to leverage this momentum by instructing village-level cadres on how to carry out long-term YNSF objectives. "Yi nian lai ertong gongzuo de zongjie" (A Summary of Children's Work Over the Last Year), undated, HBSBWG, file no. 21799-L9158.

throughout Quyang had consolidated neither a Children's League organization nor its leadership. For those that had assigned leaders for local Children's Leagues, such positions were given to local teachers rather than YNSF cadres. In some instances, the assigned primary school teachers opposed taking on such responsibilities and hence ignored these tasks. For districts where YNSF cadres had been assigned to carry out children's work, YNSF personnel could be derelict in their duties. Those that did not completely disregard children's work, the report tells us, arranged for their Children's League to accomplish certain tasks, but never followed through to ensure the work had been satisfactorily completed. For the children's work that was carried out, the report states that results were uneven. The implementation of military drills, for example, varied from "insufficient," to "too conservative," to "detrimental to children's health."[243] While the report does not provide further details, we know from previous discussions that "military training" (*junshi xunlian*) included activities such as marching, flag semaphore, learning choreographed battle maneuvers, and rehearsing village evacuation protocol. Based on the report's wording, "insufficient" drilling may indicate that Children's League members were inadequately prepared for emergency situations, such as knowing where to rendezvous following a Japanese air raid or poison gas attack. Similarly, exercises that were "detrimental" to children's health may have pushed youngsters to physical extremes that resulted in pain, discomfort, parental resistance, or an unwillingness to remain involved with the organization.

Nowhere do we see local resistance more clearly than among the children themselves. As explained above, in constructing these mass organizations the Party aimed to foster within the membership solidarity, voluntarism, and the desire to actively struggle for the political and economic interest of the social group. The historical record suggests that the Children's League

[243] "San nian lai ertong gongzuo zongjie" (A Summary of Three Years of Children's Work), May 12, 1941, HBSBWG, file no. 21368-L8727.

acted accordingly. In a March 1940 report summarizing two years of education work in central Hebei, the author mentions local children's development of a "democratic work style" (*minzhu zuofeng*). The report details an instance where a local Children's League sought justice in response to an ornery villager's assault of their teacher. According to the document, the League held an impromptu meeting where they collectively determined an appropriate punishment for the assailant: a ten *yuan* fine. The League brought their decision to the local government bureau and demanded the penalty be enforced. When delivering their verdict, League members went as far to threaten the adult cadres. If the government refused to carry out the League's demands, the children threatened to mobilize "the entirety of the school's students to protest the matter." Much to the League's pleasure, the protest was not needed. The government bureau agreed that the League's demands were just, and subsequently fined the villager.[244]

While this case suggests the Children's League acted in accordance with the stated objectives, more often than not the League's struggle for self-interest was counterproductive to broader Party and government prerogatives. Reflecting on the sixteen months from May 1939 to August 1940, the Jin-Cha-Ji Department of Education Head, Liu Aifeng, reported that primary school teachers and administrators had difficulty keeping their students under control. Liu noted this was in part due to the independence the government had conferred onto children. He notes the context as follows. As education expanded during the border region's first two years, the demand for teachers far outstripped the supply. As a result, schools employed "backward" teachers from nearby private schools, many of whom "were incapable of effectively managing the classroom." These teachers disciplined troublesome students in the only way they knew how: through corporeal punishment. The result was that many students began refusing to attend class.

[244] "Jizhong qu liang nian lai jiaoyu gongzuo de zongjie" (A Summary of Two Years' Education Work in Central Hebei), *Bianqu jiaoyu*, March 1, 1940, reprinted in *JCJCDJY*, 1:30-31.

To correct this, Liu continued, the government enacted two measures. First, it prohibited teachers from physically disciplining students. Second, it placed authority over children—inside and outside of school—into the hands of the YNSF. Under this arrangement, "the teacher was relegated to an ancillary role." From this moment, Liu remarked, the Children's League became "primary school students' own mass organization, with an independent leadership system." That is, the government removed from the League's ranks teachers and school administrators as authoritative figures. Children now reported directly to the YNSF, both in and outside of school.[245]

As a result, Liu continued, students "became aware of their independence." Children launched "continuous struggle" (*buduan de douzheng*) against teachers with whom they were "dissatisfied." In districts under "excessively leftist leadership," children developed "extremely democratic tendencies" (*jiduan minzhu de qingxiang*). Teachers who had ceased physically disciplining children were now at their wits end. These teachers responded, Liu wrote, by adopting "a lackadaisical attitude, and schools descended into chaos."[246]

The government attempted to ameliorate these issues by encouraging better communication between schools, the YNSF, and the League. In early 1940, for example, the government began emphasizing that school lessons and League activities should be "complementary." As the historical record reveals, however, the YNSF and school administration continued to clash. In some cases, teachers refused to allow students to participate in League activities. Other instances demonstrate that the YNSF removed children from class without prior notification. A few lines of one resolution hint at this tension: "Schools should

[245] Liu Aifeng, "Jizhong wu nian jiaoyu gongzuo de zongjie (1938 nian - 1942 nian)" (A Summary of Five Years of Education Work in Central Hebei), April 5, 1942, reprinted in *JCJJUFZZC*, 1:356.
[246] Ibid., 1:356-357.

wipe out any thinking that fosters a 'selfish compartmentalism' [*benweizhuyi*] that works against the merits and achievements of children's work."[247] Similarly, a March 1941 article appearing in the pedagogical journal *Border Region Education* stresses that while primary schools and the League were separate entities, neither "should interfere with the work of the other." In the case that scheduling conflicts arose, for example, the article suggested the two should communicate with each other to work out the issue. Cases where either a teacher or YNSF leader controlled "every aspect of students' lives from dawn to dusk" should not exist. "At school," the article continued, "the Children's League's role is to ensure the completion of study-related tasks. The League's activities must not interfere with the completion of the school's education plan. Likewise, in cases where there is no such interference, schools cannot indiscriminately limit the League's necessary activities. Schools must respect the League's autonomy." In short, the article concluded, "schools and the League should achieve an organic, complementary relationship, not a mechanic separation."[248]

Despite these and greater governmental efforts, however, no efforts appear to have adequately harmonized relations between the YNSF, the Children's League, and local primary schools.[249] In an April 5, 1942, work report, Liu Aifeng lamented the education administration's inability to "forge close relationships" with the various mass organizations, of which Liu singled out the YNSF. "In order to improve both educators' social position and enthusiasm," Liu remarked, "we called on children to show more respect for their instructors. Yet students

[247] "Jin-Cha-Ji bianqu wenhua jiaoyu huiyi wenhua jiaoyu jueyian" (Resolutions on Culture and Education from the Jin-Cha-Ji Border Region Conference on Culture and Education), *Bianqu jiaoyu*, June 16, 1940, reprinted in *JCJJUFZZC*, 1:134-135.
[248] Lu Nan, "Bianqu xiaoxue jiaoyu fazhan de xin jieduan" (A New Stage in Developing Border Region Primary School Education), *Bianqu jiaoyu*, March 15, 1941, reprinted in *JCJJUFZZC*, 1:277-278.
[249] "Bianweihui banfa guanyu ertongtuan yu xiaoxuexiao guanxi de jueding" (Border Region Committee Promulgation Concerning the Decision on the Relationship between Primary School and the Children's League), *Bianzheng daobao*, January 20, 1942, reprinted in *JCJJUFZZC*, 1:334.

continue to indiscriminately attack their teachers, demonstrating a complete lack of respect for their leadership. In their everyday lives and studies, children continue to exhibit an extremely democratic nature. This phenomenon has yet to be eliminated. The YNSF is either giving children too much work, or it is operating in direct conflict with the schools. For example, during lessons, the YNSF will—as it pleases—pull students out of class to attend meetings. This affects the completion of the education plan. Due to their participation in YNSF work, students in Anping county, for example, attended only three of thirteen language arts lessons." Liu concluded that Children's League actions in the classroom were "completely unchecked." Children unleased "unbridled attacks on their instructors, to the extent that teachers were utterly shamed." In fact, in some areas Children's League members possessed the right to remove teachers with whom they were dissatisfied and hire in his or her place a new instructor. Liu reported that this often led to the whimsical and "indiscriminate transfer" of teachers that left schools bereft of the stability needed to carry out the border region's education goals.[250]

Similar phenomena plagued other areas of the border region as well. A May 1942 report on education work in the Beiyue district surveyed the progress of "citizen's education work" over nineteen counties. This report stated that though communication between the YNSF, Children's Leagues, and local schools showed "general improvement," that in some villages the relationship remained "uncongenial." Rather than working together to "assure the smooth day-to-day operations of education," the YNSF and Children's League did the opposite: they championed their own "operational autonomy" (*duli xingdong*) and "obstructed school order." The report singled out a Xingtang county primary school, where the local YNSF Chairman and

[250] Liu Aifeng, "Jizhong wu nian jiaoyu gongzuo de zongjie (1938 nian - 1942 nian)" (A Summary of Five Years of Education Work in Jizhong), April 5, 1942, reprinted in *JCJJUFZZC*, 1:379, 388.

League Head regularly interrupted lessons at his leisure to call children out of class in order to carry out League meetings and other activities.[251]

Despite these difficulties, the Children's League managed to enlist and mobilize large numbers of children. Because the following two chapters both deal specifically with children's responses and the Children's League activities, it will suffice here to note the reported scope of the League's reach. Statistics seeking to quantify the number of Children's League members vary wildly.[252] In a memoir recorded more than half a century after the fact, a former Children's Department Head recalled that by 1940 the Jin-Cha-Ji Children's League had reached over one million members.[253] A 1943 report claimed that the Beiyue district and central Hebei regions had 320,127 and 400,000 members, respectively, for a total over 720,000 members. This report added that in the Beiyue district total membership constituted approximately 85 percent of the 350,000 children residing in that area.[254] A third report dated from 1945 states that the Children's League was the third largest mass organization—behind the peasants' and women's associations—throughout the border region with 280,000 members.[255]

Published by the Party's central mouthpiece, *Liberation Daily*, a fourth report declares that between 1940 and 1942, the League swelled from 390,000 members to 629,000, a 61 percent increase. By sheer numbers, this growth was second only to the Women's League.

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[251] "Beiyue qu ershi ge yue lai guomin jiaoyu gongzuo zongjie cailiao" (Materials Summarizing Twenty Months of Citizen Education Work in the Beiyue District), September 1940 - May 1942, reprinted in *JCJCDJY*, 1:68-87.
[252] As with primary school enrollment statistics, the only sources I have had access to are official CCP and border region government reports. Efforts to corroborate or challenge these sources will need to be taken up by future scholars.
[253] Xu Guang, Li Hao, "Jin-Cha-Ji bianqu de kangri ertongtuan" (The Jin-Cha-Ji Border Region Anti-Japanese Children's League), reprinted in *JCJSLHB*, 2:97-103.
[254] "Muqian huabei qingyun gaikuang yu 1943 nian de gonggzuo fangzhen" (The Present Situation of the Youth Movement and the 1943 Work Policies), April 20, 1943, reprinted in *ZQYLS*, 16:90.
[255] Liu Lantao, "Jin-Cha-Ji bianqu de qunzhong gongzuo" (Jin-Cha-Ji Border Region Mass Work), *Bianqu jiaoyu*, January 1945, reprinted in Jin-Cha-Ji kangri genjudi shiliao congshu bianshen weiyuanhui, Zhongyang dang'anguan, eds., *Jin-Cha-Ji kangri genjudi di 1 ce wenxian xuanbian* [Jin-Cha-Ji Anti-Japanese Base Area Select Historical Materials Volume 1] (Beijing: Zhonggong dangshi ziliao chubanshe, 1989), 1:1:974.

Growth of the Women's League, however, may be deceiving. Reports suggest that while the Women's League boasted a larger total membership, members constituted just 30 percent of all eligible women. This was the lowest level of enrollment across all mass organizations.[256] The Children's League, on the other hand, enrolled the highest percentage of eligible numbers of all mass organizations, with somewhere between 53 and 68 percent of all school-aged children enrolled.[257] Claire and William Band, former professors that spent time with the Communists, corroborate these numbers—though without an explanation of their methodology. They reported in May 1942 that directly west of the Beiping-Hankou railroad, 200,000 of the area's 350,000 children had joined the League. This equates to approximately 57 percent of eligible children. The Bands added to this observation the "special tasks" League members carried out. According to the Bands, children "were to help in times of emergency as guards, scouts, inspectors of passports and travel permits, in counter espionage, vigilance and the detection of traitors. The seeming innocence of small children, especially of Chinese children, makes them very useful in such work."[258]

According to the *Liberation Daily* article, the Jin-Cha-Ji Children's League constituted approximately 32 percent of League membership across four—out of nineteen—border regions and base areas. *Liberation Daily* reported that across Jin-Cha-Ji, Jin-Ji-Lu-Yu, northwest Shanxi, and Shandong, total membership in the Children's League had reached 1,981,502.[259] These

[256] Hartford, "Step by Step," 422; Claire and William Band, *Two Years with the Chinese Communists* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1948), 125-127; Evans Fordyce Carlson, *Twin Stars of China: A Behind-the Scenes Story of China's Valiant Struggle for Existence* (Beijing: Foreign Language Press, 2003), 101.
[257] Hartford suggests as much in her study, but stops short of estimating total numbers. See Hartford, "Step by Step," 420.
[258] Band and Band, *Two Years with the Chinese Communists*, 127.
[259] *Liberation Daily* reported the exact numbers as follows: Jin-Cha-Ji: 628,871; Jin-Ji-Lu-Yu: 1,070,000; northwest Shanxi: 24,264; and Shandong: 248,367. Across these four areas, *Liberation Daily* listed total membership across all mass organizations at 12,411,092. With 1,981,502, the Children's League constituted 16 percent of total mass organization membership. See Wang Ruofei, "Women zenyang zai dihou kangri genjudi jianshe qi xinminzhuzhuyi

numbers dwarfed the Nationalist Party's enrollment of school-aged children in its Scouting organizations. In 1940, the Nationalist Party had enrolled only 136,615 children across three sibling organizations: the Boy Scouts, Girl Scouts, and Wolf Cubs. While statistics are mostly unavailable for 1942, the GMD would never again surpass this number on the mainland. In 1947, the last year for which data is available, these organizations totaled just shy of 110,000.[260] The Communist Party's Children's League, by and far, touched the lives of far more children than its urban counterpart. Crude figures, based on partial statistics, would estimate that for every 1 Scout the northern border regions could mobilize 10 League members.

While a more accurate accounting of League membership must wait for elsewhere, using reports that fall within the middle of the spectrum, we can estimate the approximate number of children within the border region's jurisdiction that belonged to the League.[261] As we saw in chapter two, figures for central and west Hebei indicate a primary school enrollment in June 1946 of approximately 835,000.[262] Representing 70 to 90 percent of all school-aged children, these two territories would have been home to somewhere between 928,000 and 1.2 million children aged 8 to 15 total. Presuming little fluctuation in these numbers between 1942 and 1946, then, one out of every two to three eight- to fifteen-year-olds were members of the Children's League in 1942. This constituted close to one quarter of the border region's mass organization membership.

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de zhengzhi" [How We Established an Anti-Japanese Base Area New Democracy Government behind Enemy Lines], *Jiefang ribao*, July 7, 1942.

[260] Guomin zhengfu jiaoyubu jiaoyu nianjian bianzuan weiyuanhui, ed., *Di er ci Zhongguo jiaoyu nianjian* [Second Yearbook of China's Education] (Shanghai: Shangwu yingshuguan, 1948), 1337.

[261] As with the statistics in chapter two concerning primary school student enrollment, I simply do not have access to other materials that would corroborate this data. This task will need to be taken up by future scholars.

[262] For a breakdown of primary school enrollment figures in early 1946, see "Bianqu xiaoxuexiao zaoshou rikou de pohuai yu fuxing jianshe jihua" (Border Region Primary School Education, Its Destruction by the Japanese, and a Plan for Its Rebuilding), April 30, 1946, reprinted in *JCJCDJY*, 1:157-162. For statistics on number of schools and students by geographical area, see Cao, 281-283.

Summer Camps and Children's Day Celebrations

The YNSF was responsible for holding regular activities for their Children's Leagues. Two regular events for which there are some YNSF-authored primary source documentation are summer camps (*xialingying*) and Children's Day celebrations (*ertongjie dahui*). An analysis of how the YNSF organized, structured, and led these events provides a glimpse into the day-to-day operation of both the YNSF and the Children's League.

Annual county-wide summer camps provided the YNSF with opportunities to train large numbers of children and YNSF cadres. Following approximately two weeks of activities, these newly trained children and youth returned to their home villages where, ideally, they would pass on lessons in organization, education, mobilization, and hygiene to their peers. A summary of one such summer camp, held from June 23 to July 5 in either 1940 or 1941, tells us how such camps operated and with what goals.[263] The camp was held in Fuping county's second district in Scholar Tree village (*Huaishu zhuang*). Altogether, 161 children and YNSF cadres participated in the camp. Of the 138 males and 23 females present, 2 were aged eight to ten, 114 aged ten to fourteen, and 45 aged fifteen to eighteen. This group represented eight of Fuping's ten districts, and likely twenty-two different Children's Leagues.[264] Regarding educational level, 3 had graduated from upper primary school, 62 from lower primary school, and 4 were illiterate. Script indicating a fourth category is illegible, but likely indicates how many children were currently enrolled in lower primary school, for which the number 92 is listed. While the report does not state that the total turnout was poor, in a preface the authors do note that several extenuating circumstances created organizational challenges. These included a last-minute change in camp

[263] Regarding the year, the report simply includes "1940-1941," without specifying to which year the report refers.
[264] The report implies that each Children's League sent one troupe. A table of statistics lists that there were twenty-two troupe leaders present.

leadership due to illness, that late June / early July was a busy agricultural period for which additional labor was needed, and the fact that neighboring counties had recently begun experiencing harsh "mopping up" (*saodong*) campaigns, violent Japanese sweeps of local villages that sought to ferret out Communist cadres, soldiers, and collaborators.

The focus of the camp was to inculcate in participants organizational discipline and train them in topics and skills they were to disseminate to their peers back home. One theme throughout the camp was developing in children a capacity to "work hard and endure hardships." Children awoke and slept at scheduled times, maintained a clean campsite, and underwent regular hygiene inspections, which examined the cleanliness of children's hands and faces. The report described the overall environment as "tense" and "militarized," yet "lively." One activity with which organizers tasked the children—ostensibly to cultivate their ability to "endure hardships"—involved traveling two and half kilometers by foot to collect firewood, and then hauling the firewood—the same two and a half kilometers—back to the campsite. Each child made three round trips for a total of fifteen kilometers, and, apparently, "not once did any campers complain that the task was too arduous." Additionally, children received six hours of instruction per day, which included a crash course on "culture and entertainment work" (*wenhua yule gongzuo*). This involved learning six anti-Japanese songs, five dances, and three plays, the latter which culminated in a final performance before Scholar Tree village's central leadership. Campers also learned how to carry out propaganda work and deliver speeches. Toward the end of the camp, forty-six children participated in a speech competition, where the top three speakers were awarded pencils.

The report indicates that YNSF leaders were able to think on their feet, turning challenging situations into teachable moments. For example, when one morning all twenty-three

girls began sobbing, complaining that they missed their mothers and wanted to return home immediately, the youth leaders used this as an opportunity to "exercise the children's ideology." Disregarding the "mocking jeers and laughing" of the onlooking boys, YNSF cadres gave an impromptu lesson to "correct" the children's "attachment to their families." While it is unclear exactly what took place, we are told that a female cadre was able to adequately soothe the girls' emotions and refocus them on camp activities. Similarly, several days into the camp, YNSF leadership discovered an emerging pattern of missing objects. After some investigation, the cadres apprehended a thief among the children. In response, the camp held a "struggle session" (*douzheng dahui*), where the children took turns "ardently providing [the thief] with suggestions" that would correct the err of his ways. Through this process, the report states, YNSF leadership not only educated the little culprit but all the campers as well. Following the struggle session, no more items were reported missing.[265]

While the aforementioned report does not provide specifics concerning what educational content children at the Fuping county camp learned during their daily instruction, the cache of primary sources I examined did include a booklet of "Children's Summer Camp Teaching Materials." This booklet provides great detail concerning what the YNSF intended for children to learn at these events. This included general information concerning the Children's League's organizational features and main functions as well as how Children's Leagues were to complement primary school instruction. While this content was clearly important, a tremendous amount of ink was devoted to training children to carry out broader YNSF and Children's League goals once the camp concluded and they returned to their villages. For example, children were given very specific instructions concerning how exactly they were to help enroll their truant

[265] "Fuping ertong xialingying zongjie" (A Summary of the Fuping Children's Summer Camp), 1940-1941, HBSBWG, file no. 21234-L8593.

peers in local primary schools. One tactic includes canvassing homes throughout the neighborhood by knocking on doors and encouraging parents to enroll their sons and daughters in the local school. In these instances, children were to share with parents and children the benefits of attending school, which included not just basic literacy but also practical skills that would benefit household production. The materials note that should children encounter "exceptionally intransigent parents," the canvassers were to remind adults that the government had mandated their children attend, hence making enrollment and attendance "compulsory" (*yiwude*). After leaving these homes, the children were then to report such instances to the local government.[266] That summer camps devoted so much attention and detail to these techniques demonstrates that the Children's League functioned as a means of not only social discipline for the members themselves, but as a broader medium of discipline and surveillance on local communities.

While source limitations constrain what I can conclude about Children's Day celebrations, we can make some general observations. These festivities were in many regards similar to annual summer camps. Top-down government documents disseminated to local YNSF branches and published throughout the border region's major newspapers tell us that through both their preparation for and participation in the event, children were to reinforce their understanding of the political and cultural messaging the state promoted at any particular moment. During the height of the Three Alls campaign, for example, children learned "anti-Fascist" (*fanfaxisi jiaoyu*) and "anti-slave" (*fannuhua*) education. In contrast, following the Japanese surrender children learned more about agricultural production. Similarly, in alignment with broader YNSF objectives, children were encouraged to canvass local homes and invite

[266] Ibid.

children not already enrolled in a local primary school to do so. In addition to general education, children were to participate in a broad range of theatrical performances, physical education demonstrations, and a variety of physical and mental competitions. Children's schoolwork was also showcased through exhibitions. Individual children were awarded various honors such as "model child" or "child labor hero," and entire divisions of Children's Leagues were selected and celebrated as "model troupes." Rewards for such honors included paper, pencils, and cash.[267]

Brief YNSF-authored reports of two different Children's Day events in the early 1940s indicate these efforts and much more were effectively carried out. In addition to honoring children for meritorious deeds and material contributions, for example, one YNSF branch carried out on some children what appears to be physical examinations. This is evident from the fact that several children were awarded honors for being the "healthiest children." The YNSF provided such designations based on a myriad of factors that included weight, chest circumference, listening, "spirit" (*jingshen*), nutrition, skin, hair, mouth, teeth, bone structure, and an examination of their lymph nodes. In total, two children won the top award, with another eighteen receiving honorable mention.[268]

At a separate event in Tang county, one report details the types of performances children participated in for those who attended. Local Children's Leagues, for example, underwent a "comprehensive military-style review," where children demonstrated physical fitness through marching and calisthenics exercises as well as their mastery of bayonets, sabers, and grenades.

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[267] "Guanyu jinian 'si si' ertongjie de zhishi" (Instructions Concerning the Celebration of 'April Fourth' Children's Day), March 14, 1942, reprinted in *JCJCDJY*, 1:436-438; "Jin-Cha-Ji bianzheng deng jinian ertongjie haozhao dizhanqu ertong zhankai 'wu bu yundong'" (To Celebrate Children's Day Jin-Cha-Ji Border Region Government Calls on Enemy-Occupied Areas to Launch "Five No's Movement"), *Xinhua ribao*, March 23, 1942, reprinted in *JCJCDJY*, 1:439; "Jinian ertongjie bianweihui haozhao ge jie aihu ertong" (To Commemorate Children's Day, Border Region Committee Calls on All Walks of Life to Love and Protect Children), *Jiefangjun ribao*, April 3, 1943, reprinted in *JCJCDJY*, 1:451-452.

[268] "Ertongjie jiniance" (Children's Day Commemorative Album), 194X, HBSBWG, file no. 21631-L8990.

These troupes even performed mock battles, where they responded improvisationally to a commander's warning that enemy planes were approaching and were dispersing poison gas. Children at this event also performed for their parents and neighbors by singing, dancing, and drawing. Competitions included track and field events such as sprinting and the high jump, and recreational sports such as kicking the shuttlecock and ping pong. As with other child-centered events, participants were inspected for adherence to hygiene, and were graded on the cleanliness of their clothing, face, and hands. Finally, the report indicates that in the run up to main Children's Day event, the YNSF organized a "children's week" (*ertong zhou*), where children not only rehearsed for various main performances, but participated in local agricultural production competitions. These included seeing which groups could plant more trees, chop more wood, collect the most nightsoil, or enlist the most soldiers for the Eighth Route Army. The report includes tables and charts quantifying children's accomplishments, as well as in what ways they helped military dependents with household chores and how many chicken eggs they collected.[269]

Beyond simple education and recreation, summer camps and Children's Day events served a much larger purpose. While Children's Day celebrations were similar to summer camps insofar as they provided opportunities for the YNSF to organize, educate, and mobilize children, the scale and objectives of these festivities were much broader. For example, whereas summer camp participants were limited to children and their YNSF leaders, Children's Day celebrations encouraged the attendance and participation of the entire community in general and of children's parents in particular. Through a grand assortment of child-centered performances, exhibitions,

[269] "Tang xian qingjiuhui guanyu 'si si' ertongjie jinian dahui de zongjie" (Tang County Youth National Salvation Federation Summary of the April Fourth Children's Day Commemorative Meeting), April 20, 1940, HBSBWG, file no. 21219-L8578.

competitions, and even elaborate awards ceremonies, the state—through primary schools, the YNSF, and the Children's Leagues—showcased children's academic, cultural, economic, and political contributions in order to create and bolster its governing legitimacy among the rural populace. Simultaneously, these events functioned as a form of spectacle and propaganda. Theatrical performances and military reviews, for example, provided parents and children with education and cultural messaging. The content of this messaging was identical to what we examined in chapter two. That is, performances emphasized loyalty to the Chinese nation and enthusiastic support for the CCP and its army. This education also further contributed to the delineation of who did and did not belong to the bourgeoning socialist society by assigning blame for the border region's troubles and credit for its resistance and persistence. Likewise, electing and awarding local teachers, parents, and children as "models" and "heroes" worked to standardize normative behavior and physical development.

Conclusion

This chapter has examined the formation, structure, and function of the Anti-Japanese Children's League, which, by some accounts, shaped the lives of close to two million rural children through north China during the War of Resistance. I have argued that the Children's League complemented formal education by providing children with opportunities to apply to the real world the various social, political, and cultural knowledge they acquired at their primary schools. By examining the Children's League's various objectives, I have argued that the organization sought to discipline children's bodies and minds. Through physical education, marching, and learning military drills, the Children's League complemented other efforts to militarize rural education while also strengthening children's bodies. At the same time, the

League reinforced primary schools' curricular efforts by inculcating the government's values, concerns, and ambitions. In this way, the Children's League also disciplined children's minds. Collectively, these efforts sought to improve the quantity and quality of the Chinese population, and hence strengthen the nation as a whole. Finally, I have demonstrated that the YNSF's organization, education, and mobilization of the Children's League was not without its difficulties. In addition to problems with its leadership, the YNSF in general and the border region government in particular had difficulty reining in the League's collective delinquency. While the Children's League therefore succeeded in organizing children and building peer solidarity, it struggled to instill in the organization blind obedience to authority.

CHAPTER 5: Everyday Childhood in Japanese-Occupied North China

> Some say that [our] children…are incapable of crying. Indeed, we rarely see them weep. In moments of study, work, and play, [they display] a remarkable innocence and liveliness, intelligence and cheer. Yet standing before the enemy, [they demonstrate] composure and vigilance, bravery and resolution. From the fertile soil of the people's struggle they have blossomed into dazzling flowers. Throughout [this] ruthless conflict, they have become battle-tested little soldiers. As the new generation, they are most deserving of the Chinese nation's pride.[270]

The previous three chapters have examined the ways in which Chinese communist youth and adults conceptualized, organized, educated, and sought to mobilize rural children. My objective in analyzing these structures has ultimately been to understand how the institutions of primary school education and the Children's League sought to shape actual children's lives. In this and the following chapter, I shift our focus from an intellectual and institutional history to the children themselves.

This chapter argues that children as historical actors contributed to the Chinese Communist revolution as agents of revolution and mediums of military manpower. As agents of revolution, children were involved in mass politics, taught basic literacy to adults, performed in theatrical dramas, disciplined non-normative behaviors, and assisted in the violent overthrow of landed elites. As a form of military manpower, child labor was indispensable to the border region economy and in fulfilling crucial paramilitary responsibilities. In both cases, government officials valued children for their immediate, present-day contributions to both the War of Resistance and the Civil War.

This chapter builds on my earlier discussion of efforts to promote throughout border region society a culture of war and, in particular, to inculcate in children a militarized

[270] Liu Songtao, "Jin-Cha-Ji de fannuhua jiaoyu de douzheng" (Jin-Cha-Ji's Anti-Slave Education Struggle), *Jiefangqu qunzhong jiaoyu jianshe de daolu*, November 1948, reprinted in *JCJCDJY*, 1:259.

consciousness. I argue that the environment of total war required state officials to militarize childhood. This involved helping children to understand war and their roles and responsibilities within it. To help to achieve these ends, primary schools carried out three inter-related tasks. These included providing children with general military training and teaching children to carry out paramilitary tasks. It also involved what I term "emotional tempering," a form of emotion work that sought to foster in children a repertoire of emotions: allegiance to the Chinese Communist Party, affection for the Eighth Route Army, and the substitution of fear for anger, the latter of which children were intended to direct toward enemies of the state.

Whereas chapters two and three focused solely on the institutions of education and the Children's League from a top-down perspective, the present chapter examines cadre-authored documents, pedagogical journals, and teacher work reports to analyze what actually took place in primary school classrooms. Whereas chapters two and three focused more on the goals of education policy and organization, here I investigate the actual implementation of these policies and how children reportedly responded. After detailing how primary schools actually carried out militarization polices in the classroom, I shift our attention to reports of how children applied this newfound knowledge in the real world.

I argue that schools' attempts to temper children's emotions were successful. Children demonstrated their mastery of emotions such as fearlessness, hate, and loyalty by confronting enemy combatants, reporting the improper or suspicious behavior of friends, family, and neighbors to government bureaus, and risking life and limb to protect Communist cadres and ERA soldiers. Education also appears to have made children more amenable to performing war work, which included navigating life-threatening situations such as carrying out propaganda and

education work under the watchful eye of occupying soldiers and evading detection during sensitive reconnaissance and espionage-related activities.

In addition to these tasks, children also carried out important paramilitary responsibilities. As I demonstrate, a severe shortage of adult labor—due to war-related emigration and compulsory conscription into Communist, Japanese, and collaborationist armies—intensified the need for an all-hands-on-deck strategy. As a form of military manpower, children served a sentries, spies, and saboteurs, ferreted out local traitors, robbed enemy camps, destroyed local infrastructure, and buried landmines. Children also acted as agents of revolution, whereby they disciplined their local communities and expanded Party hegemony. They did this by recruiting their truant peers in local primary schools, distributing propaganda, acting in theatrical productions, hanging posters, and singing in choirs. During the Civil War, when the Party desperately needed to further increase agricultural production, children strategically disparaged loafers that resisted participating in economic production. Lastly, children participated in revolutionary campaigns, such as radical and violent land reform. In all of these roles, we see that through children's involvement in various wartime and nation-building activities, the government intended to use such "revolutionary struggle" as a pedagogical tool to sharpen children's national and political consciousness. In doing so, we witness a continuation of the 1920s Marxist-Leninist interpretation of age as a category of organization, which we discussed in chapter one.

Before we continue, a note is needed on the sources used here and my methodology for using these sources. I have demonstrated in previous chapters that the CCP and CYL faced and overcame great adversity in their efforts to organize, educate, and mobilize children. This chapter continues to pay attention to these challenges. With that said, the sources used in this and the

following chapter suggest that while many children challenged established hierarchies of power, many others also acquiesced. Indeed, a primary objective of this dissertation is to investigate how and why children willingly and enthusiastically supported the Chinese Communist movement. This requires that we take seriously sources that highlight and promote these successes. Joining with other scholars of children and childhood, I argue that it is a mistake to presume that children's displays of political rectitude and revolutionary enthusiasm were contrived. Such one-dimensional analyses suffer from what Mona Gleason has termed the "agency ideal"—the ideological imperative to locate youthful resistance and autonomy as the main interpretive goal.[271] While children certainly did oppose adult authorities—as I detail below—the emphasis on resistance alone fails to interrogate how historical subjects willingly conformed to dominant cultural trends, and hence how and why children reconciled with adult agendas.[272] As Susan Miller has noted, attention to acquiescence often reveals not blind faith in adult prerogatives, but instead how children used adult interests to exercise power and achieve their own interests. Such opportunities were plentiful in contexts where adults extolled the latent potential of youth and children, as was the case throughout the Communist revolution. Siding with Gleason, Miller, and others, I argue that children willingly assented to the tasks grown-ups gave them in ways that granted them power and authority. Also, like Miller, I argue that an analysis of child assent provides a clearer picture of how children influenced and acted on the world in which they lived.[273]

Militarizing Childhood

[271] Mona Gleason, "Avoiding the Agency Trap: Caveats for Historians of Children, Youth, and Education," *History of Education*, Volume 45, Issue 4 (2016): 446-459.
[272] Miller, "Assent as Agency in the Early Years of the Children of the American Revolution."
[273] Ibid., 49.

Children's contributions to a range of military operations were crucial to Communist survival and success. Exacerbating the border region government's need for child labor in various war efforts was the regional climate of total war. While the definition of "total war" remains contested, Roger Chickering and Stig Förster have identified its key hallmarks. These include the war's massive scale and scope, an intensification that removes the legal, moral, and civil restraints on combat, the erasure of distinctions between soldiers and civilians, making all people regardless of age and gender targets of violence, and a concerted government effort to mobilize the entirety of the population's commitment to and involvement in war.[274]

As we have seen, the nature of Japanese occupation contributed to total war through its intention to annihilate the material and human resources that supported Communist resistance. This included civilian non-combatants, such as women, elderly, and the young. Ubiquitous throughout the rural north, children were liabilities to the Party and government. They knew the names and residences of Communist cadres and village leaders. They witnessed the Eighth Route Army's arrivals and departures, and they knew where these soldiers stashed vital surplus rations, clothing, and ammunitions. One example of how children threatened the government is particularly instructive. During raids, Japanese soldiers would round up entire villages in a central location, requiring everyone to stand in a line. A soldier or interpreter would then select a child and ask them to identify a family member. This was done in hopes that, under the threat of harming the child's kin, the Japanese could prompt the child to divulge sensitive information. To combat these types of situations, children learned in their primary school lessons to feign a relationship with a non-villager. Department of Education Head, Liu Aifeng, noted that this "and

[274] Roger Chickering and Stig Förster, "Are We There Yet? World War II and the Theory of Total War, in *A World at Total War: Global Conflict and the Politics of Destruction, 1937-1945*, eds., Roger Chickering, Stig Förster, and Bernd Greiner (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005); Edwards, *Women Warriors and Wartime Spies of China*, 199.

numerous other methods of protecting" military and government personnel allowed "uncountable cadres to escape disaster."[275] As we will soon see, many sources corroborate belligerent adult efforts to extract from children information that would benefit the Japanese position. In addition to threats of violence and interrogation, children were the victims of kidnapping, torture, and, in many cases, murder.

As a means of simultaneously limiting children's susceptibility as liabilities and increasing their value as assets, the government conditioned children through militarization. At the broadest level, militarization had two objectives. First, to help a society understand war and the place of individuals within war. Second, to prompt the population's active participation in war-related endeavors.[276] Scholars Jacklyn Cock and Louise Edwards have defined militarization as "a social process that involves the mobilization of resources for war on political, economic, and ideological levels," which results in the creation of a "militarized consciousness."[277] While this understanding is appropriate in broad terms, it lacks the nuance necessary to reveal the peculiarities and complexity of children and childhood in rural north China. A useful supplement to Cock and Edwards' conceptualization is Andrew Donson's concept of "war pedagogy." Donson defines this as a child-centered methodology that sought to cultivate nationalism and militarism, connect grief and discomfort with patriotic virtue, and infuse war deeply into children's everyday lives and sentiments.[278] Much like Donson's case study of Germany during World War I, border region educators avoided crass indoctrination, preferring instead a subtler and more sophisticated form of inculcation. Unlike Donson's urban pupils, however, the children

[275] Liu Aifeng, "Jizhong wu nian jiaoyu gongzuo de zongjie (1938 nian - 1942 nian)" (A Summary of Five Years of Education Work in Central Hebei), April 5, 1942, reprinted in *JCJJUFZZC*, 1:362.
[276] Collins, *Children, War, and Propaganda*, xv; Tillman, "Engendering Children of the Resistance," 159.
[277] Jacklyn Cock, "Women and the Military: Implications for Demilitarization in the 1990s in South Africa," *Gender and Society* 8, No. 2 (June 1994): 152-169; Edwards, *Women Warriors and Wartime Spies of China*, 2.
[278] Andrew Donson, *Youth in the Fatherless Land: War Pedagogy, Nationalism, and Authority in Germany, 1914-1918* (Cambridge, M.A.: Harvard University Press, 2010), 59-60.

of rural north China lived in enemy-occupied territory under the conditions of total war. The clear and present danger Chinese children faced on a daily basis, combined with the demand for their labor to meet war-related logistics, required a more multi-faceted approach.

The border region's militarization of childhood involved three inter-related processes: general military training, assumption of paramilitary responsibilities, and what I term emotional tempering. As we discussed in chapter two, immediately upon establishing the border region in January 1938, the government required the immediate militarization of all primary schools. This included implementing a regimen of regular military drills, village defense protocols, and educating children on the war. While the "militarization" of primary school education had been a staple of Republican-era schooling since the early twentieth century, children in rural north China during the War of Resistance had opportunities to put this knowledge to use. Indeed, the presence total war in north China, in conjunction with severe labor shortages, required that youngsters undertake a variety of paramilitary duties.

Another key difference in the militarization of border region childhood involved what I call "emotional tempering." This functioned as a form of "emotion work," a systematic and conscious strategy that attempted to change "in degree or quality an emotion or feeling."[279] As Stephanie Olsen has demonstrated, formal and informal education stressed not only positive (do) and negative (do not) actions, but also instructed students on the "correct" kinds of emotions they should muster up at the "right" times.[280] For the children of rural north China, emotional tempering sought to foster a repertoire of emotions: allegiance to the Party, affection for the Eighth Route Army, and the substitution of fear for anger, the latter which children were to then direct toward enemies of the state.

[279] Elizabeth J. Perry, "Moving the Masses: Emotion work in the Chinese Revolution," *Mobilization* 7 (2): 111-112.
[280] Olsen, *Juvenile Nation*, 8.

This latter emotion—anger toward enemies of the state—deserves further qualification. While during the War of Resistance educators directed children's anger largely toward the Japanese, a secondary target included so-called "traitors" (*hanjian*). As we have already seen, this referred to Chinese "puppet" soldiers and other collaborators, who assisted the Japanese in a variety of war-related and governance endeavors. This "traitor" category functioned as a form of Trojan horse whereby the Party could position dissent or diversity of thought as treachery.[281] In doing so, emotional tempering sought to instill and sustain in children a "hierarchically ordered set of social categorizations," where there existed a clear delineation between a patriotic "us" and a perfidious "them."[282] Whereas chapter two focused solely on the institution of education and the content of primary school textbooks, here we will see exactly how children put to use school-sponsored militarization and the efficacy of emotional tempering.

General Military Training

Beginning with the establishment of the border region in January 1938, cadres and officials actively began militarizing childhood. Indeed, orders for this task came directly from the top levels of the border region government. The January 1938 "Resolution on Culture and Education," for example, included a provision that called for "implementing militarization" (*caiqu junshihua*) throughout primary schools.[283] In April 1938, the government elaborated on the method of militarization by penning an ordinance for the attention of all counties. This document outlined themed training weeks that all primary schools were to hold for their students.

[281] Edwards, *Women Warriors and Wartime Spies of China*, 176.
[282] Karen Vallgårda, Kristine Alexander, and Stephanie Olsen, "Emotions and the Global Politics of Childhood,"in *Childhood, Youth, and Emotions in Modern History*, eds., in Karen Vallgårda, Kristine Alexander, and Stephanie Olsen (Basingstoke, Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015), 20.
[283] "Jin-Cha-Ji bianqu junzheng mindaibiao dahui jueyian: wenhua jiaoyu jueyian—queding bianqu wenhua jiaoyu jihua" (Resolutions from the Jin-Cha-Ji Border Region Military and Political Affairs People's Congress: Resolutions on Culture and Education—Fixed Plans for Culture and Education), January 1938, reprinted in *JCJJUFZZC*, 1:1-3.

The themes included: the United Front, the War of Resistance, the spring planting season, "ferreting out traitors" (*chujian*), local self-defense, air defense (*fankong*), community service, and honoring the military and their families (*weilao*).

This training had two primary objectives. First, to inculcate in children characteristics and behaviors that prepared them for the most urgent political threat: war. With war being a clear and present danger to the rural community, children required pragmatic survival training that taught them how to respond to certain situations. We saw examples of this in chapter two. During the week covering air defense, for example, students learned how to respond when enemy aircraft approached their villages. Children learned not to "panic or dash about," but quickly take cover. Students vowed to dissuade their neighbors from "huddling together," and to instruct their families to stock up on water and sand in order to prevent the spread of bombing fires. Once the raid had ended, students were to help with "administering first-aid and firefighting." In addition to survival skills, the border region government sought to harden children into battle-ready soldiers. Instructions to schools stated that children should be prepared to "take up arms," "enlist in the guerrilla army," and "sacrifice everything" in defense of their hometowns. The document also included a list of phrases for children to memorize. Among these were: "I would rather perish in battle than become the slave of a dying nation," and "When attacked by the enemy, I will not yield. I will not fear. I will resist."

The second objective of this training was to "arouse" children's "national consciousness," inculcating in them a devotion to the nation above all else. One component of this required reverence for the military and service to the community. Among the government's suggested activities for children were the solicitation of donations for the army, helping disabled veterans and military families, producing textiles such as boots and hats, serving sentry duty, delivering

messages for village cadres, and repairing roads and bridges. The government made clear its intention for children to put the nation above their families in its "ferreting out traitors" training. During this week, children vowed not only to "investigate suspicious persons" by "covertly tracing their steps," but also to "inform on *friends and relatives* who exhibit traitorous behavior."[284]

Finally, this military training sought to strengthen children's bodies through numerous forms of physical education. This included, stretching, calisthenics, and marching in formation, learning to use various weapons, such as the bow staff (*gunbang*), bayonet (*ciqiang*), saber (*pidao*), and throwing grenades (*tou shouliudan*), and other practical skills such as flag semaphore, knot tying, carrying stretchers, and martial arts.[285] And if there was any doubt that it was indeed society's youngest members for whom the border region government intended this training, the document included in a final section titled "Take Notice" the following: "The target of this training is *children*."[286]

Emotional Tempering

Emotional tempering had two goals. Firstly, crucial to both the government's and children's survival was youngsters' ability to confront violent hostility with cool equanimity. This meant knowing how to react in combat situations and how to interact with enemy soldiers. Secondly, as a means of binding atomized local villages together into a cohesive national polity, the government cultivated warm relations between rural society and the Eighth Route Army.

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[284] My emphasis. Ibid.
[285] Wang Zhen, "Huoyue de Beiyue tongzijun" (The Flourishing Beiyue Scouts), September 5, 1943, *Jin-Cha-Ji ribao*, reprinted in *JCJCDJY*, 1:458-459.
[286] My emphasis. "Jin-Cha-Ji bianqu junzheng mindaibiao dahui jueyian: wenhua jiaoyu jueyian—queding bianqu wenhua jiaoyu jihua" (Resolutions from the Jin-Cha-Ji Border Region Military and Political Affairs People's Congress: Resolutions on Culture and Education—Fixed Plans for Culture and Education), January 1938, reprinted in *JCJJUFZZC*, 1:1-3.

Indeed, rural individuals' heartfelt affection for the military was central to the Maoist military doctrine of "people's war" formulated in the 1930s. People's war demanded not only the militarization of broad swathes of China's population, but that ordinary people actively supported armed personnel. Without official bases to store rations, equipment, and arms, the ERA heavily relied on rural families' homes—and the secrecy its residents maintained—to stockpile and safeguard material. During the harshest period of the Three Alls, soldiers disguised themselves as locals and hid among villagers. In many of these instances, ordinary people were called on to risk and even sacrifice their lives in order to protect military secrets and personnel. To achieve these two goals, border region war pedagogy emphasized "secret keeping" (*baomi*) and the emotions of fearlessness, hate, and loyalty. As we will see below, children demonstrated their mastery of these emotions through a range of behaviors. These included confronting enemy combatants, reporting friends and family to government bureaus, and risking life and limb to protect Communist cadres and ERA soldiers.

In an effort to harden the people's resolve and commitment to the war, the government regularly held region-wide ceremonies where participants swore oaths of allegiance to the government and nation. A top-level cadre reported of one such 1940 ceremony that "everyone throughout the border region can recite the citizen's oath [*gongmin gongyue*], including every woman and child."[287] Another high-ranking official commented of a January 1942 ceremony that alongside "hoary, grey-haired men," children as young as seven "in every village throughout the region" pledged loyalty by reciting the "Soldier and Citizen's Oath" (*junshi shiyue*). While the exact number of participants in unknown, statistics from one prefecture suggest a strong showing

[287] "Yang Gengtian tongzhi baogao guanyu bianqu shehui jiaoyu de yixie wenti" (Comrade Yang Gengtian's Report Concerning Some Issues with Border Region Social Education), September 1, 1940, *Bianqu jiaoyu*, reprinted in *JCJJUFZZC*, 1:189.

with 85 percent of villagers attending. For those who were absent, the oath was written on signs and buildings in every village, making it difficult for local residents to ignore.[288] This particular oath went as follows:

> I am a citizen and soldier of the Republic of China. During this period of imperial Japan's invasion of my country, I voluntarily swear to abide by the Soldier and Citizen's Oath. This I do for the benefit and survival of the Chinese nation.
>
> 1. I will not become an obedient traitor.
> 2. I will not become a soldier of the enemy's army.
> 3. I will not join the enemy's local militia.
> 4. I will not do anything on behalf of traitors or the enemy.
> 5. I will not sell goods to traitors or the enemy.
> 6. I will not give grain to traitors or the enemy.
> 7. I will not use the traitors' currency.
> 8. I will cherish the anti-Japanese army.
> 9. I will keep secret military assets.
> 10. I will obey the anti-Japanese democratic government.
>
> This I swear. And should I violate this oath, I willingly accept military discipline.[289]

In addition to this vow, the government directed the Children's League to commit to heart an additional pledge known as the "Five Don'ts" (*wu bu*).

> 1. Don't come into the devils' sight.
> 2. Don't attend the devils' schools.
> 3. Don't speak truth to the devils.
> 4. Don't do anything for the devils.
> 5. Don't become the devils' slave.[290]

In April 1942, Liu Aifeng, Jin-Cha-Ji Department of Education Head, reported that children began receiving training on the importance of "secret keeping" and "how to interact

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[288] Liu Songtao, "Jin-Cha-Ji de fannuhua jiaoyu de douzheng" (Jin-Cha-Ji's Anti-Slave Education Struggle), *Jiefangqu qunzhong jiaoyu jianshe de daolu*, November 1948, reprinted in *JCJCDJY*, 1:251.
[289] Ibid., 1:251-252.
[290] Here, "devils" is a pejorative term referring to the Japanese. The word "traitors" referred to any ethnic Chinese who collaborated with the Japanese. "Enemy" is an ambiguous term that could refer to either the Japanese or their Chinese collaborators. The first document stating the "Five Don'ts" is "Jin-Cha-Ji bianfu deng jinian ertongjie haozhao dizhanqu ertong kaizhan 'wu bu yundong'" (Jin-Cha-Ji Border Region Government Commemorates Children's Day by Calling on Children in Enemy-Occupied Territories to Develop the 'Five Don'ts Movement'), *Xinhua ribao*, March 23, 1942, reprinted in *JCJCDJY*, 1:439.

with the enemy" as early as May 1939. Liu included in these notes that "It is extremely difficult for a stranger to get from the lips of a primary school student the whereabouts of a school, who is its teacher, or the name of village cadres." In fact, the border region government mandated that cadres disseminate the "Five Don'ts" at the April Fourth Children's Day celebrations held throughout the region.[291] Pedagogues included the pledge in primary school textbooks and also made it into songs, the latter perhaps to aid in its memorization.[292]

Not all communities were convinced that government education would benefit their children. In fact, some parents believed it put their children in harm's way. In the internally circulated periodical for government officials, *The Government Guide* (*Bianzheng daobao*), Liu Aifeng provided his colleagues with strategies for persuading parents to allow their children to attend local schools, especially those in enemy-occupied and guerrilla territories. Liu's article suggests that communities were concerned that the presence of state-sponsored schools would attract further repression, and hence endanger the lives of students and teachers. Liu argued against this by asserting that schools drew teachers, parents, students, and officials into a close community founded on mutual care and concern. In such a community, children were looked after not only by their parents, but by their classmates' parents, their teachers, and local education cadres. "Moreover," Liu declared, "because [children] learn methods for dealing with enemies and traitors [*xuexi yingfu diwei*], they are more capable of looking after the anti-

[291] "Guanyu jinian 'si si' ertongjie de zhishi" (Instructions Concerning the Celebration of 'April Fourth' Children's Day), March 14, 1942, reprinted in *JCJCDJY*, 1:438. According to *Jin-Cha-Ji Daily*, swearing the Five Don'ts were a mainstay of Children's Day celebrations also in 1943. See "Jinian ertongjie bianweihui haozhao ge jie aihu ertong" (To Commemorate Children's Day, Border Region Committee Calls on All Walks of Life to Love and Protect Children), *Jiefangjun ribao*, April 3, 1943, reprinted in *JCJCDJY*, 1:451-452.

[292] Liu Songtao, "Jin-Cha-Ji de fannuhua jiaoyu de douzheng," *JCJCDJY*, 1:252. For an example of the Five Don'ts in a textbook (in song form), see "Wu bu yundong ge" (The Five Don'ts Movement Song), *Chuxiao guoyu keben, chuxiao sannianji yong* (Jin-Cha-Ji bianqu xingzheng weiyuanhui jiaoyuchu, January 1945), HBSBWG, file no. 23548-L10907.

Japanese cadres." Lastly, Liu argued, schools provided children with tight-knit organizations and leadership, which would keep children off the streets and out of trouble.[293]

Indeed, the historical record is rife with examples of the various "techniques" children learned "for dealing with the enemy" (*yingdi jishu*). Liu Aifeng reported that through frequent practice and quizzing, children, when actually confronted by Japanese or collaborator soldiers, were able to "answer questions without hesitation." Liu's account demonstrates that war pedagogy taught children to frustrate enemy efforts to gather intelligence on local communities. Liu reported that in one case an enemy agent was asking village children about the status of their local "mister" (*xiansheng*), a designation that applied to a variety of professional occupations. While the children apparently understood this individual was specifically seeking out their school teacher, the students responded confidently that their "local doctor" could be found on the village's west side. In another instance, soldiers raiding Quyang county's seventh district assembled local residents in the village square. When asked about the whereabouts of Communist cadres, a twelve-year-old child eagerly raised his hand to volunteer that his father was a "local official." When the soldier inquired further, the child divulged—much to the troop's chagrin—that his father was the head of local village security. Using war pedagogy, educators also instructed students to playfully engage with enemy soldiers. Children joyfully tousled soldiers' hair and softly caressed their faces. They asked for candies, pictures, and other treats that enemy combatants often distributed to earn the good will of local children and their families. The intention of urging children to interact closely with the enemy, Liu wrote, "was to manufacture a sense of closeness. It was for [the children] to exercise a cool equanimity [so as

[293] Liu Aifeng, "Kaipi yu jianchi youjiqu jiaoyu gongzuo kaizhan dui di sixiangzhan" (Initiate and Maintain Education Work in Guerrilla Areas, Engage the Enemy in a War of Ideas), *Bianzheng daobao*, May 1943, reprinted in *JCJJUFZZC*, 2:49-50.

to] cultivate a complete sense of fearlessness. Yet once the enemy had departed," Liu continued, the children's "countenance immediately became stern. They would throw their candy to the ground and rip to shreds the pictures. Although these children are still young, among the fire and brimstone of war they have learned to hate."[294]

In each of these cases, war pedagogy engaged children in a form of play. By doing so, adults likely aimed to make war less fearful and less menacing, and therefore more tolerable for children. No longer hindered by anxiety, border region children may have become more amenable to carrying out a wide variety of roles that could benefit both their development and the Communist's position in the war.[295] While the notion that children can enthusiastically accept war may seem counterintuitive, studies from multiple disciplines support this idea. Oral histories from World War I recall that children found air raids "quite exciting" and that it "invoked a spirit of adventure in children…especially the boys." Eye-witness testimony from World War II commented that "some children…[were] completely unaffected and indeed seemed to be enjoying 'the new adventure' of being bombed."[296] In a pioneering psychological study on children's reactions to Germany's World War II bombing of Britain, Anna Freud and Dorothy Burlingame suggest that children experienced a "primitive excitement" as they played amongst wreckage and debris.[297] Ed Cairns has suggested that play facilitates in children an understanding of political violence as well as a means to ventilate their emotions. This is possible, he notes, "because in play children can re-enact events and also try out new roles and solutions."[298]

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[294] Liu Songtao, "Jin-Cha-Ji de fannuhua jiaoyu de douzheng" (Jin-Cha-Ji's Anti-Slave Education Struggle), *Jiefangqu qunzhong jiaoyu jianshe de daolu*, November 1948, reprinted in *JCJCDJY*, 1:248.
[295] Collins, *Children War and Propaganda*, 39.
[296] Ibid., 83.
[297] James Alan Marten, *Children and War: A Historical Anthology* (New York: New York University Press, 2002), 4-5.
[298] Cairns, *Children and Political Violence*, 85.

Border region educators used Japanese-sponsored schools and proximity to Japanese encampments to their pedagogical benefit. Consistent with government policies that encouraged educators to teach current events and inform students of Japanese atrocities, border region schools had plenty of material for their lessons during the height of Japanese repression. Liu refers to one approach educators adopted as "teaching current events" (*shishi jiaoxue*). This involved "educating the masses on each and every event that transpired." Teachers took students to "confession and revenge meetings" (*kongsu fuchou dahui*), where villagers struggled against landlords, wealthy peasants, and collaborators, and to funerals for family and friends. Instructors used these events as teaching moments in order to "reveal [to students] the enemy's cruel plots" and to "arouse [the students'] righteous indignation toward the enemy." In one case, a teacher took children to visit a still smoldering village. Here, the students reportedly used ash to write on bricks and still-standing walls "We will not allow you to have been burnt in vain." In another instance, a teacher shared with his class the recent murder of a fellow primary school student named Jiqing. Collectively, the students pledged to "avenge" this student's death.[299]

In another case, a Japanese soldier made a visit to West River Run primary school, located in Quyang county. At the school, the soldier encouraged children to study well the Japanese language so that in the future they could "become translators and earn lots of money." Upon departing, the man handed to each student a ten-dollar bill. Following the troop's departure, the teacher, Sun Guiyuan, turned to his students and asked: "Who is he that works for the Japanese devils?" To which the students replied in unison: "A traitor!" Sun then asked, "The enemy has given you money, instructed you to study well the Japanese language. What is the

[299] Liu Songtao, "Jin-Cha-Ji de fannuhua jiaoyu de douzheng" (Jin-Cha-Ji's Anti-Slave Education Struggle), *Jiefangqu qunzhong jiaoyu jianshe de daolu*, November 1948, reprinted in *JCJCDJY*, 1:253.

meaning of this?" In unison, the students replied: "To bribe us to become turncoats! We cannot accept his money!" At this, the students tore the money into shreds.[300]

During the Chinese New Year, collaborationist governments required central Hebei students living near Japanese blockhouses to pay a customary visit to the occupiers and wish them good fortune. Upon returning to school after such a visit, one Raoyang county teacher found his students eating some of the candy they had just received. The teacher abruptly queried the students: "Who gave you that candy?" "The enemy," the students replied. "And why are they called 'the enemy,'" the teacher asked. "Because they murder people and burn down villages," the students responded. "They kill *our* people and torch *our* houses. And now they have given you candy. What should we do?" At this, the students broke into a fit of rage. Together, the students threw their candy to the ground and began stomping it into pieces. "The educational significance of this event," Liu remarked, "is something that no textbook can teach."[301]

In cases where the situation required students to use Japanese-issued textbooks, teachers employed a method of teaching Liu refers to as "refutation instruction" (*fanbo jiaoxue*). This method prompted the students to "correct" the textbooks' "fallacies." In a chapter titled "New Construction," for example, a teacher inquired whether students appreciated the smoldering remains of their neighbors' village. In response to another chapter, titled "Sino-Japanese Good Will," a teacher prompted his students with the following: "In the last six months, over a dozen people in our village have been murdered. Who was it that slaughtered them?" To this, the students replied, "The Japanese devils!" "These victims: what kind of people were they?" the teacher asked. "They were Chinese!" the students replied. "This," the teacher responded, "is the Japanese's so-called 'Sino-Japanese Good Will.' Do you approve of this 'good will'?" To which

[300] Ibid., 1:253.
[301] Ibid., 1:253-254.

the students replied, "We reject their 'good will'!" For another chapter, titled "Benevolent Government, Land of Happiness," a teacher instructed students of the various methods Japanese soldiers used to torture Chinese. This included water boarding (*guan liangshui*), feeding live Chinese to dogs (*wei yanggou*), and the insertion of bamboo shoots under one's fingernails (*zhijia shang cha zhuqian*).[302]

To return to our aforementioned comments on play, the opportunity for children to express and direct strong emotional remorse and resentment may have helped facilitate their national identity. As Cairns notes, "…it has been suggested that the games…children play provide 'the ideological cement from which the child's national identity is forged.'" Play, Cairns concludes, "is not simply the reliving of common experiences, rather, 'it is the collective means by which children recover, internalize, and identify with past and contemporary…reality."[303] Beyond simply preparing children for what lay beyond their classroom walls, border region education may have also provided children with effective coping mechanisms and opportunities for catharsis that allowed them to function—physically, emotionally, and intellectually—within the climate of total war.

The archive suggests that war pedagogy did indeed make many children more amenable to participating in war work, which included navigating life-threatening situations. Reports state that children regularly made "valiant contributions" (*yingyong zhuanglie de shiji*) to propaganda and education work. One document details that due to the severity of Japanese repression, cadres had begun carrying out all government activities clandestinely. "In an effort to evade the enemy's attention," one official details, "some cadres exclusively employ children to transmit messages." The report suggests that the Japanese had caught on to the government's use of

[302] Ibid., 1:254.
[303] Cairns, *Children and Political Violence*, 85-86.

children for such tasks. Children therefore devised ingenious methods of evading detection. In one case, a unit of ERA troops found itself surrounded by Imperial Army forces. In desperate need of back up, the Communist troops deployed a child to a nearby village with a written document explaining the need for immediate reinforcement. In the course of his delivery, the child neared a Japanese sentry. Anticipating that the guard would search him for incriminating paraphernalia, the child hollowed out a stalk of sorghum and placed within it the rolled up communication. Sure enough, the Japanese soldier not only stopped the boy, but required him to strip completely nude. Finding nothing of significance on his person, the guard allowed the child to pass unaware of what lie within the stalk. After passing the checkpoint, the boy reached his destination and successfully transmitted the communication. In a similar instance, two students—also transporting critical correspondence—spotted walking toward them an armed soldier. Worried that they would be stopped, the boys staged an argument that led to the two rolling around on the ground fighting. In the course of the fracas, the children furtively buried the document in the dirt. Once the soldier had passed and was out of eyeshot, the boys retrieved the message and continued on to their destination.[304]

Instances of children braving enemy sentries and working covertly as border region operatives were not happenstance events. Indeed, a central Hebei work report explicitly encouraged teachers and cadres to, in areas where "the enemy presence is strong," use "outstanding students to carry out political work." The report wrote that schools "should regularly instruct students on how to deal with the enemy as well as how to guard confidential information. The more specific the instruction, the better. Moreover, [teachers] must be prepared

[304] "Jizhong fan saodong zhong xuanchuan jiaoyu gongzuo zongjie" (A Summary of the Propaganda and Education Work Taking Place Amid Resistance to Mopping Up Campaigns in Central Hebei), April 21, 1943, reprinted in *JCJJUFZZC*, 2:29.

to assess the students who have regular interactions with enemies and collaborators; and especially those students who study within [enemy] encampments. Every day—before and after class—there must be someone to work with these students. [Someone] must take the students whom the enemy desires to use as their own intelligence operatives and turn [the students] into spies of our own."[305]

In another case, one child endured horrible physical abuse and almost certain death. In this instance, an unnamed Anping student was stopped and interrogated concerning the whereabouts of a supposed runaway cadre. When the child refused to divulge any useful information, Japanese and collaborating soldiers tied the child up. After which, the adults kicked, beat, and whipped him with a leather belt. When after such abuse the child continued to resist, the Japanese dug a hole into which he threw the boy and began burying him alive. If not for a fortunate distraction, which forced the soldier's immediate departure, the child likely would have faced certain death. Yet throughout the ordeal, the child rebuffed the enemy. Such children, wrote one cadre, "exalted a high degree of national integrity." These children not only rejected money and other material goods from the enemy, but they "guarded government secrets and refused to cry in front of the Japanese; the latter because sobbing was both useless and shameful."[306]

Children also found ways to resist Japanese education, even when forced to attend lessons. In one Quyang county village, all of the village's forty-five school-aged children were required to attend a nearby "puppet" school. Of these children, border region cadres recruited half to work as spies. As the puppet school was located inside a nearby Japanese compound, the children had access to intelligence the cadres lacked. After sometime of attending classes,

[305] Ibid., 2:33-34.
[306] Ibid., 2:29-30.

however, the Japanese reportedly became suspicious that the children were providing the Communists with intelligence, and thereafter refused to send the students home after class. The children countered this by aggravating the camp's soldiers. At night, the children would scream wildly that they were seeing the ghosts of villagers whom the Japanese had killed. Other times, also at night, they would cry out "The Eighth Route Army is coming! The Eighth Route Army is coming!" After some time, the Japanese shut the school down and allowed the children to return home.[307]

The report states that like adults, children had also "themselves experienced five years of cruel war, through which they have witnessed the enemy's brutality." Suggesting that this instilled in the children an obstinate nature toward Japanese demands, the author wrote that students were purposefully intractable at school. "They do not pay attention in class and they refuse to sing the songs they are taught. When the enemy gives them a ballad, they deliberately mispronounce the lyrics. 'Resist the Communists' [*fangong*], for example, becomes 'counter-attack' [*fangong*].[308] According to the report, students even found a way to use their school-provided meals as a means to resist the enemy. Perhaps because the children ate well at school, they would purposefully eat less at home, preferring that their family members at more. As many schools were located within Japanese encampments, which also housed prisons holding local cadres, children found ways to sneak their shares to these government officials. Students whom the Japanese attempted to recruit as spies often turned the tides on their would-be handlers. These children informed local border region officials of their status. Government cadres then

[307] Liu Songtao, "Jin-Cha-Ji de fannuhua jiaoyu de douzheng" (Jin-Cha-Ji's Anti-Slave Education Struggle), *Jiefangqu qunzhong jiaoyu jianshe de daolu*, November 1948, reprinted in *JCJCDJY*, 1:257.
[308] Mandarin's use of tones differentiates one pronunciation from the other. "Jizhong fan saodong zhong xuanchuan jiaoyu gongzuo zongjie" (A Summary of the Propaganda and Education Work Taking Place Amid Resistance to Mopping Up Campaigns in Central Hebei), April 21, 1943, reprinted in *JCJJUFZZC*, 2:28.

used these children's privileged position to feed false information to the enemy. In cases where the student's handler was a Chinese compatriot, children often used the opportunity to criticize the collaborator's morality. Children would incessantly inquire into the status of the adult's family with the intention of making him homesick. Though "countless students" behaved in these ways, the report wrote, not all students resisted the enemy. Many had been "deceived" into writing anti-Communist poetry, or felt that attending these schools was "amusing."[309]

Paramilitary Responsibilities

Children contributed directly to military operations, serving as sentries and performing clandestine operations. Equipped with "sharp, red-tasseled spears," youngsters stood guard at crucial village intersections and verified travel documentation (*tongxingzheng*) to ensure that passersby were not surreptitiously spying on local communities or poisoning local water supplies.[310] During the 1940 autumn harvest period, for example, 12,553 children performed sentry duties over a ten-day period.[311] Children took this duty seriously. In an education work report, one cadre recounted the composure with which one child responded when confronted by an armed adult. Upon being prompted for his documentation, an unknown man pulled out a gun and threatened the child by saying: "This is my travel document!" To this, the sentry coolly responded, "I've seen plenty of those. Without a travel document you cannot pass this point. If you think I'm joking, just try me. The entire village will be here in no time."[312] Apparently, the man—a neighboring village official—was just "testing" the boy. In another case, a child sentry

[309] Ibid., 2:28.
[310] Xia Yang, "Jin-Cha-Ji bianqu de haizimen" (Children of the Jin-Cha-Ji Border Region), *Xin zhonghua bao*, April 2, 1940, reprinted in *JCJCDJY*, 1:433-435.
[311] Liu Aifeng, "Jizhong wu nian jiaoyu gongzuo de zongjie (1938 nian - 1942 nian)" (A Summary of Five Years of Education Work in Jizhong), April 5, 1942, reprinted in *JCJJUFZZC*, 1:361.
[312] "Jizhong qu liang nian lai jiaoyu gongzuo de zongjie" (A Summary of Two Years' Education Work in Central Hebei), *Bianqu jiaoyu*, March 1, 1940, reprinted in *JCJCDJY*, 1:30.

noticed that the stamp on the document was too faint. He therefore refused the man permission to pass. At that time, the child's father approached and vouched for the traveler and instructed his child to allow the traveler through. To this, the sentry reportedly rebutted: "This is a military matter. No one can pass without clearly marked documentation."[313] In a third case, an army division commander carried out a premediated evaluation of a critical village passing. Bucking his war steed far ahead of the crossroads, the commander neared the checkpoint at a full gallop. Spotting the unfamiliar figure fast approaching, one sentry whistled loudly. To this, more than forty children appeared seemingly from nowhere to hold the line. "Armed with cudgels, spears, and other sundry weaponry," the children denied the commander passage. Another account remarked that the border region's child sentries were so strict that they even once denied the border region's top military official, Nie Rongzhen, passage for failure to produce the appropriate documentation.[314]

Sentry responsibilities were not just for show. There were numerous reports of children apprehending unauthorized travelers and suspicious individuals. Children did so not just as sentries, but also as "intelligence reporters" (*qingbao tongxun*), who constituted an extensive region-wide "communications network" (*tongxunwang*).[315] In this capacity, children eavesdropped on adult conversations, noted the comings and goings of unidentified persons, and traveled through guerrilla and enemy-occupied territories—often at night—in order to deliver messages and report on the status of nearby enemy patrol units.[316] A high-ranking central Hebei

[313] Shi Wei, "Jizhong de xiaoxue jiaoyu" (Central Hebei Primary School Education), *Jin-Cha-Ji ribao*, April 23, 1941, reprinted in *JCJCDJY*, 1:49.
[314] Xia Yang, "Jin-Cha-Ji bianqu de haizimen" (Children of the Jin-Cha-Ji Border Region), *Xin zhonghua bao*, April 2, 1940, reprinted in *JCJCDJY*, 1:433-435.
[315] "Jizhong san nian lai de jiaoyu gongzuo" (Three Years of Education Work in Jizhong), October 1, 1940, *Bianqu jiaoyu*, reprinted in *JCJJUFZZC*, 1:218.
[316] "Jizhong qu liang nian lai jiaoyu gongzuo de zongjie" (A Summary of Two Years' Education Work in Central Hebei), *Bianqu jiaoyu*, March 1, 1940, reprinted in *JCJCDJY*, 1:30-31.

official reported that every village's Children's League possessed a "small detachment devoted to ferreting out spies," who policed "local villagers, friends, and relatives." Upon witnessing any suspicious activity, League members "immediately reported to the responsible comrade." This cadre concluded that children were particularly well-suited for this type of work because "ordinary people pay no attention to [children's] activities. It is [therefore] more convenient [for them to carry out] this work."[317] By October 1940, children across five central Hebei counties had detained or arrested fifty "suspected persons," sixty-seven escaped convicts, two "traitors," and one "armed traitor."[318] *Xinhua Daily* reported that by 1943 children in three central Hebei counties had apprehended 90 "traitors" (*hanjian*) and 439 "suspected criminals" (*xianyifan*).[319]

While many of these activities could just as easily have been (and indeed were also) carried out by adults, youth afforded children opportunities that adults had outgrown. Examining age in this way demonstrates how children were the ideal agents for tasks such as surveillance and transporting sensitive communications. Multiple reports detail how League members kept tabs on their neighbors and reported suspicious activities to local cadres. Liu Aifeng wrote in one report that "Children's Leagues in every village have a small group that regularly observes the contacts and dealings of all villagers. Upon discovering suspicious activity, the League reports their findings to the responsible comrades. As the average adult rarely takes notice of children's activities, the League is particularly conducive for this work." [320] Liu's remark is telling. Indeed,

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[317] Liu Aifeng, "Jizhong wu nian jiaoyu gongzuo de zongjie (1938 nian - 1942 nian)" (A Summary of Five Years of Education Work in Central Hebei), April 5, 1942, reprinted in *JCJJUFZZC*, 1:362-363.
[318] Xia Yang, "Jin-Cha-Ji bianqu de haizimen" (Children of the Jin-Cha-Ji Border Region), *Xin zhonghua bao*, April 2, 1940, reprinted in *JCJCDJY*, 1:433-435.
[319] Xing Hua, "Kudou wu nian de Jin-Cha-Ji xiao yingxiong" (The Bitter, Five-Year Struggle of Jin-Cha-Ji's Little Heroes), *Xinhua ribao*, August 22, 1943, reprinted in *JCJCDJY*, 1:456. These figures were reiterated at least twice. In both iterations, however, the authors note the number of "suspected criminals" apprehended was 432, not 439. It is unclear why latter accounts of these figures was altered. See Yang Ke, "Kangzhan zhong Jin-Cha-Ji ertong de dui di douzheng," *JCJCDJY*, 1:473; Liu Songtao, "Jin-Cha-Ji de fannuhua jiaoyu de douzheng," *JCJCDJY*, 1:257-258.
[320] Liu Aifeng, "Jizhong wu nian jiaoyu gongzuo de zongjie (1938 nian - 1942 nian)" (A Summary of Five Years of Education Work in Central Hebei), April 5, 1942, reprinted in *JCJJUFZZC*, 1:363.

it suggests that the typical adult's essentialization of children as inherently "innocent" and "weak" allowed youngsters to be more effective at some types of work than adults.[321]

Numerous reports suggest children were aware that their youth afforded them opportunities to resist the enemy in ways unavailable to adults. In *Jin-Cha-Ji Daily* one article details how a young girl clung to the leg of a cadre as he was being arrested by enemy troops. Howling, the child begged the would-be captors to release her "brother" (*gege*). The ploy apparently softened the soldiers, who reluctantly set free the girl's supposed sibling. The cadre, it turned out, was a complete stranger to the girl.[322] Another boy, Liu Shuanlu, used a similar tactic. He wrapped his arms and legs around a Japanese troop to prevent the soldier from entering a village where local cadres were hiding. Frustrated, the soldier delivered a series of furious strikes to the boy's head and body. Knowing that sooner or later the officer would shake free, Liu started sobbing loudly, pleading with the soldier to stop. His intention, the article tells us, was to protest loud enough that his cries would carry ample warning to those inside the village. Luckily, Liu's tactic was successful: the cadres avoided discovery.[323] In other cases, children sung homesick-themed songs to "puppet" troops—local Chinese who had joined the Japanese army—reportedly moving them to tears.[324]

Miscellaneous activities that fall under the category of paramilitary responsibilities included guiding soldiers unfamiliar with the area through enemy territory, robbing enemy encampments, and destroying local infrastructure. Regarding the latter of these activities, cadres

[321] Plum, "Unlikely Heirs," 232. Plum makes this observation in her discussion of Zhang Zonglin's contributions to war-time discourse.
[322] Wang Zhen, "Huoyue de Beiyue tongzijun" (The Flourishing Beiyue Scouts), September 5, 1943, *Jin-Cha-Ji ribao*, reprinted in *JCJCDJY*, 1:459.
[323] "Pingshan youjiqu de yi qun xiao yingxiong" (Pingshan Guerrilla Area's Group of Little Heroes), April 1, 1945, *JCJCDJY*, 1:465-466.
[324] Wang Zhen, "Huoyue de Beiyue tongzijun" (The Flourishing Beiyue Scouts), September 5, 1943, *Jin-Cha-Ji ribao*, reprinted in *JCJCDJY*, 1:459.

reported numerous instances where children participated alongside adults in destroying railways, roads, or communications infrastructure vital to the Japanese occupation. In 1939, for example, 1,064 children from Quyang county participated in seventeen different destruction drives. In the same year, 564 children from Wan county participated in similar activities 34 times.[325] In 1940, 31,159 primary school students across five counties helped to destroyed 389.5 *li* of roads. During these activities, the children shouted the slogan "The more sweat we till, the less blood will spill!"[326] In Lingqiu county, one child assisted YNSF cadres in clipping over fifty kilograms of enemy telephone wire.[327] A "rob the enemy movement" (*qiedi yundong*) encouraged children to pilfer Japanese campgrounds. They stole horses, bullets, grenades, documents, and anything else they could get their hands on.[328] Evidence of school-aged children committing violent acts or serving in the army is thin. However, one *New China Paper* article did note that children in Quyang county were responsible for burying landmines. The journalist reported at least one case where such a landmine "blew up an enemy vehicle." The same article detailed a group of thirteen children "embedded with the 120th division of the Eighth Route Army." Like the children discussed above, these youngsters gathered reconnaissance on the enemy's position (*zhentan*

[325] Xing Hua, "Kudou wu nian de Jin-Cha-Ji xiao yingxiong" (The Bitter, Five-Year Struggle of Jin-Cha-Ji's Little Heroes), *Xinhua ribao*, August 22, 1943, reprinted in *JCJCDJY*, 1:455.
[326] The Chinese slogan was *Duo liu han, shao liu xie*. See Liu Aifeng, "Jizhong wu nian jiaoyu gongzuo de zongjie (1938 nian - 1942 nian)" (A Summary of Five Years of Education Work in Central Hebei), April 5, 1942, reprinted in *JCJJUFZZC*, 1:363. These figures were repeated elsewhere. See Yang Ke, "Kangzhan zhong Jin-Cha-Ji ertong de dui di douzheng" (Jin-Cha-Ji Children's Struggle Against the Enemy During the War of Resistance), July 10, 1946, reprinted in *JCJCDJY*, 1:473-475; Liu Songtao, "Jin-Cha-Ji de fannuhua jiaoyu de douzheng" (Jin-Cha-Ji's Anti-Slave Education Struggle), *Jiefangqu qunzhong jiaoyu jianshe de daolu*, November 1948, reprinted in *JCJCDJY*, 1:242-259.
[327] Xia Yang, "Jin-Cha-Ji bianqu de haizimen" (Children of the Jin-Cha-Ji Border Region), *Xin zhonghua bao*, April 2, 1940, reprinted in *JCJCDJY*, 1:433-435.
[328] Liu Songtao, "Jin-Cha-Ji de fannuhua jiaoyu de douzheng," *JCJCDJY*, 1:258. Other examples of children stealing from Japanese blockhouses can be found in "Pingshan youjiqu de yi qun xiao yingxiong," *JCJCDJY*, 1:465-466.

diqing), transmitted messages, delivered meals and water to troops at the front lines, provided medical aid to injured and ill soldiers, and collected bullet casings.[329]

Agents of Revolution

This section demonstrates the various ways in which children acted as agents of revolutionary change, and by doing so effected change on their communities. Children carried out education work by teaching adults to read and recruiting their unenrolled peers in school. They also worked as propagandists by acting in drama troupes, distributing leaflets, hanging posters, and singing in choirs. Children were also a tool of social discipline and engineering. They disparaged loafers that resisted participating in economic production and criticized adults and youngsters alike that failed to conform to border region normative behavior or bodily practice. Lastly, children participated in revolutionary campaigns, such as radical and violent land reform, alongside adults.

Children remained involved in education work outside of normal class hours. Two regular tasks included mobilizing their school-aged peers to enroll in school and teaching basic literacy. Children carried out the latter of these activities as part of the "little teacher system" (*xiao xianshengzhi*).[330] This program aimed for children to disseminate the lessons they learned in school to their peers and adult neighbors, especially during the winter slack season when most villagers spent their days indoors. In an attempt to make use of this idle time, the border region began holding "winter learning movements" (*dongxue yundong*), which aimed to raise political consciousness and literacy across the board. Statistics from the 1940 winter learning movement

[329] Ibid., 1:433-435.
[330] "Jizhong san nian lai de jiaoyu gongzuo" (Three Years of Education Work in Central Hebei), October 1, 1940, *Bianqu jiaoyu*, reprinted in *JCJJUFZZC*, 1:218.

show that Anping and Shenze counties trained large numbers of "little teachers" to provide literacy instruction and read newspapers to illiterate adults. Anping county trained 2,700 children and Shenze county 7,489.[331]

The government's mobilization of children as literacy instructors was part of a broader pattern of mobilizing children to effect general influence on the community. As one cadre noted, children were "particularly effective" at "mobilizing their backward parents." "Where other adults had failed," the author remarked, "countless youngsters…exert a surprising degree of influence over their parents…persuading [the grown-ups] to participate in all types of village activities."[332] Children were conspicuously present in various mediums of "propaganda work" (*xuanchuan gongzuo*). This included participation in themed drives, which promoted core government messages and events. These included anti-surrender, anti-cooperation, spring plowing, autumn harvest watch, hygiene, transportation infrastructure destruction, and the winter learning movement. During the autumn harvest period, children hung a cloth from the lapels of their jackets that read "Harvest quickly, thresh quickly, hide quickly" (*kuai shou, kuai da, kuai cang*). During the period when cadres were investigating and writing progressive taxation reports, children hung from their lapels: "resist concealment and falsification" (*fandui yinman jiabao*). During the movement that promoted the Soldier and Citizen's oath, children chanted throughout the villages "Don't become a traitorous toady!" (*bu zuo hanjian shunmin*). During the election movement, they chanted "You have rights! I have rights!" Commenting on recent propaganda campaigns, one cadre wrote that "hundreds of thousands of students across thousands of primary schools" had come together to form a "vast network of morning bells and

[331] Liu Aifeng, "Jizhong wu nian jiaoyu gongzuo de zongjie (1938 nian - 1942 nian)" (A Summary of Five Years of Education Work in Central Hebei), April 5, 1942, reprinted in *JCJJUFZZC*, 1:362.
[332] Ibid., 1:360.

evening drums that exhort virtue and purity [*muguzhenzhong*]." Everywhere, children reportedly promoted the government's central messages. "As long as you are not illiterate," the author concluded, "you can at every place see what work you should be participating in. As long as you are not deaf, you can hear the children carrying out and promoting various movements. They are the force of the revolution, a bugle of progressive media."[333]

As propagandists, children took part in theatrical performances, choir groups, and also in disseminating leaflets and other propaganda materials. Statistics from just one central Hebei district (of just eight counties) documented that in the first two years of the border region's existence, 55,552 students had organized to assist with propaganda, forming 2,338 teams and distributing 194 different types of propaganda. At the county, district, and village level, these children distributed a total of 38,400 documents, posted 1,828 types of wall posters, and organized 214 drama troupes. The troupes performed 429 times in 298 different villages.[334] During the same period, children in Beiyue district formed 2,342 drama troupes, 2,860 choirs, 1,860 propaganda teams, and 1,102 dancing groups.[335] A 1940 government work report stated that in 1940 more than 95 percent of children in Zhi county participated in "election propaganda work" and formed 68 autumn harvest propaganda teams. The report also noted that in Yu county, children formed 40 child drama troupes, which performed 254 times. Two-thousand and five hundred students in Yu county formed 157 propaganda teams.[336] At a June 1940 Culture and Education Conference, a high-ranking official remarked to the audience that the border region's

[333] Ibid., 1:359-360; Shi Wei, "Jizhong de xiaoxue jiaoyu" (Central Hebei Primary School Education), *Jin-Cha-Ji ribao*, April 23, 1941, reprinted in *JCJCDJY*, 1:49.
[334] "Jizhong san nian lai de jiaoyu gongzuo" (Three Years of Education Work in Central Hebei), October 1, 1940, *Bianqu jiaoyu*, reprinted in *JCJJUFZZC*, 1:223.
[335] Xing Hua, "Kudou wu nian de Jin-Cha-Ji xiao yingxiong" (The Bitter, Five-Year Struggle of Jin-Cha-Ji's Little Heroes), *Xinhua ribao*, August 22, 1943, reprinted in *JCJCDJY*, 1:456.
[336] "Bianweihui gongzuo baogao" (Border Region Committee Work Report), autumn 1943, reprinted in *JCJJUFZZC*, 2:82-83.

over 2,000 child singing groups were so effective at propagating "war of resistance songs" that "even small children, who can barely speak, are capable of belting out the lyrics." The cadre concluded that children's drama and singing groups were "extremely useful in countering old thought and consciousness and combatting traditional feudal practices."[337]

In their capacity as agents of revolution, children disciplined their deviant peers—and even grown-ups—in a number of ways. Indeed, border region youngsters could be incredibly mischievous. They washed their hair in teachers' drinking water, stole school supplies, and streaked nude through classrooms. In one case, a teacher briefly left his soon-to-be-cooked lunch simmering on a classroom stove. Upon his return, he lifted the pot's lid to discover his meal had been replaced with bricks.[338]

As mediums of social discipline, children delineated the boundaries of China's burgeoning socialist society. During agricultural production drives, for example, they spurred the listless into action. Early in the morning, they banged gongs and drums, pounded on doors, and yelled for their neighbors to wake up and get to work.[339] In situations where adults had not awoken by a certain time, the children would snatch from doorsteps the whole families' shoes and deliver them to the local government office. The families could retrieve their belongings only by visiting the relevant bureau and reporting why it was they had not risen on time.

Other forms of obnoxious commotion included ridiculing through rhyme and song individuals that failed to realize the new standards of the Communists' socialist society.

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[337] "Yang Gengtian tongzhi baogao guanyu bianqu shehui jiaoyu de yixie wenti" (Comrade Yang Gengtian's Report Concerning Some Issues with Border Region Social Education), September 1, 1940, *Bianqu jiaoyu*, reprinted in *JCJJUFZZC*, 1:189-190.
[338] Liu Songtao, "Laiyuan jiefanghou de Nanguan xiaoxue—yi ge wei xiaoxue de gaizao" (The Reformation of a Puppet Primary School in Post-Liberation Laiyuan County, Nanguan Village), *Jin-Cha-Ji ribao*, October 20, 1945, reprinted in *JCJCDJY*, 1:532.
[339] Wu Yuntian, "Jin-Cha-Ji bianqu xiaoxue jiaoyu jianying" (A Sketch of Jin-Cha-Ji Border Region Primary School Education), *Beifang wenhua*, June 1946, reprinted in *JCJCDJY*, 1:178.

Countless articles reported the ubiquity of village children mocking idle adults with verses such as:

> Lazy Han,
> Lazy dude,
> Doesn't work,
> But still eats food![340]
>
> To my east, a lazy brother,
> To my west, his sleepy mother,
> Neither works, both eat all day,
> But still they manage, the bills to pay.[341]

Teachers motivated students to taunt languid villagers in a variety of ways. One method was direct class-based instruction. Liu Aifeng emphasized the importance of "reform[ing] lazy children, especially those from affluent families who are unwilling to work at school and demean labor. These children exhibit the prejudice of exploitative class education." Providing an example of just how teachers should do this, Liu praised one instructor who taught his students that "Those who do not labor are parasites. They are like the lice found on a human body, or maggots in a toilet."[342] In another case, a teacher instructed his students that "lazy children who find no pleasure in labor are disgraceful."[343]

Another major regional newspaper, *Liberation Daily*, reported that this instruction made a critical impact on children. The newspaper wrote that students had taken to heart their lessons

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[340] The original verse is as follows: "*Lao han / lao han / bu gan huo / guang chi fan!*" See "Jin-Cha-Ji xiaoxuesheng nuli bangzhu jiating shengchan" (Jin-Cha-Ji Primary School Students Earnestly Helping with Household Production), *Jiefang ribao*, May 19, 1943, reprinted in *JCJCDJY*, 1:395.
[341] The original text is: "*Dong tou you ge lan hanzi / xi tou you ge lan laopo / Lan han, lan po / hao chi zui, bu gan huo / lan po, lan han / guang chi fan, bu gan!*" See Liu Aifeng, "Guomin jiaoyu zenyang he shengchan jiehe qilai" (How to Integrate Citizen Education with Production), *Jiaoyu zhendi*, February 5, 1946, reprinted in *JCJCDJY*, 1:414.
[342] Liu Aifeng, "Guomin jiaoyu zenyang he shengchan jiehe qilai" (How to Integrate Citizen Education with Production), *Jiaoyu zhendi*, February 5, 1946, reprinted in *JCJCDJY*, 1:414.
[343] Wang Jing, "Yixian mofan jiaoshi Gao Xinwu" (Yixian Model Teacher Gao Xinwu), *Jin-Cha-Ji ribao*, October 14, 1944, reprinted in *JCJCDJY*, 1:502.

and as a result were unwilling to befriend unproductive children.[344] *Education Front* mentioned the effects on one child in particular. Labeled "the laziest child in all of Nianpan [village]," Song Laodong reportedly "resisted work at home" and "always loafed around at school." Such behavior spurred Song's classmates to compose the following ditty:

> Song Laodong,
> Dull and sleepy,
> Hates to work,
> Yet mouth quite greedy![345]

This chant, in conjunction with being habitually labeled a "loathsome stubborn element," apparently maddened Song beyond belief. After days of verbal abuse, the child finally retorted with the following comeback: "Me, lazy? I'll show you! I'm going to spin a half kilo of thread in one day!" From that moment forward, *Education Front* reported, Song was a child who "loved to labor."[346]

Children also promoted new hygienic norms. One primary school in Lingshou county taught its students to shame "dirty children" with the following rhyme:

> Filthy children,
> Hair unkempt,
> Under nails,
> Is excrement.
> Hands unwashed,
> Rice bowl is black,
> Don't learn your manners,
> From this brat![347]

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[344] "Jin-Cha-Ji xiaoxuesheng nuli bangzhu jiating shengchan" (Jin-Cha-Ji Primary School Students Earnestly Helping with Household Production), *Jiefang ribao*, May 19, 1943, reprinted in *JCJCDJY*, 1:395.
[345] The original text is: "*Song Laodong / zhen shi lan / hao chi, lan zuo / bu shengchan!*"
[346] "Nianpan cun xiaoxue shengchan yu jiaoyu jiehe de jieshao" (An Introduction to Nianpan Village's Integration of Primary School Education and Production), *Jiaoyu zhendi*, June 1, 1944, reprinted in *JCJCDJY*, 1:405.
[347] The original verse is: *Zang haizi, zhen lata / lian bu xi, tou bu gua / zhitou haoxiang shi fencha / chi fan bu xi shou, wan zang ye bu shua / dajia jiang weisheng, bu yao xue ta*. See "Ji-Jin qu xuexiao jiaoyu zongjie" (A Summary of Ji-Jin District Education Work), 1945, *Xinzhou diqu jiaoyuzhi shiliao*, reprinted in *JCJCDJY*, 1:151.

In another case, the local government issued an edict requiring all women to cut their hair. Yet no number of threats or ordinances could compel them to comply. It was only after the "model" primary school instructor, Sang Wenyi, encouraged his students to taunt the local women did change occur. Sang taught his pupils to patronize long-haired young girls with the following lines:

> Backward elements,
> Haircut they deny,
> So behind their heads,
> A pigtail does lie![348]

According to the article, the children effectively "shamed" many women into cutting their hair.[349]

As agents of revolution, children also participated in land reform and class struggle. The reader will remember from chapter two that during the Chinese Civil War the border region government called on primary school teachers and students to actively participate in land reform campaigns. Two aspects of these instructions calling for such involvement warrant our attention. The first concerns children's perceived roles in these campaigns. As discussed in chapter two, inextricably linked to land reform were investigations concerning landlord and rich peasants' falsification of class status. As the historical record shows, this extended well beyond Party and governmental institutions. For reasons that remain unclear, families went so far as to misrepresent children's class status when registering them for school.[350] As a result, investigation into such falsifications reached into primary schools to in order to verify and (if needed) correct children's class background. While border region officials stated that it was "not advisable

[348] The original text is: *Luo hou fenzi, bu jiantou / hou tou liu ge zhu weiba!*
[349] Liu Songtao, "Sang Wenyi he ta de xuexiao" (Sang Wenyi and His School), *Jin-Cha-Ji ribao*, December 1944, reprinted in *JCJCDJY*, 1:520.
[350] One reason may be that parents sought to take advantage of subsidies, which the government reserved for children from poor families.

to…use the masses or struggle sessions to determine [students'] class status," the government's top authority did suggest that schools employ "children from impoverished families… to speak bitterness [to adults]" at mass rallies.[351]

The other aspect of these instructions that requires our attention concerns the leeway age provided children vis-à-vis their class status. As noted, the government advised officials against using struggle sessions to target children and investigate their class background. Indeed, officials wrote that "because primary school students are children, they lack political experience." Rather than targeting children, the government encouraged officials to "use this opportunity to arouse students' hatred for feudal practices and to improve their class consciousness and political position." Age, however, did not preclude children from being forced to acknowledge the political sins committed on their behalf. The government stated that "students whose parents have been struggled against must receive a thorough explanation…. Have these students embrace the peasants' standpoint and write their parents a letter expressing their thoughts…. every student's [family background] must be evaluated and re-registered by the village Poor Peasant League and New Peasant Associations. Students who have falsified their class status or registered in error must receive education."[352]

As border region officials seemed to suggest, age afforded children a degree of political exoneration. According to the governing body, this extended well beyond children's primary school years and into adolescence. The government asserted, for example, that although middle school students' class consciousness was evident by the age of sixteen, they differed from adults in that "their exposure to the taint of old society" was "comparatively shallow, and, therefore,

[351] "Bianweihui guanyu muqian jiaoyu gongzuo fangmian ji ge wenti de zhishi" (Border Region Committee Instructions Concerning a Few Issues Related to Education Work), *Jiaoyu zhendi*, November 30, 1947, reprinted in *JCJJUFZZC*, 2:313.
[352] Ibid.

easy to reform." Officials therefore suggested that "these students organize workers and poor peasants into small groups to serve as the backbone [of the movement]; to examine class, thought, and pedagogical standpoint and approaches."[353] No doubt, as with the recommended involvement of primary school students above, the government intended to use land reform and rectification as a pedagogical tool to sharpen children's and adolescents' political consciousness. Present in these instructions, therefore, is a continuation of the 1920s Marxist-Leninist interpretation of age as a category of organization discussed in chapter one. More specifically, we see as evidence in this documentation the notion that participation in revolutionary struggle could alter one's social nature. By incorporating children from bad class backgrounds into land reform campaigns in general, and by mobilizing them against their parents in particular, the government sought to correct children's behavior and outlook, and hence ideally stamp out exploitative class mentalities. Moreover, we see here an instance of class being subordinated to age. Whereas this does not indicate a wholesale departure from class being the ultimate lens through which the CCP ordered other markers of one's identity, it does demonstrate that inherent in the age-class dyad was a tension that could be utilized and/or politicized in order to further specific goals.

In early January 1948, signs that the peasant associations had deviated from the government's stated objectives began to appear. On January 16, the border region government's top-ranking official, Song Shaowen, issued a revised version of the November 30 document, in which he modified earlier instructions concerning middle school students' role in land reform. Song professed that "an incorrect policy had been provided concerning the examination of class and thought in middle schools." Song amended the earlier directions by stating that the

[353] Ibid. The document defines "youth" as between sixteen to twenty years of age.

relationship between students was "one of equality among classmates." This relationship, he wrote, was "fundamentally different than that between village landlords and the rich and hired laborers and poor peasants. Middle school students… have mostly received a primary school education… regardless of whether their family is of a landlord, rich peasant, or capitalist background, students' thinking will be different from that of [their] kin." Song concluded that "reforming students' thinking is comparatively easy. Such is the responsibility of education."[354]

Yet despite this intervention, the historical record suggests that peasant associations continued implementing a violent land reform that enveloped all members of the community without concern for their age. Confusion concerning exactly which cross-section of society should be involved began at the top. Shortly after the government issued its November 30 instructions, regional administrators called for children to participate directly in land reform. Luo Yuchuan, Director of the Central Hebei Administrative Region, directed students of "good class background" from upper *and* lower primary schools to assist the Poor Peasant Leagues and to "participate in struggle" (*canjia douzheng*). Students deemed to be "too young" or of bad class background, Luo asserted, were to remain in class, where course content should "strengthen their thinking concerning hired laborers and poor peasants."[355]

Articles in *Jin-Cha-Ji Daily* document the unprecedented tumult and disruption land reform and re-classification brought to primary schools. Once piece, published on February 2, 1948, reported that many primary schools had "adopted the organizational and methodological techniques of the class struggle taking place in the countryside and mechanically applied them in

[354] Song Shaowen, "Bianweihui dui 'guanyu muqian jiaoyu gongzuo fangmian ji ge wenti de zhishi' de xiuzheng" (Revised Edition of 'Border Region Committee Instructions Concerning a Few Issues Related to Education Work'), January 16, 1948, reprinted in *JCJJUFZZC*, 2:322.
[355] Luo Yuchuan, "Jizhong xingzheng gongshu dui ge ji xuexiao zai pingfen tudi guocheng zhong ruhe jinxing jiaoyu de zhishi" (Central Hebei Administrative Office Instructions Concerning Teaching during the Period of Equal Land Distribution), December 16, 1947, reprinted in *JCJJUFZZC*, 2:317-318.

schools." Children at these schools reportedly organized their own Poor Peasant Leagues, which served as "the backbone" of the movement, and through which students struggled against their peers from landlord and rich peasant families. "During struggle sessions," the article explains, "students from poor- and middle-peasant backgrounds criticized the others and then divided among them the fruits of victory." Some students adopted the premises of "reorganizing the ranks" to expel students of landlord and rich peasant families from school. Some children even went so far as to "drive out their teachers." *Jin-Cha-Ji Daily* states that "the extremely chaotic situation" had "resulted in education work suffering unprecedented losses."[356]

Presaging the Party's rollback of the movements more radical policies in late February, *Jin-Cha-Ji Daily* called such activities "leftist, immature, and haphazard." The newspaper assigned blame to an inadequate understanding of the nature of the class struggle taking place in the countryside. The article stated that the purpose of investigating family backgrounds in the countryside was for the benefit of the peasantry, while in schools the objective was to evaluate and reform thinking while also intensifying class education (*jieji jiaoyu*).[357] Paraphrasing Song's January 16 revisions, the article wrote that the relationship between teachers and students, and that between classmates, was equal: there was no political oppression or economic exploitation. It did not matter, for example, that some students may have been from landlord or rich peasant families because these students were not responsible for managing domestic affairs, and therefore had not exploited the peasantry. Moreover, because students from these backgrounds had received "new education" their thinking and work style was "very different" from their

[356] "Bu ying ba nongcun douzheng de yi tao ban dao xuexiao zhong qu" (The Method of Struggle Taking Place in the Countryside Should Not Be Used in Schools), *Jin-Cha-Ji ribao*, February 2, 1948, reprinted in *JCJJUFZZC*, 2:324.
[357] Ibid., 2:324. The article defined class education as the ability to draw a clear distinction among different modes of thought, to conquer landlord and rich peasant thought, and to establish a revolutionary outlook of life and thinking that serves the people.

parents. Their thinking was capable of being reformed. The article added that this was "especially true for primary school students—children of approximately ten years—whose thinking was very simple and even easier to reform."[358]

Yet while the article concluded that there was "absolutely no need" for schools to implement mass struggle as a means to investigate students' class or thought, the government continued to send mix signals. The article still suggested, for example, that teachers combine land reform with an intensification of class education, while also encouraging students to evaluate and criticize each other. The article concluded by saying that the "clear class line" of school-based education was "the proletariat's leadership of the masses." Similarly, the article stated that the ideal object of education was the "sons and daughters of the laborers," who, it claimed, should be prioritized.[359]

Neither *Jin-Cha-Ji Daily* nor Song's revisions were enough to mitigate the chaos unfolding through the region's schools. In early June, a *Central Hebei Guide* (*Jizhong daobao*) article stated that teachers remained "uneasy" about their work given the conflict that had arisen during land reform. "At present," the article explained, "an extremely democratic phenomenon has developed among students. It is widespread and serious. Some teachers are so unable to manage their students that full-day schools spend their time quarreling and fighting noisily. The local communities do not approve."[360]

As late as mid-July, a district-level official lamented that education work in his area had "collapsed." He described the area's approach toward all intellectuals as "too leftist." "All teachers," the cadre wrote, "regardless of their work were classified as landlords and rich

[358] Ibid., 2:324-325.
[359] Ibid., 2:325.
[360] "Jiaqiang lingdao ban hao xiaoxue jiaoyu" (Strengthen Leadership, Manage Well Primary School Education), *Jizhong daobao*, June 6, 1948, reprinted in *JCJJUFZZC*, 2:328.

peasants. They were strongly struggled against…. Many have either stopped working or resigned." To this, he added, the land reform movement's emphasis on the plight of the peasant had caused a district-wide reduction in wages paid to teachers, who now earned less than that of the "common worker." Already subsisting on low salaries, teachers were therefore forced to change professions. The result, the official wrote, was that "children have nothing to study and teachers nothing to teach. Education work in my district is at a standstill." The document concluded:

> If the Party and the government do not immediately take seriously education work by correctly implementing policies concerning intellectuals, not only will the people's education suffer a great, unnecessary loss, but its collapse will jeopardize the success of the consolidation we have already achieved. This will isolate the Party from the laboring masses, making it difficult to support the front line and build a new society…. The correct handling of intellectuals, reorganization of education administration, and development of mass education is a matter of great urgency.[361]

Statistics show this cadre's rhetoric was not hyperbole. At a representative assembly on the eve of the region's dissolution, Song Shaowen delivered a report demonstrating that student enrollments had taken a great leap backwards as a result of land reform. Whereas figures from 1945-46 showed that Jin-Cha-Ji had enrolled 1,464,784 children, the much-expanded border region as of September 4, 1948, had a primary school student population of approximately 1,136,000; a 22.5 percent drop in total enrollments.[362]

Conclusion

[361] "Guanyu 'chongzheng jiaoyu xingzheng zuzhi jiaqiang zhishifenzi gongzuo kaizhan qunzhong jiaoyu' de yijian" (Suggestions Concerning 'The Reorganization of Education Administration, Strengthening of Intellectuals' Work, and Development of Community Education), July 14, 1948, reprinted in *JCJJUFZZC*, 2:338.

[362] Song's report states that this figure included 47,000 upper and 1,089,000 lower students across 677 upper and 17,458 lower primary schools. "Song Shaowen, Yang Xiufeng zai huabei rendaibiaohui shang baogao Jin-Cha-Ji, Jin-Ji-Lu-Yu bianqu zhengfu gongzuo" (Song Shaowen, Yang Xiufeng's Report to the North China People's Representative Conference Concerning the Work of the Jin-Cha-Ji and Jin-Ji-Lu-Yu Border Region Governments), *Qunzhong ribao*, September 4, 1948, reprinted in *JCJJUFZZC*, 2:383-384.

This chapter has demonstrated that as historical actors children acted on their environments and communities through a wide range of activities. They "confronted the enemy," "purged…traitors and spies," and "assisted the anti-Japanese government and army." These contributions demonstrated for adults children's agency and therefore the youngsters' worthiness as "masters of New China."[363] The children of north China, however, had not always exhibited such virtues. One author noted how local youngsters had transformed from "wild, mountain-valley children [*shangou li de yehaizi*] into little soldiers, who defended the region [*baowei bianqu de xiao zhanshi*]." As little soldiers, these children "shouted everywhere: 'To protect the border region! To protect the freedom of this land!'"[364]

Consistent with the official government-sponsored narrative of the time, this same report drew a distinction between children's lives before and after the establishment of the border region government. "Primary school students," he wrote, "are no longer children that are shut indoors to read dead books [*sishu*].[365] They learn what to do when they encounter the enemy, how to study under wartime conditions, and how to work under wartime conditions. They shout loudly, 'Children will save the nation! Children have power!'"[366] The author described local children as the "outstanding next generation of the Chinese nation," "the anti-Japanese reserve force" (*kangri de houbeijun*), and "an emerging force for our nation-building efforts."[367]

To these reports we can add the myriad of activities in which adults witnessed border region children participating. They completed household chores, participated in agricultural

[363] Xia Yang, "Jin-Cha-Ji bianqu de haizimen" (Children of the Jin-Cha-Ji Border Region), *Xin zhonghua bao*, April 2, 1940, reprinted in *JCJCDJY*, 1:435.
[364] Ibid., 1:433-435.
[365] Literally "dead books"; meaning "to read without digesting." The character here for "dead" is synonymous with "four," and is making a connection to the traditional "four books," or four classics of the Confucian canon.
[366] "Jizhong qu liang nian lai jiaoyu gongzuo de zongjie" (A Summary of Two Years' Education Work in Central Hebei), *Bianqu jiaoyu*, March 1, 1940, reprinted in *JCJCDJY*, 1:29.
[367] Ibid., 1:31.

production, assisted needy families, solicited army donations, sold national salvation bonds, guarded nearby roads and refused passage, confronted armed adults, carried out clandestine reconnaissance, arrested alleged spies and traitors, destroyed railways, laid landmines, taught literacy, mobilized parents and villagers, disseminated propaganda, acted in plays, sang in traveling choirs, hung banners and posters, and challenged adult authority.

Children's participation in these activities demonstrates their agency. As discussed in the introduction, this study challenges the notion of agency as an autonomous and unified will separate from enduring power structures. Instead, agency is "partially determined by and in continuous interaction and negotiation with various forms of power."[368] To this we can add Mona Gleason's observation that agency is not an undifferentiated, monolithic concept. We should reject the "agency ideal" and foreground examples of children's acquiescence to adult prerogatives.[369] Indeed, the children that have appeared in this chapter have demonstrated a range of agency. They performed hard labor, attended school, watched over siblings, and participated in military-style marching and drilling. They also organized within adult-constructed institutions to challenge traditional authority. They "struggled" against their teachers, insisted government officials accept their demands, and denied high-ranking cadres the right to use their roads.

[368] Vallgårda, "Can the Subaltern Woman Run? Gender, Race, and Agency in Colonial Missionary Texts."
[369] Gleason, "Avoiding the Agency Trap: Caveats for Historians of Children, Youth, and Education."

CHAPTER 6: Martyrs, Models, and Miscreants

"Little Sanyu, is only thirteen,
His national integrity, is highly esteemed.
Had five tender fingers, hacked off with a sickle,
Yet from his mouth, no secrets did trickle."[370]

This emotive ode to Wen Sanyu is representative of the child-centered narratives that emerge from the historical record. It spotlights a young, pre-adolescent male, who displays a precocious capacity for sacrifice and revolutionary virtue. In this case, Wen's refusal to capitulate to his interrogators' demands modeled for his peers—other children—politically and socially correct behavior. That is, adults expected children to sacrifice their lives to safeguard the nation. The circulation of such narratives throughout the war demonstrates that border region adults identified children as targets of ideology.[371] Through such examples, adults intended for the children that consumed these stories to emulate similar behavior.

Accounts of exemplary children, which I typologize here as martyrs, models, and miscreants, are, like any historical sources, mediated. Indeed, the historical record's primary limitation is that it privileges particular children. We see little of youngsters whose social well-being lied, for whatever reason, beyond the reach of the state. This includes boys such as twelve-year-old Yuan Xiaoniu, whose impoverished family was unable to buy the child clothing. Yuan therefore regularly roamed the streets in the buff. Or girls like fourteen-year-old Yuan Bianyu, who begged roadside in order to support her little brother and blind grandmother.[372] Likewise, the sources provide little insight into the mundane mischief children inescapably engaged in, such as falling face first into a village outhouse and emerging covered head-to-toe in human

[370] My translation. Original in Lin Dan, *Xunfang ertongtuan zhanyou* (Searching for Comrades-in-Arms of the Children's League) (Beijing: Zhongguo wenlian chubanshe, 2008), 70.
[371] Catriona Kelly, *Comrade Pavlik: The Rise and Fall of a Soviet Boy Hero* (London: Granta, 2005), 14.
[372] "Zuzhi pinku ertong xuexi de ji ge fanli" (A Few Examples of Organizing Poor Children's Studies), *Jiaoyu zhendi*, February 18, 1947, reprinted in *JCJCDJY*, 1:423-425.

waste.[373] Most egregious is the record's omission of the tender moments between parent and child, which more than compensate for the daily vexation so emblematic of parenthood.

Instead, the sources under investigation here underscore a specific type of child at particular historical moments. This suggests the youngsters that emerge are articulations of certain adult anxieties. During the height of Japanese repression, for example, the record is full of children that endured incredible hardship, suffered torture and violence, and even purportedly martyred themselves to safeguard the Party, its army, and local communities. Likewise, following the war's end, the nascent Communist state expanded into new territory, much of which had been under the influence of Japanese, collaborationist, or Nationalist governance. The children that come to punctuate the historical record at this juncture are models and miscreants. The former, which include Wen Sanyu, exhibited politically and socially appropriate behavior, and therefore displayed for others unfamiliar with Communist society what behaviors an ideal child exhibited. Miscreants, on the other hand, are playful, immature, mischievous, and often disobedient. I refer to this group as miscreants not solely because the sources characterize these children as social deviants, but because they are the true outliers of the archive. They display no loyalty to the Party or nation. They have not "sacrificed" for their family or local community. They exhibit no commendable attributes.

Yet despite these biases, we can retrieve certain elements of children's lived experience from these sources. I argue here that the typology of martyrs, models, and miscreants represents a spectrum along which we can locate how and to what degree children acquiesced with and resisted adult prerogatives. Martyrs, for example, demonstrate that children and their bodies were significant sites of symbolic contestation. As we saw in previous chapters, border region

[373] Yun Han, "Hejian xian mofan jiaoshi Zhang Shicai he Qian Hongyan xiaoxue" (Hejian County Model Teachers Zhang Shicai and Qian Hongyan's Primary School), *Jizhong daobao*, May 27, 1946, reprinted in *JCJCDJY*, 1:544.

personnel went through great lengths to emotionally temper children so that they were prepared to confront and cope with war and violence. At the same time, the politicization of martyr children's deaths lent a moral rationale and legitimacy to the Chinese nation's struggle against Japanese imperialism. Martyrs, as we will see below, were both willing agents of revolutionary struggle and victims of heinous foreign predation.

The second type of child that emerges is the model. These children played an instrumental role in what we might consider the genesis of Maoist exemplarism. That is, the selection, ascension, and circulation of model individuals—from and among "the masses"—that contributed to the construction of a socialist moral order. Up until this period, the theme of resistance had served as the ideological glue that bound together vast swathes of the rural population. However, foreseeing that the looming Japanese defeat would problematize the longevity of this narrative, the Party began fashioning an everyday Communist code of conduct that would discipline society. Maoist exemplars, such as Wen Sanyu and others we will met below, were central to this project.

Finally, we can read miscreant children in several ways. As I mentioned above, these youngsters appear in the archive in part due to their delinquent nature. They skipped classes, perturbed their teachers, and stole from neighbors. In many cases, adults vented these moments seemingly in fits of cathartic helplessness. Education inspectors, for example, would cite these actions as a means of qualifying a particular village's incapacity to properly implement discipline, policy, or reform. In other instances, however, miscreant children operate as a foil to teach ordinary children the risks associated with bad behavior. In these circumstances, adults and other students target the miscreants as an object of reform. By passing through a trial of public criticism and re-education, delinquent youngsters—despite their egregious failings—

demonstrated the transformative and redemptive power of state-sponsored schooling. By reforming and reintegrating troubled minors, the state therefore portrayed itself as a sympathetic and paternalistic authority that was willing to aid citizens in overcoming minor transgressions. In this regard, I argue that delinquency was the constitutive counterweight to exemplary behavior. As such, deviancy and propriety together constructed a didactic dichotomy that delineated the boundaries of China's burgeoning socialist society. Miscreant children were therefore indispensable to the Communists' moral vision that emerged in the war's waning years.

Martyrs, models, and miscreants each represent a point along a spectrum. Martyrs and miscreants fall along opposite poles. The former represent largely voiceless children, whose representations adults instrumentalized to build communities of resistance. Miscreants are diametrically opposed to martyrs, falling on the opposite end of the spectrum. While the metamorphosis of some miscreants from brooding trouble-makers to obedient schoolchildren served to demonstrate education's transformative power, those children that resisted the border region government indicate the limits of state power.

Model children fall along the middle area of the spectrum. While it is their exemplary—and therefore extraordinary—behavior that earned them a place in the historical record, these children, I argue, provide us with an informative glimpse into the lived experience of border region children. Here, I am interested most in the models' assent to border region norms. For childhood scholar Susan Miller, acquiescence is important because one-dimensional analyses that emphasize only resistance fail to interrogate how historical subjects willingly conform to dominant cultural trends. Borrowing insights from David Lancy, Miller argues that historians must pay equal weight to how and why children reconciled with adult agendas. Acquiescence often reveals, Miller notes, not blind faith in adult prerogatives, but instead how children used

adult interests to exercise power and achieve their own interests. Such opportunities were plentiful in contexts where adults extolled the latent potential of youth and children, as was the case throughout the Chinese communist revolution.[374]

Martyrs

Before proceeding, a comment is required concerning my reading of the following "martyr" (*liesheng*, *xunguo*) texts that constitute this section. It is difficult to determine the veracity of the reports that follow. While widespread slaughter of Chinese civilians—including children—did indeed take place, each of the accounts below narrate events and psychological insights to which the authors themselves most certainly did not have first-hand access. As such, I am less interested in corroborating these documents' truthfulness than I am understanding them as a form of educational propaganda. Here, I am concerned primarily with the reports' descriptive and prescriptive functions. For example, how did these accounts of suffering and torture illustrate appropriate behavior? In what ways did they establish boundaries between different social groups? How did these texts construct a burgeoning "Chinese" identity? Finally, what "ideological impulses" do these stories satisfy?[375]

Tales of children "sacrificing" (*xisheng*) themselves for the resistance are not uncommon throughout the archive. Aside from reports of Japanese massacres of primary school students,[376] newspapers and journals contextualize child deaths as steadfast adherence to the Five Don'ts campaign. These accounts emphasize how amidst sensational brutality children mustered an

[374] Miller, "Assent as Agency in the Early Years of the Children of the American Revolution," 49.
[375] L. Stephanie Cobb, *Dying to be Men: Gender and Language in Early Christian Martyr Texts* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2008), 5.
[376] For example, see the Ping'an Massacre where forty primary school children were allegedly murdered; Liu Songtao, "Jin-Cha-Ji de fannuhua jiaoyu de douzheng" (Jin-Cha-Ji's Anti-Slave Education Struggle), *Jiefangqu qunzhong jiaoyu jianshe de daolu*, November 1948, reprinted in *JCJCDJY*, 1:242-259.

unwavering loyalty to the Party: they "shed pure blood" and "died with dignity."[377] The *Jin-Cha-Ji Daily*, for example, provides a case where enemy soldiers tortured an unnamed thirteen-year-old in order to extract sensitive information: "[The child] was doused with cold water, whipped, and in the end nailed to a door; bayonets driven through the palms of [its] hands."[378] The same article mentions another child, this one a League member from Nanling village, who was "dragged out from hiding in the grass and bayonetted by the enemy."[379] *Education Front* published a column describing the events that befell thirteen-year-old Zhang Xifu, who enemies had captured and questioned regarding the location of a runaway cadre. After threats of violence failed to extract from Zhang the cadre's whereabouts—who unbeknownst to the soldiers had reportedly taken refuge in the boy's home—the troops left the child to die, hanging upside down in a well.[380] Another account describes how San Daizi, a native of Fanzhi's sixth prefecture, was accosted by a band of Japanese troops, who were hot on the heels of a retreating band of Eighth Route Army troops. When pressed under the threat of violence to disclose the direction in which the Communist forces had departed, San reportedly exclaimed "You could beat me to death and I still wouldn't know!" In the face of this defiance, the Japanese reportedly heaved the boy off a nearby cliff.[381]

Journalists and the cadres that produced and circulated wartime reportage treat these events as fact. On one account, Department of Education Head Liu Aifeng noted in a work report that enemy soldiers detained three primary school students and interrogated them, demanding the

[377] Ibid., 1:464-467.
[378] The child's gender is not revealed, as the author makes no use of names or pronouns.
[379] Wang Zhen, "Huoyue de Beiyue tongzijun" (The Flourishing Beiyue Scouts), September 5, 1943, *Jin-Cha-Ji ribao*, reprinted in *JCJCDJY*, 1:457-460.
[380] "Pingshan youjiqu de yi qun xiao yingxiong" (Pingshan Guerrilla Area's Group of Little Heroes), April 1, 1945, *Jiaoyu zhendi*, reprinted in *JCJCDJY*, 1:464-467.
[381] Liu Songtao, "Jin-Cha-Ji de fannuhua jiaoyu de douzheng" (Jin-Cha-Ji's Anti-Slave Education Struggle), *Jiefangqu qunzhong jiaoyu jianshe de daolu*, November 1948, reprinted in *JCJCDJY*, 1:259.

students relinquish the names and addresses of local leaders. When the children refused, the soldier stabbed one child to death with his bayonet. The soldier then questioned once again the two surviving children. When they continued to plead ignorance, the soldier killed a second child. The soldier questioned for a final time the third child, who remained silent. He, too, was killed. "Similar cases," Liu concluded "are innumerable."[382] Writing broadly about the trend of children willingly sacrificing their lives for the Party, *Education Front* editorialized the following:

> Although they are young, they have done some amazing things. They have suffered beatings and some have even made the honorable sacrifice [*guangrong xisheng*]. For anti-Japanese work, in order to protect military assets and secrets, and in order to carry out the "Five Don'ts Movement," they have engaged in a bitter struggle with the enemy. Although they are small, their national integrity is larger than the heavens! They exhibit the courageous and indomitable spirit of the Chinese nation! They represent our nation's bright future! Under the leadership of the Communist Party, [the enemy] will never triumph![383]

Three tales of martyrdom, the origins of which are rooted in the height of Japanese repression between 1941 and 1943, are worthy of our consideration. The first concerns Wang Erxiao, a thirteen-year-old boy from Laiyuan county. On January 1, 1942, *Jin-Cha-Ji Daily* eulogized Wang through the publication of a ballad, which recounted the circumstances of his death. As the paper reported, the young cowherd was tending to his cattle one morning when he stumbled upon a wandering and disoriented band of Japanese soldiers. As it turned out, the troops had received intelligence of a nearby hideout, where Eighth Route Army soldiers, their supplies, and over a thousand villagers had absconded following a recent mopping up campaign. Knowing the Japanese were not far from their mark, Wang purportedly feigned a sincere and

[382] Liu Aifeng, "Jizhong wu nian jiaoyu gongzuo de zongjie (1938 nian - 1942 nian)" (A Summary of Five Years of Education Work in Jizhong), April 5, 1942, reprinted in *JCJJUFZZC*, 1:362.
[383] "Pingshan youjiqu de yi qun xiao yingxiong," (Pingshan Guerrilla Area's Group of Little Heroes), April 1, 1945, *Jiaoyu zhendi*, reprinted in *JCJCDJY*, 1:466-467.

simple eagerness to help his lost "uncles" find their way. As the story continues, Wang intentionally led the company away from their intended destination and straight into Communist-army territory. Wang cleverly led the Japanese into a gorge, the high earthen walls of which were manned by ERA soldiers. Only after shots from above began ringing throughout the chasm did the Japanese discover Wang's duplicity. At that moment, the paper tells us, one of the Japanese soldiers ran Wang through with his bayonet and then subsequently heaved the boy's bleeding body onto the ravine's rocky ground. Though *Jin-Cha-Ji Daily* lamented Wang's death as "tragic," the paper's emphasis is on how the boy's sacrifice is directly responsible for the "safety of the cadres and villagers." Indeed, the *Daily* suggests that Wang himself could not have imagined a better ending to his own story with these concluding lines: "Erxiao now slept among the frigid mountains, and on his face he wore a smile."[384]

A second account regards the interrogation and torture of a Children's League Squad Commander named Zhang Liuzi. The *Jin-Cha-Ji Daily* reported on April 4, 1943, that Zhang was a resident of Shangfang village in Xingtang county. In January of that year, Japanese soldiers had surrounded Zhang's village as a target for mopping up. While the article is unclear on how, at some point during the fracas enemy troops abducted Zhang and attempted to extract from him the names of local cadres, army officials, and the whereabouts of ERA supplies. To each request, Zhang feigned ignorance, replying defiantly: "I don't know!" Unconvinced, the four soldiers grabbed poles with which they "beat [the boy] relentlessly." When Zhang refused to disclose the desired information, the soldiers "bound the child's feet and hands and suspended him above a fire, which scorched his skin and putrefied his flesh" (*pijiaoroulan*). "Throughout

[384] *Jin-Cha-Ji ribao*, "Xiaoer changge," January 1, 1942. Wang Erxiao's story is recounted in an oral history given by Xu Guang, a Children's League official in the 1940s. See Xu Guang, Li Hao, "Jin-Cha-Ji bianqu de kangri ertongtuan" (The Jin-Cha-Ji Border Region Anti-Japanese Children's League), reprinted in *JCJSLHB*, 2:97-103.

this entire ordeal," the *Daily* concluded, "this little hero did not mutter a single word. In the end, [Zhang] heroically gave his life for his country [*zhuanglie xunguo*]! This resolute and indomitable spirit should become the most outstanding model for the border region's children. It represents for the border region Scouts the great spirit of brave sacrifice [*yingyong xisheng*]."[385]

Our final account, one of the mostly widely publicized and graphically detailed accounts of border region children's so-called indomitable spirit, concerns the 1943 Yechang Massacre, known colloquially throughout the historical record as the "May Seventh Incident." According to the *Jin-Cha-Ji Daily*, the mass killing was a response to villagers' refusal to divulge to Japanese interrogators knowledge concerning Eighth Route Army supplies. The event began with enemy soldiers rounding up villagers and sequestering them in a nearby ravine. Tensions escalated following failed attempts to extract information from villagers, and culminated with frustrated soldiers opening fire onto the unarmed crowd. One hundred and eighteen were reportedly killed, with fifty-four critically wounded. Ten survivors spoke to the journalist, Shen Zhong, who reported the event.

One of the few actors of this drama that Shen identifies by name is fifteen-year-old Wang Pu, son of the village head. Amidst the interrogation, Wang is depicted as "remembering the citizen's oath" and then bravely coming forward to proclaim: "No one is allowed to speak! It is okay if we die. Even if you know something, you mustn't speak!" At this, Wang's unnamed mother, "moved by her son's words," emerged "from the huddled masses of women present" to

[385] *Jin-Cha-Ji ribao*, "Xingtang: Tongzijun Zhang Liuzi zhuanglie xunguo," April 4, 1943. One contemporaneous source, journalist Wang Zhen, mentioned Zhang Liuzi when summarizing similar activities carried out by border region children. Zhang is also mentioned in Xu Guang's oral history. See Wang Zhen, "Huoyue de Beiyue tongzijun" (The Flourishing Beiyue Scouts), September 5, 1943, *Jin-Cha-Ji ribao*, reprinted in *JCJCDJY*, 1:457-460; Xu Guang, Li Hao, "Jin-Cha-Ji bianqu de kangri ertongtuan" (The Jin-Cha-Ji Border Region Anti-Japanese Children's League), reprinted in *JCJSLHB*, 2:100.

beseech the others to remain silent. Recognizing the futility of his questioning, the interrogator conceded by signaling for the gunners to open fire on the villagers.

> At the interpreter's signal, the heavy artillery guns began firing into the crowd. Amidst the hail of dirt and dust, the crowd of villagers erupted into chaos. Blood and flesh, brains and marrow misted the air, at which the enemy sat laughing behind their machine guns perched on the hillside. Taking advantage of a momentarily silence afforded by the enemy's reloading of the guns, an injured woman, Hao Chengyi, clung to her child and pointed at the enemy: 'You sons of bitches, we may die, but our children will avenge us!' As the final words exited her lips, however, Hao looked down to notice that all that remained of her baby was a lifeless upper torso. At this, she fell to the ground and began sobbing frantically.
>
> After emptying two more rounds of bullets into the crowd, the enemy descended into the ravine and stuck everything still moving with their bayonets. Even an infant, which was crawling on its mother's dead body to suckle at her breast, was stabbed to death. The enemy then chopped off both of the child's feet. As the afternoon sun shone down on the ravine, the passing wind carried away with it the putrid stench of blood. Soaked red, the ground was covered with flesh, brains, marrow, and chunks of hair."[386]

Shen acknowledges that he drafted this account the day following the massacre, after the Party administration had dispatched personnel to provide the village with relief. "At our arrival," Shen wrote, "the women…looked upon us as if we were intimate relatives." Shen interviewed for his story thirteen-year-old survivor Wang Luozi. When Shen asked why he was sobbing, Wang "responded by wiping tears from his eyes and declaring: 'I'm not crying. I'm furious!'" Shen also reported that the hand of another child, eight-year-old Wang Luxi, had been badly injured. Despite the pain, Shen reported, Wang Luxi implored his mother to "allow him to avenge their neighbors' deaths. 'Mommy, mommy,' little Wang howled. 'With just one hand I can still fight the Japanese!'" Wang's injuries were greater than his spirit. He died the following day.[387] Months later, the Yechang Massacre and the children that had "sacrificed" their lives for the resistance remained a widely published topic. Journalists continued to sing the praises of children

[386] Shen Zhong, "Yechang can'an," *Jin-Cha-Ji ribao*, May 27, 1943, reprinted in *JCJRBTX*, 8:380-383.
[387] Ibid.

such as Wang Pu. One correspondent commented that Wang Pu and "numerous other children have not only committed the [Five Don'ts] to heart," but had "put it to practice in their own lives."[388]

As casualties of war, these children performed a type of emotional labor unlike their peers in peacetime domestic spaces. While children during times of peace labored to demonstrate love and produce happiness, children of war became broad cultural symbols of victimization and redemption.[389] In both capacities, their representations sought to produce compassion and to galvanize their compatriots to action. They also served as actual poster children, which transformed abstract problems into discernible dramas that humanized complex issues.[390]

These accounts of child martyrdom functioned as identity-forming texts that sought to foster a community of resistance loyal to the Communist Party. In each narrative, children demonstrated their "national integrity" by willingly sacrificing their lives to protect the Party or a symbolic surrogate. These included not just cadres, but ERA soldiers, the whereabouts of hidden supplies, and sensitive information. As identity-forming texts, these narratives also localized the revolution for the disparate territories that constituted the border regions. Punctuating the larger "foundational drama" through which the Communists united the rural Chinese community, local exemplars were more memorable, and hence gave communities a claim of ownership to the revolution. In this way, Wang Pu and other fallen children were the "primordial ancestors" whose blood was the "holy seed" from which resistance grew.[391]

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[388] Wang Zhen, "Huoyue de Beiyue tongzijun," (The Flourishing Beiyue Scouts), September 5, 1943, *Jin-Cha-Ji ribao*, reprinted in *JCJCDJY*, 1:459.
[389] Vallgårda, Alexander, Olsen, "Emotions and the Global Politics of Childhood," 12-34.
[390] Michael Grossberg, "'A Protected Childhood': The Emergence of Child Protection in America," in *American Public Life and the Historical Imagination*, eds., Wendy Gamber, Michael Grossberg, and Hendrik Hartog (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 2003), 220.
[391] Cobb, *Dying to be Men*, 57.

Crucial to these texts is the performative act of martyrdom and its accompanying pornographic gore. Simply claiming loyalty to the Party was insufficient: membership required performance of the ideal attributes. Martyrs were therefore required to make visible their adherence to the sacred oaths.[392] The obsessive attention that journalists paid to physical suffering—Wang Erxiao bleeding out on cold rock, the festering of Zhang Liuzi's charred flesh, an infant's squirming as it hangs impaled from a bayonet—reinforces the martyrs' commitment in an important way. It "represents an attempt to make visible that which is by definition invisible": a willingness to die for the Party.[393] The physical agony, therefore, renders visible for the reading and hearing community a near-divine devotion to Party and people.

Finally, a heavily gendered discourse of these martyr texts inverts the power relationship between torturer and tortured. Shen Zhong's reporting of the event opens by describing the village men as disciplined and dispassionate, like the "stones within the ravine: resolute and unyielding." Women, on the other hand, are portrayed as emotional and "disobedient." While the men are steadfast in their refusal to capitulate to their interrogator's demands, the women "cowered together and called out for their loved ones." These emotional outbursts prompted the Japanese soldiers to retaliate by striking them with the butts of their guns. Despite this violence, it is only in response to a male villager's invocation of a Party pledge—the Soldier and Citizen's Oath—that the ravine silences. The sudden equanimity of the villagers is contrasted against the increasingly irascible interrogator. Frustrated by his futile efforts to extract from the villagers the sought after intelligence, he resorts to a frantic hurling of curses and insults reminiscent of the women's earlier emotional fragility.

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[392] Ibid., 61.
[393] Thomas Sizgorich, *Violence and Belief in Late Antiquity: Militant Devotion in Christianity and Islam* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2014), 124-25.

Various invocations of the Party—a common motif throughout wartime martyr texts—function as a masculinizing force that steels the resolve of the masses in the face of imminent death. At the same time, they also emasculate the enemy. The objective of this emasculation is not only to invert the persecutor-persecuted relationship. It also demonstrates that those who are suffering—in this case children—are actually the ones who are morally and psychologically in control. They—not the adult interrogator—demonstrate a mastery of their passions and therefore march voluntarily toward death. Children made effective martyrs insofar as it was unexpected for them to embody the community's most sought-after qualities. When contrasted with the adult interrogator, the child's embodiment of masculine ideals emphasizes the emasculation of the adult, who had supposedly reached the peak of manliness.[394] Lastly, the interrogator's submission to the use of violence, either as a means to compel his victims to speak or to punish their recalcitrance, is admission of impotence. It is the failure to wield power over the interrogated, and hence a failure of manliness. These stories therefore transform "persecution" to "martyrdom," and powerlessness to power.[395]

Models

From late 1943 to early 1944 we witness a significant shift regarding Communist anxieties—and hence priorities—concerning children. This deviation demonstrably affects the types of children that appear in the archive. The reader will remember from chapter two that by February 1944 Japanese soldiers had begun gradually withdrawing from north China. In preparation for the Ichigō Offensive, the Imperial Army began diverting large amounts of troops and material from north to central and south China. This relaxed considerably the overall

[394] Cobb, *Dying to be Men*, 61.
[395] Elizabeth Anne Castelli, *Martyrdom and Memory: Early Christian Culture Making* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2007), 34, 48.

situation in north China, which had been plagued by intense Japanese repression for over three years. As military tensions decreased, journalists, cadres, and educators paid less attention to martyrs, atrocities, and violence. They instead began extolling the selfless bravery, unwavering loyalty to the Party and nation, and Stakhanovite work ethic of the region's population.

A deluge of such discourse flooded newspapers, textbooks, cadre work reports and other forms of media following a spate of "Heroes of the Masses" (*qunying*) rallies. Each of north China's five border region governments convened such celebrations, beginning with Shaan-Gan-Ning in November 1943.[396] These events celebrated and rewarded—materially and honorifically—locally elected men, women, and children. For Jin-Cha-Ji's First Border Region Heroes of the Masses Rally (*bianqu di yi jie qunying dahui*), convened between February 10 to 14, 1944, the government honored 104 individuals from the Beiyue District alone. For its second rally, held between December 21, 1944, and January 30, 1945, the region selected 90. Raising the profile of these events was top Party brass, including Cheng Zihua, Liu Songtao, Song Shaowen, Cheng Fangwu, and Yang Gengtian, many of whom gave speeches. News of the events, along with a list of awardees and their good deeds, made the front page of *Jin-Cha-Ji Daily*. Additionally, lengthy profiles, interviews, and unique woodblock portraits of these "models" (*mofan*) and "heroes" (*yingxiong*) appeared in the region's newspaper throughout early 1945.

Among those honored at the 1944-45 celebrations were three children: "model of integrity" (*qijie mofan*) Wen Sanyu and two "labor heroes" (*laodong yingxiong*) Niu Guocai and

[396] Governments in the Jin-Sui and Taihang areas also held such conferences. For the latter two, see Jin-Sui bianqu xingzheng gongshu, ed., *Jin-Sui bianqu di se jie qunying dahui zhongyao wenxianji* [Collection of Important Historical Documents from the Jin-Sui Border Region's Fourth Heroes Meeting] (Jinsui bianqu xingzheng gongshu, publication date unknown); Wang Yusheng, ed., *Taihang qunying: Taihang qu di yijie dahui shilu* [Taihang Heroes: A Record of the Taihang Area's First Meeting] (Beijing: Renminribao chubanshe, 2011).

Mi Yulan.[397] These children played an instrumental role in what I term the genesis of Maoist exemplarism. That is, the selection, ascension, and circulation of model individuals—from and among "the masses"—that contributed to the construction of a socialist moral order. Up until this period, the theme of resistance had served as the ideological glue that bound together vast swathes of the rural community. However, foreseeing that the looming Japanese defeat would problematize the longevity of this narrative, the Party began fashioning an everyday Communist code of conduct that would discipline society. Maoist exemplars, such as Wen, Niu, and Mi were central to this project.

Wen Sanyu

As early as the late 1930s, primary schools throughout the border region selected outstanding children to serve as a model for their peers. Writing in 1940, Liu Aifeng commented that schools "have trained a large group of student leaders, who to most children serve as a model leader. [These models] have spurred children to work on their own initiative and also to become more active."[398] *Liberation Daily* offered a similar sentiment in May 1943, remarking that "the children all want to be a little labor hero."[399] Following the war with Japan, one teacher wrote in *Northern Culture* of his school's selection of "child cadres." As teacher assistants, these children helped review lessons, visited the homes of truant children to encourage them to enroll,

[397] *Jin-Cha-Ji kangri genjudi* shiliao congshu bianshen weiyuanhui, ed., *Jin-Cha-Ji kangri genjudi, di san ce, da shiji* [Jin-Cha-Ji Anti-Japanese Base Area, Volume 3: Major Events] (Beijing: Zhonggong dangshi ziliao chubanshe, 1991), 3:266; Cang Yi, "Qunying shenghuo zaji" (Notes from the Heroes of the Masses Rally), February 10-23, 1945, *Jin-Cha-Ji ribao*, reprinted in *JCJRBTX*, 12:221.
[398] "Jizhong san nian lai de jiaoyu gongzuo" (Three Years of Education Work in Central Hebei), October 1, 1940, *Bianqu jiaoyu*, reprinted in *JCJJUFZZC*, 1:222.
[399] "Jin-Cha-Ji xiaoxuesheng nuli bangzhu jiating shengchan," *Jiefang ribao*, May 19, 1943, reprinted in, *JCJCDJY*, 1:395.

told stories, taught songs, enlisted peers in agricultural production, and organized games.[400] Schools also used the April fourth Children's Day festivities to display exhibitions that showcased students' "outstanding works of art and literature." Children also elected at these celebrations "model children" and "little labor heroes."[401] While these examples demonstrate a local practice of electing model and hero children, these instances lack the regional recognition and celebration that we witness unfolding with the 1943-44 mass rallies. The cases of Wen, Niu, and Mi, then, provide a clear example of how the border region government promoted the characteristics and values it desired for all children to emulate.

Only eleven years old in 1943, Wen became famous throughout Communist-held territories for protecting army secrets under extreme duress. According to an *Education Front* article, Wen Sanyu was a native of Wuqiang county. He was the middle child of five, with two older brothers and two young siblings, a brother and sister. His father was a primary school teacher. His eldest brother was the head of general local militia affairs. The family owned a plot of land between ten and twenty *mu* in size.[402] The article does not state the year of Wen's birth, but notes that he was thirteen at the time of publication on April 1, 1945. The event for which Wen became famous occurred on the twenty-third day of the first month of the lunar calendar in the year 1943. Given the information provided, this would have made Wen eleven years old.

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[400] Wu Yuntian, "Jin-Cha-Ji bianqu xiaoxue jiaoyu jianying" (A Sketch of Jin-Cha-Ji Border Region Primary School Education), *Beifang wenhua*, June 1946, reprinted in *JCJCDJY*, 1:180.

[401] For examples of how the border region government issued instructions concerning the facilitation of Children's Day celebrations, see: "Guanyu jinian 'si si' ertongjie de zhishi" (Instructions Concerning the Celebration of 'April Fourth' Children's Day), March 14, 1942, reprinted in *JCJCDJY*, 1:436-438; "Jinian ertongjie bianweihui haozhao ge jie aihu ertong" (To Commemorate Children's Day, Border Region Committee Calls on All Walks of Life to Love and Protect Children), *Jiefangjun ribao*, April 3, 1943, reprinted in *JCJCDJY*, 1:451-452; "Bianweihui bianqu qinglianhui guanyu jinian jinnian 'si si' ertongjie de zhishi" (Border Region Committee and the Youth Association Instructions Concerning This Year's April Fourth Commemoration of Children's Day), March 4, 1946, reprinted in *JCJCDJY*, 2:162-164; "Jin-Cha-Ji bianwei, qinglian guanyu 'si si' ertongjie gongzuo zhishi" (Jin-Cha-Ji Border Region Committee and the Youth Association Instructions Concerning April Fourth Children's Festival Work), March 28, 1947, reprinted in *JCJCDJY*, 1:189-191.

[402] This is approximately 1.5 to 3.2 acres.

On the morning of the event, the village militia awoke early to fetch water. Unaware that the enemy had surrounded the area, these soldiers were spotted by Japanese. With a small head start, the men ran back into the village and took refuge in a tunnel, the entrance for which was in Wen's courtyard. When enemy soldiers arrived at Wen's home, they first questioned his mother. When she claimed to know nothing of the militia or their bunker, the enemy sliced her face with a bayonet, after which the woman collapsed to the ground and remained motionless. The soldiers then took hold of Wen and dragged him to the courtyard. With Wen's younger siblings watching helplessly from inside the house, the soldiers beat and kicked the boy, demanding he disclose the bunker's location. Upset that Wen claimed ignorance, the troops ratcheted up their pressure, stabbing him in both arms and pointing their guns in his face. At some moment during this interrogation, one enemy soldier spotted an article of Eighth Route Army clothing. This soldier confronted Wen, who continued to deny the militia's presence. At this, the soldier struck Wen's head with the butt of his gun. With Wen knocked to the ground writhing in pain, the soldiers finally departed.

As the enemies left Wen's courtyard, the article reports, they encountered a middle-aged man named Wu Quanjing. Under the threat of violence, Wu immediately capitulated, divulging to the Japanese that the bunker's entrance indeed was located near the entrance to Wen's home. The soldiers hurriedly returned to the boy's home and quickly uncovered the tunnel's entrance. Intending to smoke out the absconding communist troops, one Japanese soldier began preparing a fire while another charged into the house and lugged Wen back outside. "Make him watch us execute them. Then we'll kill him," one of the soldiers sneered. Just as the Japanese approached the tunnel's entrance, the communist troops suddenly emerged and shot at the invaders. The ensuing scuffle quickly advanced to the streets, where reserve Japanese soldiers joined in.

Greater in number, they and the puppet forces easily subdued the Chinese, killing several local villagers and taking others prisoner. Furious at what had transpired, the Japanese returned to Wen's house looking to exact retribution. *Education Front* transcribed Wen's account of what ensued. Due to the rarity of children's own voices in the archive, I have included his testimony in full:

> Amidst the fighting, many members of the militia were sacrificed. Many devils also died. One devil and two traitors pulled me into another house's courtyard. At first, they made me stretch out my arm in order to cut off my hand. Just as they swung the blade, though, I withdrew my arm and they failed to cut it off. Then they made me kneel down. A traitor took his bayonet and stabbed right through my hat. Knowing they wanted to cut off my head, I wrapped my arms around my head and began sobbing. I was unable to take my eyes off the bayonet's blade. Then I heard the traitor ask, "What is that there in the window?" In the moment I took my eyes off the bayonet to glimpse at the window, I saw in my peripheral vision the blade dart toward my head. Just in time, I leaned to the side and dodged it. I then ran into the house, but the traitors followed me. They pinned me to the ground and used their bayonet to slice at my back. Though the blade ran along my spine, because my clothing was thick they failed to cut through my shirt and into my skin. The traitor then stood over me, foot on my stomach. I frantically clutched at my head and cried out. The traitor then swung his blade toward my head. This time he made contact. I remember hearing a loud 'crack,' and then feeling my entire body go cold. I fell unconscious.
>
> When I came to, I saw my fingers lying on the floor. My head and body were covered in blood. Writhing in pain, and trembling uncontrollably, I left the house and began looking for my mother….[403]

While both Wen and his mother escaped the altercation with their lives, the boy's father and eldest brother were taken prisoner. They would both die a year later in a Japanese-owned mining pit. The border region government celebrated Wen—alongside other local heroes—for his commitment to protecting army secrets. For demonstration of his unyielding moral courage, the government bestowed upon Wen the title of "first model of integrity" (*qijie mofan di yi ming*). Alongside other "first place" models and heroes, Wen was also awarded a cow.[404]

[403] Yu Hui, "Ertong qijie mofan Wen Sanyu" (Child Model of Integrity Wen Sanyu), January 21, 1945, reprinted in *JCJRBTX*, 12:112-114.
[404] Ibid.

In conjunction with other forms of media that circulated Wen's story, this testimony challenges the notion that such articles were merely fictitious dramatizations. First is a photo of Wen Sanyu standing alongside Niu Guocai and, presumably, Mi Yulan, who we will turn to below.

Image 5.1. From right, Wen Sanyu, Niu Guocai, and either Mi Yulan or Wang Qiufen.[405] The text briefly recounts Wen's resistance as a means of safeguarding the local militia. From a "Little Heroes" exhibition located in Hebei Provincial Museum, Shijiazhuang, PRC. Summer 2016. Photo by the author.

[405] This picture located at the Jin-Cha-Ji Border Region Revolutionary Memorial Hall located in Fuping county, Chengnan village, identifies the girl as Zhang Yufen. I believe this caption is incorrect. First, all three of these figures have pinned to their clothing badges identifying them as honorees of the rally. That the female has a badge reduces the likelihood that she is a random passerby that just happened to appear in this photo. Second, none of the heroes or models profiled by *Jin-Cha-Ji Daily* were named Zhang Yufen. Third, only three model/hero children were celebrated at this event. The third—and only other—child to be profiled by *Jin-Cha-Ji Daily* was Mi Yulan. In the headline for these profiles, Mi, Niu, and Wen are explicitly categorized as "children" (*ertong*). The only other hero who came close in age to Mi was Wang Qiufen, who *Jin-Cha-Ji Daily* listed as sixteen. Congruent with the age categories we visited in the introduction, *Jin-Cha-Ji Daily* refers to Wang as a "woman" (*nü*). Lastly, while the surname in the Memorial Hall's caption (i.e. Zhang) fits neither Mi nor Wang, the given name Yufen has taken one character from each Mi and Wang's name; "yu" from Mi and "fen" from Wang. The individual in the photo, I conclude, is therefore either Mi Yulan or Wang Qiufen. The likeness provided alongside Wang's *Jini-Cha-Ji* profile appears more similar. For Wang's profile, see Han Xue, "Quyang shiliu sui de nü laodong yingxiong Wang Qiufen" (Quyang Sixteen-year-old Woman Labor Hero, Wang Qiufen), January 20, 1945, *Jin-Cha-Ji ribao*.

This photo was likely taken at the First Border Region Heroes of the Masses Rally, held in Fuping county from February 10 to 14, 1944. On the left breast of each child is a circular badge, which the government awarded to them for their respective good deeds. We see Wen standing to the far right, his arm warmly embraces Niu Guocai. From the hand in view, we see missing are parts of his index and middle fingers. Presumably, his left hand is missing another three fingers.

Second are the various primary school textbooks that extolled Wen's commitment to secret keeping. This includes the epigraph that opened this chapter. In these cases, the textbooks have privileged Wen's tenacious adherence to the Five Don'ts oath, and hence his perceived loyalty to the Party and nation. For the historian, however, the textbook authors have egregiously omitted Wen's childlike features, which Yu Hui so appropriately included in his original *Jin-Cha-Ji Daily* profile. Nowhere in the poem or schoolbook do we get a sense of the palpable fear Wen felt as powerful adult men towered over his helpless body delivering violent blows with their feet, fists, and the butts of their rifles. In Yu's article, for example, Wen remarked how, knowing the soldiers sought to "cut off [his] head," he "wrapped [his] arms around [his] head and began sobbing." The schoolbooks equally disregard Wen attempts to run and hide, going so far as to seek refuge in a neighbor's home. Wen's own version of the encounter mitigates the degree to which he willingly endured the enemy's violence. Indeed, Wen detailed how it was only after he was knocked unconscious that the soldiers severed his fingers. Lastly, upon awakening the first thing Wen did was to seek out his mother.

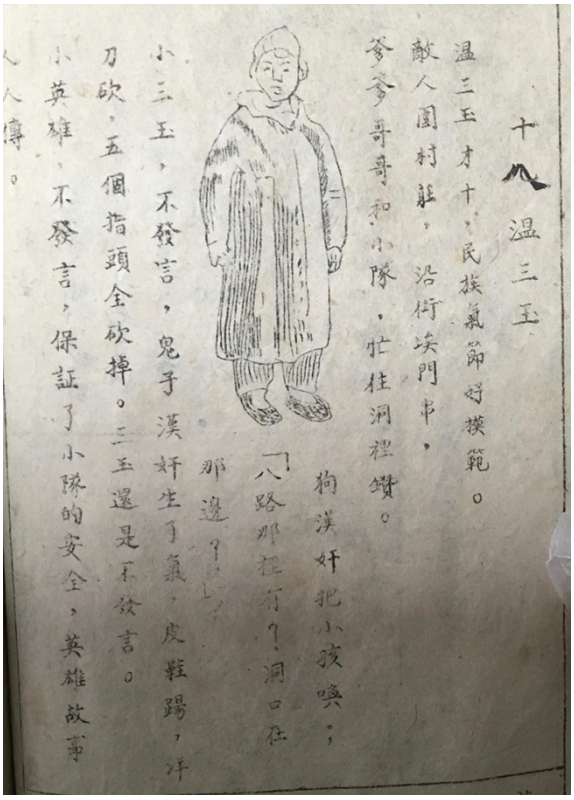

Image 5.2. Lesson 18 of this lower primary school language arts textbook displays a likeness of Wen Sanyu.[406] From the private library of textbook collector Li Baotian, who lives in Tianjin, PRC. Spring 2018. Photo by the author.

That most iterations of Wen Sanyu's story—from wartime textbooks to contemporary museum exhibitions—neglect feelings so central to children's experience of war—fear, powerlessness, and the deep desire for maternal comfort—suggest three things. First, congruent with our other findings so far, the ideal communist child—as most border region media tried in earnest to depict—was bereft of inherently human emotions. Second, that because Yu Hui's reporting of Wen Sanyu stands in stark contrast to other representations of children, Yu's article is most likely an authentic representation of the reality and everyday lived experience of children

[406] "Lesson 18: Wen Sanyu," *Guoyu keben: chuji xiaoxue shiyong, di san ce* (Jin-Cha-Ji Border Region Administrative Council Education Publishing), 26. This textbook belongs to the personal collection of Li Baotian, a resident and philanthropist of Tianjin city. I visited Li in March 2018. He was kind enough to allow me to photograph this and a few other select pages of his collection. I do not have a specific date of publication for this textbook, but it is likely 1946 or 1947. Further references to Li Baotian's collection below will be abbreviated as LBTPC.

in rural north China during this period. Finally, that such a representation managed to circumvent Party censorship suggests that similar evasions may have also prevailed. It is therefore irresponsible to consider these materials nothing more than Party propaganda. Instead, historians must deal with these sources in a sensitive and responsible manner so as to glean from them—as much as possible—children's voices.

Niu Guocai

A second child honored at the February 1944 rally was the "labor hero" (*laodong yingxiong*) Niu Guocai. A native of Xingtang county, Niu became active, *Jin-Cha-Ji Daily* reports, in local village affairs as early as 1940, when he was just ten years old. He helped impoverished children reclaim wasteland, which they used to grow millet. With the proceeds from their first harvest, Niu purchased three writing slates, five boxes of chalk, and four pencils, all of which he donated to his classmates. Niu was also active in mobilizing children to enroll in school. In 1941, Niu became the local Children's League Director (*tuanzhang*). Over three years of Children's Day League inspections, Niu's division placed first twice and third once. These accolades helped Niu get elected as the local village League representative. Prior to the construction of Japanese blockhouses, Niu organized and led a child drama troupe to perform in approximately sixteen villages. In 1942, following the construction of three blockhouses, which surrounded the boy's village, Niu accompanied his father in spreading propaganda and the Five Don'ts movement to the surrounding area.

In 1944, Niu's industriousness helped his village to win the honor of "county-wide model village for productive children." Niu worked as an "odd-job man" for the local government, during which he learned over one hundred Chinese characters. He also worked as an attendant for the county's first "Heroes and Models Conference." Inspired by another adult labor hero,

Niu's contributions to the village became even more prolific. In addition to helping his mother with housework, Niu organized all sixty of the village's children into three work teams to carry out local production. Short in stature (but not in courage), these children were more easily able to hide throughout the grain fields than their adult counterparts. Niu thus led his peers in harvesting fields in close proximity to the Japanese blockhouses. In all, the children harvested 152 *mu* of millet, 146 *mu* of beans, 12.5 *mu* of corn, and picked 60 *dan* (3,000 kg) of dates.[407] During the following wheat-planting season, Niu and his crew planted 25 *mu* of grain, spread 1,000 *dan* of fertilizer (50,000 kg), hoed the fields, and planted 25 *mu* of grain. When sparrows and rats arrived to eat the children's budding harvest, Niu led his work teams to exterminate the pests. He cleverly used sesame candy to lure and trap 730 rats in a large vat.

In addition to being a labor hero, Niu helped bury landmines and kept secrets from Japanese troops. On at least one occasion, Japanese troops abducted Niu while he was out collecting firewood. Niu not only kept silent despite a thorough beating, but also managed to escape and therefore avoid detention. At the time of publication, Niu was a Brigade Captain of the local Children League's division. He continued leading the child drama troupe and organized the League to support and provide relief to the army and their families.[408]

Mi Yulan

Mi Yulan was the third child honored at the Jin-Cha-Ji Heroes of the Masses rally. Aged fifteen in 1945, Mi lived at home in Mancheng county with both parents, an older brother, sister-in-law, niece, and nephew. According to the *Jin-Cha-Ji Daily*, the family as a whole owned only

[407] One Chinese *dan* is equivalent to 50 kilograms.
[408] Li Kuanhu, "Xingtang ertong laodong yingxiong Niu Guocai" (Xingtang Child Labor Hero, Niu Guocai), March 29, 1945, *Jin-Cha-Ji ribao*, reprinted in *JCJRBTX*, 12:349-350.

twelve *mu* of low-yielding farmland, which made it difficult for the family to meet even basic levels of self-subsistence.

Unlike Wen and Niu, both of whom the government commended for their masculine labor and bold confrontations with enemy soldiers, Mi was honored almost entirely for work she had done within the private domestic sphere. *Jin-Cha-Ji Daily* highlights Mi's relationship with her brother, for example, who in 1940 the Japanese forcibly conscripted into their local puppet army. Disgraced by her brother's service, Mi took every opportunity "to convince [him] to have a change of heart" and "to persuade him to bring his gun to fight for the Eighth Route Army." Yet because he had "received slave education and picked up bad habits from army riffraff," Mi's brother refused to abandon his post.

The situation changed in 1944, when ERA troops forced the Japanese army's withdrawal from the area. During these attacks, Communist troops captured Mi's brother and enrolled him in re-education classes. Convinced that he was no longer a threat, the Communist army released him and allowed him to return home. Despite this re-education, however, the elder brother refused to participate in government-affiliated events. While attending a "counter-espionage struggle rally" (*fantewu douzheng dahui*), Mi learned, the *Daily* tells us, rhetorical strategies to alleviate her brother's suspicion of and disregard for the government. Using these tactics, Mi "regularly educated [her brother], inculcating in him anti-Japanese thinking." This eventually led to him "turning over a new leaf," and participating actively in border region work.

Similarly, Mi helped to reform the thinking of other family members, such as her mother, father, and sister-in-law. Mi's mother, for example, was "particularly superstitious," spending much of her time with secret societies, burning incense, and engaged in prayer. Over time, Mi slowly convinced her mother of the "irrationality of superstition," after which she renounced her

beliefs. As with Mi's mother, *Jin-Cha-Ji Daily* described Mi's father as "backwards" in thought and habit. He disapproved, for instance, of his daughter's school attendance and participation in agricultural production. Following her brother's conscription, however, the family was in desperate need of laborers. Mi volunteered to work alongside her father, and after sometime he came to realize that girls, too, could be efficient laborers. The notion that women should not labor was unusually ingrained in Mi's sister-in-law, who "took pleasure in wearing beautiful clothing, yet disparaged the nature of agricultural work." Mi thoughtfully explained to her sister-in-law that lacking nice clothes was not a matter of life or death, whereas a scarcity of food was. This rationale reportedly "moved" Mi's sister-in-law, whose thinking immediately transformed. Mi's sister-in-law, from that moment forward, actively contributed in the family's work team.

Jin-Cha-Ji Daily also reported that Mi was active in the local community. More specifically, she worked extensively on bringing into the Party's orbit—economic and ideological—other village women. One such effort involved establishing a work team, which spun thread and made cloth. Despite the protestations of older women, which believed girls and young ladies should not labor, the team's efforts gradually won the elderly women's approval. Additionally, Mi started an "afternoon school" (*wuxiao*), where she enrolled local villagers—mostly women—to learn basic literacy and arithmetic. The *Daily*'s profile detailed that Mi was the first to arrive at school and the last to depart. She reportedly assisted the teacher with attendance and personally visited the homes of missing students to inquire into their absence. Aside from work, Mi urged local women to conform to the Party's modern standards of bodily practice and hygiene. For example, she helped lead a campaign to convince local girls and women to cut their hair. Mi began by discussing this issue first with each household's women. She then encouraged the wives of male cadres to lead by example. As with the work team, many

older women initially refused, but were gradually persuaded by Mi's example. Finally, the young girl successfully urged the village's most notorious loafers—a group of four women and their thirteen children, who allegedly stole crops and other food from villagers—to engage in local production. Mi helped them both to organize a work team and to enroll in local literacy classes.[409]

Wen, Niu, Mi and Gender

Wen, Niu, and Mi share many similarities. Each of the children demonstrated political and ideological rectitude congruent with that of the Party. Moreover, through their various contributions to society, they have suggested their internalization of border region education. More striking, however, are the children's differences.

Gender played a central role in structuring Wen, Niu, and Mi's experiences. The nature of their contributions, for example, display a clear gendered division of labor. While Wen's encounter with the enemy was involuntary, textbooks framed his involvement as conscious resistance. By these accounts, Wen willfully endured harassment, torture, and mutilation as a means to safeguard the military. Like Wen, Niu demonstrated a tenacious determination to realize central political tasks. In addition to his Stakhanovite contributions to agricultural production, Niu reclaimed wasteland, enrolled his peers in school, and raised money for their school supplies. He was active in the local Children's League, spread propaganda in neighboring villages, organized and led drama troupes, exterminated harmful pests, and buried land mines. Despite great risk, he farmed land and harvested crops in close proximity to enemy camps.

[409] Chen Xi, "Mancheng ertong laodong yingxiong Mi Yulan" (Mancheng Child Labor Hero, Mi Yulan), January 31, 1945, *Jin-Cha-Ji ribao*, reprinted in *JCJRBTX*, 12:194-196.

Lastly, Niu himself endured the verbal and physical abuse of enemy soldiers. By not divulging sensitive information, he, too, exhibited an unwavering loyalty to the Five Don'ts oath.

On the other hand, Mi's resume is bereft of such masculine accomplishments. Instead, whereas Wen and Niu acted autonomously on or in public spaces, much of Mi's laudable actions center on personal relationships within the private and domestic confines of her home. Within this space, Mi's value is inextricably linked to her capacities of ideological suasion. For each of the relationships *Jin-Cha-Ji Daily* showcases, Mi effectively persuaded a member of her family to abandon thinking that the Party deemed harmful to society. She convinced her brother to relinquish the "slave education" that made him suspicious of the Party and instead embrace the border region government. She eradicated her parents' "backwards" logic, which supported superstition and disparaged the worth of female labor. Similarly, Mi swayed her sister-in-law to desert her preoccupation with materiality and accept instead the importance of economic production.

Even outside the home, Mi's contributions were contingent on her ability to integrate into society individuals that were hostile or antagonistic to Party policy. We saw, for example, how Mi established a women's work team that spun thread and made cloth. Not only is this form of work gendered female, but took place within the confines of indoor, domestic spaces. In contrast to male workers, who attended supplemental classes at village "night schools" (*yexiao*), Mi started an "afternoon school." She did so likely to avoid the need for her target audience—girls and women—to travel after dusk. Lastly, Mi worked tirelessly to convince local women to adhere to the government's policy concerning hair length. In each of these cases, *Jin-Cha-Ji Daily* reported, Mi had to challenge older women and their "backwards" thinking. And in each

instance, the *Daily* reported, she won. By doing so, Mi, both in her personal and less familiar relationships, nurtured in others an obedience to state prerogatives.

Side-by-side, these cases demonstrate a clear male-female dichotomy. Wen and Niu, for example, participated in activities clearly gendered masculine. These included war, agricultural labor, and safeguarding state secrets. In each of these capacities, the boys acted with great personal autonomy. *Jin-Cha-Ji Daily* and textbook accounts frame these two as the central hero, who valiantly confronts a specific task, often risking life and limb to complete that task. In contrast, Mi's labor contributions were largely feminine: she wove thread and made cloth. When did she participate in agricultural labor, it was either alongside her father or with a large group of women. Mi therefore lacks the same degree of freedom and autonomy that Wen and Niu enjoyed. Rather than defiantly confront hostile enemies, Mi effected change within her community gradually and with care. Compared with Wen and Niu, then, a constellation of local relationships was much more central to Mi's exemplarism. Lastly, both Wen Sanyu and Niu Guocai's profiles were reprinted in full in *Education Front*. As we saw in chapter two, *Education Front* was the region's premier pedagogical journal, from which primary school teachers collected teaching materials.[410] Likewise, both Wen and Niu's stories appeared in primary school textbooks, whereas Mi's did not.[411] The fact that Wen and Niu circulated throughout the public

[410] Yu Hui, "Ertong qijie mofan Wen Sanyu" (Child Model of Integrity, Wen Sanyu), April 1, 1945, *Jiaoyu zhendi*, reprinted in *JCJCDJY*, 1:470-472; Li Kuanhu, "Xingtang ertong laodong yingxiong Niu Guocai" (Xingtang Child Labor Hero, Niu Guocai), *Jiaoyu zhendi*, April 1, 1945, reprinted in *JCJCDJY*, 1:468-469.

[411] One primary school textbook devoted two lessons to Niu Guocai, whereas Wen had only one. See "Lesson 39: Niu Guocai, Part One" and "Lesson 40: Niu Guocai, Part Two," *Guoyu keben: chuji xiaoxue shiyong, di er ce* (Jin-Cha-Ji Border Region Administrative Council Education Publishing), LBTPC. I do not have a specific date of publication, but it is likely 1947 or 1947. As for Mi's story, if it was reprinted, it is not among the small sample of textbooks that has survived and is available to foreign researchers. Liu Songtao wrote about teachers using Wen and Niu's examples in the classroom. Liu does not mention Mi. See Liu Songtao, "Laiyuan jiefanghou de Nanguan xiaoxue—yi ge wei xiaoxue de gaizao" (The Reformation of a Puppet Primary School in Post-Liberation Laiyuan County, Nanguan Village), *Jin-Cha-Ji ribao*, October 20, 1945, reprinted in *JCJCDJY*, 1:531-537.

sphere, whereas Mi did not, may be one reason why local Chinese museums have been unable to accurately identify the third child in image 5.1.

Miscreants

Among those honored at the Second Border Region Heroes of the Masses Rally were model teachers (*mofan jiaoshi*). These were exceptional individuals that had demonstrated a remarkable implementation of government education policy in their villages. As with the heroes and models, *Jin-Cha-Ji Daily* and other publications profiled and circulated these teachers' personal backgrounds, along with what specifically made them a model teacher. Because model teachers were directly affiliated with the institution of education, pedagogical journals invariably re-printed these stories. Border region instructors were therefore more likely to read in these journals accounts of model teachers than labor heroes or model workers. Moreover, these periodicals printed stories not just of region-level model teachers, but also of village- and county-level model teachers.[412] Secondary periodicals, therefore, such as *Education Front*, *East Hebei Education* (*Jidong jiaoyu*), and *Central Hebei Guide* are incredibly rich sources for the lived experience at the grassroots level.

While model teachers themselves are deserving of their own study, here I am interested only in the children that appear in these instructors' profiles. Different from the martyrs and models that took center stage, miscreant children appear only along the historical record's periphery. By and large, these are children that educators, journalists, and officials did not intend to showcase. On the contrary, reporters, teachers, and cadres included miscreants in their papers

[412] Large newspapers such as *Jin-Cha-Ji Daily* tended to print only regional heroes and models, whereas smaller publications, or those targeting a particular audience (e.g. government officials, teachers, workers, youth, etc.) included more grassroots stories and events.

and work reports as a means of demonstrating the successes and failures of the region's education system. Miscreants become increasingly conspicuous in the primary sources following the end of the War of Resistance in September 1945. As we saw in chapter two, at this point border region territory expanded quickly to encompass large swathes of formerly Japanese-occupied territory. As the region's bureaucracy encountered a population that had been under enemy rule for—in some cases—more than a decade, it sought techniques for reforming and re-educating a sometimes recalcitrant population. In particular, the Jin-Cha-Ji Department of Education required a pedagogical toolbox that allowed it to deal effectively with problem children. The wide circulation of how model teachers reformed and rehabilitated miscreant children provided such examples.

Children who Reformed

Education Front commended teachers such as Zhang Zhiping, who taught her students "how to use democracy." Zhang did this by teaching the children to hold "life discussion meetings," where students criticized each other's behavior and academic performance. While students were reportedly reluctant to participate, with "patience and consistent encouragement over time they learned to speak up." One noteworthy meeting honed in on a child named Ming Shu, who *Education Front* described as a particularly petulant child: "inattentive and hotheaded, he derived pleasure from beating and cursing others in class and bullying girls after school." Once the students became accustomed to these "life discussion meetings," they used this medium to criticize Ming, whom they ridiculed as a "bad egg" (*huaidan*). After just one meeting,

Education Front tells us, Ming "transformed completely, and learned how to work hard and respect others."[413]

Students throughout the region used meetings akin to adult struggle sessions to discipline their peers. Another case involved a twelve-year old girl named Gao Guixiang, who resided in the formerly occupied county of Laiyuan. Abandoned by her mother and father, the latter who had served in the puppet army, twelve-year-old Gao lived with grandmother. Gao's classmates constantly berated the girl for regularly wearing Japanese-gifted clothing, such as a kimono and high-heeled shoes, to school. Saddened by the incessant snickering of her classmates, Gao one day broke down in tears. In response, the teacher asked Gao why it was that she enjoyed wearing "the enemy's clothing." To which, Gao responded "Because the Japanese liked it." At this, *Jin-Cha-Ji Daily* tells us, the class scoffed. "The students all turned toward Gao and scraped a finger across their cheeks," signifying Gao's shamefulness. Incredulous that her classmates could be so hypocritical, Gao shouted through tears: "And none of you have a picture or pencil that the devil's gave you?!?" One student immediately stood and responded that he had "ripped those pictures to shreds long ago." A second claimed to have burnt his Japanese-authored textbooks. A third joined the previous stating that he had long burned the shoes the enemy had gifted him. At that, the *Daily* described, the entire classroom erupted into pandemonium: "several students reached frantically into their desks and pulled out pictures and photographs the enemy had given them. Collectively, they shredded the memorabilia into tiny pieces. Many more students began pointing at their classmates, identifying those that still hoarded similar items at home. The accused immediately admitted their guilt and subsequently volunteered to burn these items at the soonest opportunity." The article concludes by telling us that Gao never again wore her kimono

[413] "Lingqiu mofan jiaoshi Zhang Zhiping" (Lingqiu Model Teacher Zhang Zhiping), *Jiaoyu zhendi*, August 1944, reprinted in *JCJCDJY*, 1:497.

to school. Likewise, a few students that the reporter had spotted surreptitiously carrying with them Japanese army hats were never seen doing so again.[414]

A third case involves thirteen-year-old Liu Xiangrong. *Northern Culture* tell us that this young boy, "unafraid of the cold or of wolves, ran about throughout the night" and regularly got into mischief. Liu, for example, would hide in large storage jars, waiting for an unexpecting neighbor to open the lid just so he could jump out and scare them. Villagers reported that Liu would wait in these containers for one or two days, feeding on the contents—typically yams—whenever he got hungry. Liu also often snuck into neighbors' homes to steal rice, tofu, and money. When the boy's family called on him to chop firewood, Liu would use the stolen money to hire another child to collect it for him. Liu's father once lamented to the local primary school teacher, Zang Quan, that he was unable to effectively discipline the boy. "I have no recourse with this… *thing*," the elder Liu remarked. "If he were to die in the street, even the wolves would not eat him…. I've reported him to the government countless times hoping they'd relieve me of this burden and just kill him, but they won't do anything!" To find out more about the boy, Teacher Zang visited Liu's neighbors. The instructor discovered that Liu's mother had died young. The destitute family had reportedly "lost" three children; all due to negligence.[415] The community largely regarded Liu's father as a "rash idiot" (*lengtouqing*), describing him as irascible, foul-mouthed, and quick to beat his children. When the senior Liu's temper flared, neighbors declared, the children dared not return home. Locals also reported that the father often failed to feed his children. Hunger, therefore, likely prompted the child's habitual theft, Zang

[414] Liu Songtao, "Laiyuan jiefanghou de Nanguan xiaoxue—yi ge wei xiaoxue de gaizao" (The Reformation of a Puppet Primary School in Post-Liberation Laiyuan County, Nanguan Village), *Jin-Cha-Ji ribao*, October 20, 1945, reprinted in *JCJCDJY*, 1:535.
[415] The article uses the word *diu*, literally "lost," here. Without more information, it is unclear if these children died or their whereabouts were unknown.

concluded. On top of this, the village children often bullied Liu. All of this had contributed, the article concludes, "to Liu's fearlessness of neither heaven nor hell."[416] Over time, Teacher Zang persuaded Liu to attend school. By surrounding the boy with model students, Zang reportedly created a welcoming and positive environment. Whenever Liu made progress, the teacher praised the child in front of the other students. Over time, *Northern Culture* concludes, Liu reformed and became a good student.

Children who did not reform

Another case involving children from Laiyuan county involves a boy named Qi Kaiyin. One afternoon during instruction, Teacher Dong Rong was explaining to the children why the border region's Department of Education had banned corporeal punishment; a practice widely used by the Japanese and puppet governments. Following his lecture, a student raised his hand to ask: "Teacher, you say hitting people is bad. Well, there is a student among us who often beats others."

"And who is that?" Dong responded. Embarrassed that he had perhaps said too much, *Jin-Cha-Ji Daily* reported, the student turned his eyes to his desk and remained silent. Speaking to the whole class, the teacher said "A new child [*xin ertong*] is honest and forthcoming. If there is anything that he or she is holding back, dare to speak it."

Following a long silence, one student spoke up: "It is Qi Kaiyin that hits others."

"How many of you has he hit?" Dong queried. Six to seven students stood up. Dong prompted each to tell their story.

[416] Wu Yuntian, "Jin-Cha-Ji bianqu xiaoxue jiaoyu jianying" (A Sketch of Jin-Cha-Ji Border Region Primary School Education), *Beifang wenhua*, June 1946, reprinted in *JCJCDJY*, 1:180.

"He wanted a picture of mine," one student commented. "When I didn't give it to him, he hit me!"

"Once, when I didn't give him my food, he struck me with a wooden board!" exclaimed another.

"Not only does he beat others," called a third, "but he curses at us, too! He has a filthy mouth!"

A fourth cried out: "He demanded I exchange books with him. When I refused, he dragged me to where no one could hear me cry for help and he pummeled me."

"But at school," Teacher Dong retorted, "Qi Kaiyin follows the rules. What does he use to beat you all?"

Indignant, another student who had yet to speak asserted: "Teacher, if you don't believe us, go ahead and search him right now! He has a paddle on him!" Sure enough, just as Dong and some students began searching Qi, a paddle fell out of one of his pant legs. At that, Qi began to cry and the entire class erupted in rage.

Afraid that amongst all the commotion the teacher would not hear them, students jumped up on their chairs and shouted for the teacher to take immediate action, clamoring for Dong to punish the boy. In an instant, the *Daily* writes, the classroom had taken on the familiar features a struggle session (*douzhenghui*). Together, the students demanded the right to speak (*fayan*). When the teacher asked which students Qi Kaiyin had bullied, forty to fifty of the students raised their hands. One-by-one, Dong invited these students to denounce (*kongsu*) Qi. From their accusations, Dong learned that Qi had been for the enemy a "model student." During Japanese occupation, Qi had curried favor with enemy soldiers. For instance, when Qi passed by their watchtowers on his way to school, the troops would pat his head, joke around with him, and gift

him with school supplies. Over time, Qi had allegedly accumulated over a hundred pencils and dozens of notebooks. And because the enemy was happy to see and play with Qi, the teachers never dared to chastise him for his behavior. Qi could bully and hit whomever he pleased.[417] While it is unclear whether or how the school reprimand Qi, *Jin-Cha-Ji Daily* does state that Qi withdrew from school shortly after the aforementioned events.

Another student named Zhang Xi'er, who at sixteen years old was a youth by the border region's standards, caused considerable trouble for the children. According to a first grader, Zheng, like Qi, often beat his younger classmates. He also cheated younger children out of various material goods and then gifted these items to "older female classmates." Having recently completed the struggle session targeting Qi Kaiyin, Teacher Dong used the same methods to uncover Zheng's "evildoings" (*lieji*). At this meeting, over twenty students stood and spoke against Zheng. Dong discovered that like Qi, Zheng had ingratiated himself with the local puppet army, which included a high-ranking military officer. According to *Jin-Cha-Ji Daily*, students alleged that Zheng had spent considerable time at the army barracks. During this time, Zheng smoke, drank, and "fooled around" (*luangao*) with prostitutes. As a result, the youth contracted "a horrible case of syphilis, which covered him from head to toe." Furthermore, Zheng mistreated his compatriots. He assisted the puppet army in capturing and imprisoning border region officials and army personnel. He also beat and cursed Chinese workers. Troubled that Zheng might infect other students, local educators and officials met to discuss how best to handle the problem. Before the school had reached a decision, however, Zheng, like Qi Kaiyin, withdrew from school.[418]

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[417] Liu Songtao, "Laiyuan jiefanghou de Nanguan xiaoxue—yi ge wei xiaoxue de gaizao" (The Reformation of a Puppet Primary School in Post-Liberation Laiyuan County, Nanguan Village), *Jin-Cha-Ji ribao*, October 20, 1945, reprinted in *JCJCDJY*, 1:533-534.
[418] Ibid., 1:535.

The composite image that emerges from a comparison of these miscreants is that of a child who is lazy, undisciplined, and disobedient. These children were social outcasts that lacked proper adult supervision. Liu and Gao's mothers were both dead; the fathers a drunk and traitor, respectively. Gao, Qi, and Zheng all had frequent, warm relationships with the Japanese during Laiyuan's period of occupation. These three children therefore lacked national integrity. Ming Shu's indifference to manual labor portrays him as a failed contributor to local production.

Despite these egregious failings, however, these children, too, serve an important function in border region discourse. With the exception of Qi Kaiyin and Zheng Xi'er, they demonstrate the transformative power of state-sponsored education. Each of these children was "completely transformed" through a trial of criticism and re-education. Ming Shu and Gao Guixiang were both subjected to some form of group struggle session or "meeting," at which their teacher and classmates marked as social deviants and consequently criticized them. The narrative of an apparent fall from grace, whereby the children were subjected the pernicious influence of enemy "slave education," and subsequent re-education coincides with late imperial notions of children as imperfect yet improvable through education.

Only in the case of Qi Kaiyin and Zheng Xi'er, both arguably young collaborators, do we see the inability of border region education to correct these imperfections. Qi and Zheng, however do serve a didactic purpose. Like their peers, they delineated the appropriate behaviors, norms, and values of the new society. At the same time, they served as a warning to nonconformists: transform or risk marginalization. More than demonstrating the state's unwillingness to reform these children, however, I believe we see in these two cases the limits of the state's reach. That is, border region education could not save all rural children.

Conclusion

The use of children as didactic models was not a Communist innovation, but a continuation of Confucian pedagogy. As Limin Bai has shown, the Neo-Confucian canon has a long history of deploying didactic tales of ancient sages and virtuous paragons to disseminate and inculcate particular values.[419] The children depicted in these books are intellectually gifted, learn at a rapid pace, and easily discern between right and wrong. Profiling twenty model children from the 1542 and 1669 editions of *Stories for Daily Learning*, for example, Limin Bai has found the following attributes: mastering of the classics, the ability to compose poetry and prose, wisdom in replying to queries; superb memory, literacy at an exceptionally young age (e.g. seven months), curiosity concerning philosophical questions, demonstrating wisdom while saving life, intending to carry out lofty ambitions learned through reading history, and passing the civil service examination at a young age (e.g. seven years old).[420]

We can see from this list that Neo-Confucian elites displayed a clear prejudice toward intellectual precocity and adherence to Confucian principles. Two prominent examples are Wen Yanbo and Sima Guang. History remembers Wen Yanbo as a particularly resourceful child. One afternoon while playing with other children, Wen dropped the group's ball down into a deep hole. While the group bemoaned the premature end to their playtime, Wen managed to retrieve the ball by filling the hole with water, causing the ball to rise to ground level. Sima Guang, the story books tell us, was equally intelligent. As this story goes, Sima Guang came across a group of children who had been playing near an enormous porcelain cistern filled to the brim with water. One child had climbed onto the edge, fallen into the water, and—unable to swim—was drowning as Sima Guang approached. Quick on his feet, Sima Guang grabbed a nearby stone

[419] Bai, *Shaping the Ideal Child*, 95.
[420] Ibid., 97.

and smashed a giant hole into the side of the container, through which water quickly flowed, along with the mischievous child.[421]

In addition to thinking fast on their feet, model children exhibited loyalty and reverence to their parents. The *Classic of Filial Piety* stated the importance of this virtue: individuals who demonstrated piety toward familial relationships would feel the same responsibility in social obligations. In short, those who revered their parents would similarly exalt their sovereign.[422] Through her analysis of late imperial elementary primers, Bai demonstrates how young children performed such tasks and exhibited comparable traits. Han-dynasty-era Huang Xiang, for example, went to great lengths to ensure his father slept soundly. In the absence of his mother, who had died when he was nine, Huang fanned his father's pillow on hot summer nights and used his own body to warm cold sheets during the winter. Another boy, eight-year-old Wu Meng, was equally concerned about the quality of his parents' sleep. Of his own volition, Wu exposed his bare body at night to swarms of mosquitoes in order to divert their attention away from his parents. Finally, a late Han-dynasty child, six-year-old Lu Ji, was given three oranges to eat as a snack. He tasted one to judge its quality. After deciding that they were, indeed, delicious, Lu saved the other two for his mother.[423]

As we see from these examples, and as Bai concludes in her study, the children depicted in late imperial primers were quiet and thoughtful, generally sedate in appearance, and displayed a superior intelligence represented by an ability to memorize and engage with the Confucian classics. From this, Bai concludes that model children, whether entirely fictitious or embellished accounts of young versions of prominent sages, were intended to show children "how to grow

[421] Ibid., 115.
[422] Ibid., 104.
[423] Ibid., 109.

into adulthood properly and quickly."[424] This supports Bai's broader argument that Neo-Confucian teaching "aimed at fostering in children as quickly and as efficiently as possible the adult Confucian virtues of self-restraint, altruism, and sober and discriminating moral judgment." In other words, late imperial education sought to rid young students of their childish qualities and accelerate maturity.[425]

In her research on exemplars in the *Analects*, Amy Olberding convincingly argues that the use of models operates as "a compendium of practical and direct moral advice." By providing readers with a range of real-life scenarios and social interactions, the *Analects* recommends strategies for maneuvering various aspects of the human condition and inter-personal relationships. In doing so, the text prescribes actions and approaches for directing our emotions towards others, events, and ourselves.[426] The models and heroes that emerge between 1944 and 1945 operate in similar fashion. Wen, Niu, and Mi were concrete personifications of ideal socialist values. They were a means of explaining, simplifying, and justifying the moral practices the Communist Party sought to inculcate in rural society.[427]

The Communists' dissemination of these models sought to realize what Børge Bakken has termed an "exemplary society." This society has several features. First, it based human quality—an object of inquiry, intervention, and surveillance—on exemplary norms. Second, it instrumentalized exemplary behavior as a tool of social discipline and social engineering. Through its didactic models, exemplary society, therefore, sought to exploit people's morality, physical, mental, and behavioral qualities as important tools of state power.[428]

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[424] Ibid., 115, 121.
[425] Ibid., 95.
[426] Amy Olberding, *Moral Exemplars in the Analects: The Good Person is That* (New York: Routledge, 2012), 2.
[427] Ibid., 14.
[428] Børge Bakken, *The Exemplary Society: Human Improvement, Social Control, and the Dangers of Modernity in China* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 1.

While discipline and social engineering were, indeed, important border region goals, more crucial to the Communist cause were the establishment of order and counteracting of uncertainty. These objectives were particularly salient in the waning years of the Second Sino-Japanese War. Throughout this period, the theme of resistance had served as the ideological and emotional glue that bound together vast swathes of the rural community. Foreseeing that the looming Japanese defeat would render resistance null and void, the Party began fashioning an everyday Communist code of conduct that would discipline society. Maoist exemplars were central to this project.

It should come as no surprise, then, that the types of models which emerge from the archival record reflect the most pressing concerns of each historical juncture. Indeed, these exemplars represent the grand narratives of border region society.[429] Martyrs articulated heroic resistance and selfless sacrifice, labor heroes and model workers a tireless work ethic and tenacious devotion to building a new society, and miscreants a self-reflexive and conscientious acceptance to identify and amend the errors of one's way. Children such as Zhang Liuzi, Niu Guocai, and Liu Xiangrong drew attention to particular behaviors and increased the salience of social norms the Party wanted to establish. As Bakken argues, these models provided "information about the appropriateness of certain actions by setting an example and creating a normative standard for action. [They] supply definitions of situations and give clear signals about the consequences."[430]

Maoist exemplars differed most conspicuously from their Confucian counterparts in that they walked the mass line. That is, they originated from ordinary rural people themselves. This differed from the Neo-Confucian tradition, whose own models were the elite sages (or young

[429] Ibid., 170.
[430] Ibid., 169.

representations of these individuals) of China's ancient past. Having discarded—at least ostensibly—much of the so-called "feudal" Confucian tradition, then, the Communists were in need of a new pantheon of models and heroes. By choosing exemplars that not only came from "below," but shared the social and cultural moorings of rural society, the Communists hoped these new models would be more effective at propagating the desired "exemplary effect."[431]

As Aminda Smith has shown, models that followed the mass line not only spoke the language of the state and praised its values, but did so in the voice of ordinary people.[432] Just as Brian DeMare's drama troupes introduced rural communities to new words, characters, conflicts, and storylines, models and heroes that originated from below helped to foster in individuals a vocabulary of modernity that positioned themselves in the larger context of the Chinese revolution.[433] What did it mean to be Chinese? What internal and external crises threatened their existence? Who were the masses and how should they organize? What was political power and how was it harnessed? What was revolution? What role were rural peasants to play in it? By posing, answering, and modeling these questions, rural models provided not only labor perspectives, but also a means for re-envisioning the world and one's place in it. In short, models both taught and set the standard for how rural individuals could become agents of revolutionary change. As Smith concludes, they were at least as prescriptive as they were descriptive.[434]

This popularization of model children represents another break with tradition. As Bai has shown, authors fashioned their model children as precocious paragons of Confucian virtue. Elite adults crafted these children after traditional tales of the sages themselves as children. These children, who stood out for their moral qualities, represented an almost unattainable ideal toward

[431] Ibid., 171- 179.
[432] Smith, *Thought Reform and China's Dangerous Classes*, 152-153.
[433] DeMare, *Mao's Cultural Army*.
[434] Smith, *Thought Reform and China's Dangerous Classes*, 219.

which all children were to strive. The border region's model child, however, necessarily came from the same class as the masses themselves. He or she was a child that lived in the present and resided in a common geographical space. They confronted the same existential crises of war and revolution. They received the same education as his or her peers. In short, model children needed to be close enough to actual youngsters so as to connect with local children themselves. Border region children needed to see in these models an attainable ideal after which they could model their own behavior.

Models, martyrs, and miscreants were an important component of the Communists' grand narrative. As Chang-tai Hung has argued, models sought to inspire men, women, and—as we have seen here, children—with the socialist cause. As "new citizens," these models, through their thoughts and actions, distinguished themselves from their Confucian predecessors—the ignorant and backward peasantry that populated the classical cannon. Much like the "new men and women" at the center of Hung's discussion, "new children" exhibited the resolve and intensity required to reconstruct a decaying society. Perhaps more so than grown men and women, children were potent vehicles for disseminating important Party messages. They embodied the qualities of innocence and potentiality that adults had long outgrown. As such, children performed the emotional labor of eliciting from their interlocutors pleasing and acceptable emotions, which often highlighted their experiences.[435] Moreover, as we have seen above, model children were dutiful, clever, and politically active. Whereas model children from the Confucian classics demonstrated filial piety, children like Wang Pu and Wen Sanyu

[435] Vallgårda, Alexander, and Olsen, "Emotions and the Global Politics of Childhood," 12-34.

displayed an unwavering allegiance to the Party and collective nation, to which they contributed labor, loyalty, and even their lives.[436]

[436] Chang-tai Hung, *War and Popular Culture: Resistance in Modern China, 1937-1945* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994), 263.

CHAPTER 7: Conclusion

This dissertation has asked three broad questions. First, how did youth and adults associated with the Chinese Communist movement in the 1920s and early- to mid-1930s conceptualize children and childhood? For them, what was the ideal-type "communist child" and what type of childhood should he or she experience? Second, during the Second Sino-Japanese War and Chinese Civil War, what institutions did youth and adults establish in order to realize this ideal child in the flesh? And finally, what was the lived experience of children that grew up during the Chinese Communist revolution? How did they respond to adult prescriptions, and to what extent, if at all, did they become "communist children"?

Chapter one addressed this first question by examining Chinese Communist Youth League documents, which included the League's major periodicals *The Pioneer*, *China Youth*, and *Lenin Youth*. Through my analysis of these and other Central Committee sources, I have argued that between 1922 and 1936 we witness the discursive gestation of the Chinese communist child. This ideal-type was the product of a Marxist-Leninist epistemology that rejected the notion of a universal human nature, instead emphasizing the importance of humans' mutable social nature. Specifically with regards to children, the CCP and CYL argued that a political education involving children directly in revolutionary struggle and mass politics could shape society's youngest members into model future citizens and workers.

While this chapter focused largely on discourse and representation, we did see early attempts by the CCP and CYL to shape actual children's lives according to these principles. In the Party's rural south central base areas, for example, the CYL trained, educated, and organized children through the Communist Children's League, the predecessor to the wartime Anti-Japanese Children's League. We see through these reports that while many children were keen to

follow CYL orders, many others adeptly deployed Communist rhetoric and their newfound empowerment to undercut established patterns of authority and pursue their own self-interest. The historical record indicates, I have argued, that while many children eagerly assented to Party and CYL policy, many more behaved in ways that were counterproductive and therefore worked against broader CYL goals.

Chapters two and three have addressed the second and third questions, which concern the institutions through which youth and adults sought to shape their ideal child. My analysis here has focused on state-sponsored primary schools and the Anti-Japanese Children's League. I argued that together these institutions mobilized children to serve the border region government's multi-faceted political agenda. This included contributing to war efforts, nation building, and constructing and expanding CCP hegemony. In addition to examining these institutions from a top-down perspective, I have worked in earnest to provide a glimpse of how children experienced these institutions from a bottom-up perspective. Chapter two's usage of wartime primary school textbooks, for example, tell us what children learned in actual classroom environments. I argue that these textbooks functioned as a form of political socialization that sought to teach not just reading and writing, but grammatical, social, cultural, and political literacies. Through such instruction, I have argued, children learned about normative behavior, affective association, and political ideals, all of which sought to empower children to contribute materially and symbolically to the bourgeoning socialist nation. Chapter three argued that the Children's League, as a medium of informal education, complemented primary school education by providing children with opportunities to apply the different social, political, and cultural literacies learned in schools to the real world. As with the CYL's mobilization of children in the late 1920s and early 1930s, the Youth National Salvation Federation at times struggled to direct

the Children's League's young membership. As I have shown, those involved in the Children's League often used their newfound independence and empowerment to agitate against strict hierarchies of power and instead march to the beat of their own drummer.

Chapters four and five addressed the third question concerning actual children's lived experiences. By starting the dissertation with an examination how Communist youth and adults had historically thought of children and then progressing to an analysis of the institutions that sought to shape them, I have endeavored to set the stage for a social history—however brief—of "communist children." While these chapters approach children solely through adult-authored sources, I have argued that a close reading of the historical record can provide at the very least a basic understanding of what it was like to be a child growing up during the Chinese Communist revolution. By focusing on children as historical actors, I have argued that youngsters made significant contributions to the revolution as agents of revolution and forms of military manpower. As I have demonstrated, children participated in mass politics, taught reading and writing, performed in theatrical dramas, disciplined non-normative behaviors, and even engaged in radical land reform. In each of these ways, children's labor was crucial to multiple military efforts, nation building, and constructing and expanding Communist Party hegemony.

Whereas chapter four focused largely on children as a social group, chapter five concentrated on the handful of individual children that emerge from the historical record. As I have demonstrated throughout the dissertation, a wide variety of children appear in the primary source documents. These include not just those that happily acquiesced to CYL/YNSF direction, but also children that actively resisted and indeed challenged Party prerogatives. In the final chapter, I frame this spectrum of historical children—focusing specifically on the wartime record—as martyrs, models, and miscreants. This chapter argued that these categories of

children, while certainly not comprehensive of the full range of lived experiences, articulate particular adult anxieties during moments of incredible social and political upheaval. Representations of child martyrs, for example, were utilized to galvanize communities and build a coalition of anti-Japanese resistance. Miscreants, in contrast, sought to highlight behaviors that were unwelcome in new China, and hence support efforts to reform non-normative behavior. Finally, models showcase children that reportedly assented and conformed to emerging cultural trends.

Future Research

This dissertation has endeavored to begin a conversation on what might be considered a broader genealogy of the Chinese communist child that begins with the Party's founding in 1921 and continues to the present day. It is surprising that so little scholarly attention has been paid to the CCP's conception of childhood as a sociocultural and historical construct and children as historical actors. This is particularly true given both the longevity of the CCP's rule and the centrality of children—as beings and becomings—to the Party's political, economic, and cultural success. There are a number of directions in which this genealogy might develop. This conclusion suggests some possible pathways.

My attention to the early years of the Chinese Communist movement has focused largely on the discourse produced by the Chinese Communist Youth League. Because the dissertation has largely derived its data from major CYL periodicals, perspectives from other sources and historical actors remain to be explored. Future work on the CCP and CYL's conceptualization of children and childhood might consider more fully how these organizations continued and differed from contemporary alternative imaginings. A natural starting point for this discussion

should be Mary Ann Farquhar's excellent study of early twentieth-century children's literature.[437] Farquhar provides a comprehensive overview of the four main genres of children's literature during this period: Confucian, popular/folk, commercial, and revolutionary. The latter of these four will be of particular interest to scholars interested in further investigating the communist child. As Farquhar persuasively argues, the primary attributes of this genre included Marxist social analysis, a contempt for wealthy Chinese and privileged foreigners, and the desire to create an egalitarian society by awakening and mobilizing workers. Of particular consequence is the emergence through this genre of the militant hero figure: a courageous exemplar that moves beyond the boundaries of class struggle to claim leadership of an oppressed nation.[438] During my reading of Farquhar's work, what struck me as particularly worthy of further research was how this revolutionary literature of the 1920s and 1930s and its militant hero figure might have informed the CCP and CYL's initial conception of the ideal-type communist child, and hence the lives of actual children.[439]

Another project could investigate the CCP's early approaches to primary school education in rural south-central China during the late 1920s and early 1930s. While a good deal of Chinese-language scholarship covers this important period in general, very little exists in

[437] Farquhar, *Children's Literature in China*.
[438] Ibid., 143-145, 168.
[439] Other important works to consider Chinese conceptions of children and childhood in the early twentieth century include Limin Bai, "Children as the Youthful Hope of an Old Empire: Race, Nationalism, and Elementary Education in China, 1895-1915," *The Journal of the History of Childhood and Youth*, Vol. 1, No. 2 (Spring 2008): 210-231; Limin Bai, "The Chinese Kindergarten Movement, 1903-1927," in *Kindergarten and Culture: The Global Diffusion of an Idea*, ed., Roberta Wollons, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2000), 137-165; Maura Elizabeth Cunningham, "Shanghai's Wandering Ones: Child Welfare in a Global City, 1900-1953" (PhD diss., University of California, Irvine, 2014); John W. Dardess, "Childhood in Premodern China," in *Children in Historical and Comparative Perspective*, eds., Joseph M. Hawes and N. Ray Hiner (New York: Greenwood Press, 1991), 71-94; Ping-chen Hsiung, *A Tender Voyage: Children and Childhood in Late Imperial China* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2005); Jon L. Saari, *Legacies of Childhood: Growing Up Chinese in a Time of Crisis, 1890-1920* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1990); Margaret Mih Tillman, "Precocious Politics: Preschool Education and Child Protection in China, 1903-1953" (PhD diss., University of California, Berkeley, 2013); Lanjun Xu, "Save the Children: Problem Childhoods and Narrative Politics in Twentieth-Century Chinese Literature" (PhD diss., Princeton University, 2007).

English that pays attention to social and cultural history. Thankfully, given the importance of this period to Chinese Communist mythology, a good deal of primary source material is available through compendium collections.[440] Potential avenues for exploration might include how the Party and CYL adapted urban-oriented institutions to a rural environment, lessons learned and applied from the labor movement and Anyuan period, difficulties establishing schools, earning parents' trust and enrolling students, the role of the Comintern and Soviet advisors in shaping education policy, and, of course, the lived experience of rural children. Indeed, a clearer picture of primary school as an institution is needed in order to more fully contextualize the wartime period in general and change over time in particular.

Given the variegated nature of the Communist revolution across different geographies during the wartime period, another potential topic might investigate how the communist child's experience differed across the various border regions. The Jin-Cha-Ji experience was unique for many reasons, not least of which include the territory's size, population, the nature of Japanese occupation, and its proximity to the core of the Party's leadership in the neighboring Shaan-Gan-Ning border region. How might representations or experiences of children have differed in territories that experienced minimal military violence, such as Shaan-Gan-Ning? How did the institutions in these areas differ? What rationale were children given for demanding fealty to the Communist government given the absence of a clear and present danger? Similarly, how might

[440] See, for example, the nine-volume set of Jiangxi Soviet education materials. I have listed these volumes as the originals appear, including errors and inconsistencies. Jiangxi sheng jiaoyu kexue yanjiusuo, eds., *Jiangxi suqu jiaoyu ziliao huibian, 1927-1937, 1 jiaoyu yanlun, 2 jiaoyu fangzhen zhengce, 3 jiaoyu xingzheng guanli, 4 jiaoyu leixing he banfa xingshi (shang),4 jiaoyu leixing he banfa xingshi (zhong), 5 jiaoyu leixing he banfa xingshi (xia), 6 gongchan qingniantuan, shaonian xianfengdui, ertongtuan, jiaoyu chengjiu he jingyan, 7, 8 jiaoxuefa* (Gannan shifan xueyuan: Jiangxi sheng jiaoyu kexue yanjiusuo, 1985). See also Jiangxi sheng jiaoyuting, eds., *Jiangxi suqu jiaoyu ziliao xuanbian* (Nanchang: Jiangxi jiaoyu chubsnshe, 1960); Fujian sheng jiaoyu kexue yanjiusuo, Zhonggong Longyan diwei dangshi ziliao zhengji yanjiu weiyuanhui, eds., *Minxi suqu jiaoyu ziliao xuanbian* (Fujian sheng jiaoyu kexue yanjiusuo, Zhonggong Longyan diwei dangshi ziliao zhengji yanjiu weiyuanhui, 1986), Chen Yuanhui, *et al*, eds., *Laojiefangqu jiaoyu ziliao 1: tudi geming zhanzheng shiqi* (Beijing: Jiaoyu kexue chubanshe, 1981).

children have been emotionally prepared and mobilized when the main enemy was not a Japanese "other" but instead ethnic kin such as the Chinese Nationalists? What role did local customs, economy, and political and social traditions play in shaping Communist efforts that concerned children and child-centered institutions?[441] Similarly, future studies might engage with the English-language secondary scholarship that has examined wartime child-centered institutions, such as welfare and philanthropy, and children not as historical actors, but as potent symbols of national resistance.[442]

[441] An excellent set of materials to begin with include: Henan renmin chubanshe, ed., *Laojiefangqu xuexiao jiaoyu ziliao xuanji, di yi ji*, *Laojiefangqu xuexiao jiaoyu ziliao xuanji, di er ji* (Zhengzhou: Henan renmin chubanshe, 1958); Renmin jiaoyu shebian, ed., *Laojiefangqu jiaoyu gongzuo jingyan pianduan, di yi ji, Laojiefangqu jiaoyu gongzuo jingyan pianduan, di er ji* (Shanghai: Shanghai jiaoyu chubanshe, 1958); Shanghai jiaoyu chubanshe, ed., *Laojiefangqu jiaoyu gongzuo huiyilu* (Shanghai: Shanghai jiaoyu chubanshe, 1979); Zhongyang jiaoyu kexue yanjiusuo, ed., *Laojiefangqu jiaoyu ziliao 2: kangri zhanzhengshiqi shang, Laojiefangqu jiaoyu ziliao 2: kangri zhanzhengshiqi xia* (Beiing: Jiaoyu kexue chubanshe, 1986); Zhongyang jiaoyu kexue yanjiusuo, ed., *Laojiefangqu jiaoyu ziliao 3: jiefang zhanzheng shiqi* (Beijing: Jiaoyu kexue chubanshe, 1991); Sha'anxi shifan daxue jiaoyu yanjiusuo, ed., *Shaan-Gan-Ning Bianqu jiaoyu ziliao: xiaoxue jiaoyu bufen, shang, xia* (Beijing: Jiaoyu kexue chubanshe, 1981). An excellent five-volume set of materials is available on the Jin-Sui YNSF. Much like my study here, this includes wonderful grassroots materials authored and published by the local YNSF. Unlike the Jin-Cha-Ji compendiums, this set of materials follows developments until the founding of the PRC in October 1949. I therefore believe that these sources would be a treasure trove of information concerning the pivotal 1948 to 1953 transitional period. Moreover, this would be a great starting point for a fine-grained micro case study of the Second Sino-Japanese War and Civil War periods. See Gongqingtuan Shanxi shengwei, Shanxi sheng danganguan, eds., *Shanxi qingnian yundong lishi ziliao: Jin-Sui geming genjudi fence, di yi ji (1937.7-1940), di er ji (1941), di san ji (1942-1945.9), di si ji (1945.10-1948), di wu ji (1949.1-1949.9)* (Taiyuan: Shanxi sheng danganguan, 1986-1987).

[442] Lily Chang "Contested Childhoods: Law and Social Deviance in Wartime China, 1937-1945" (PhD diss., University of Oxford, 2012); Jennifer Liu, "Indoctrinating the Youth: Guomindang Policy on Secondary Education in Wartime China and Postwar Taiwan, 1937-1960" (PhD diss., University of California, Irvine, 2010); M. Colette Plum, "Lost Childhoods in New China: Child-Citizen-Workers at War, 1937-1945," *European Journal of East Asian Studies*, Volume 11, Issue 2 (January 2012): 237-258; M. Colette Plum, "Inscribing War Orphans' Losses into the Language of the Nation in Wartime China, 1937–1945," in *Childhood, Youth and Emotions in Modern History: National, Colonial, and Global Perspectives*, ed., Stephanie Olsen (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015), 198-220; M. Colette Plum, "Orphans in the Family: Family Reform and Children's Citizenship during the Anti-Japanese War, 1937-1945," in *Beyond Suffering: Recounting War in Modern China*, ed., James A. Flath (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 2011), 186-206; Laura Pozzi, "Chinese Children Rise Up!: The Role of Children in Propaganda Cartoons During the Second Sino-Japanese War," *Cross Currents: East Asian History and Culture Review*, No. 13 (December 2014): 99-13; Laura Pozzi, "The Revolution of a Little Hero: The Sanmao Comic Strips and the Politics of Childhood in China, 1935-1962" (PhD diss., European University Institute, 2014); Laura De Giorgi, "Little Friends at War: Childhood in the Chinese Anti-Japanese War Propaganda Magazine *Kangzhan Ertong*," *Oriens Extremus* (2014): 61-84; Xu Lanjun, "Little Teachers: Children's Drama, Traveling, and Ruptured Childhoods in 1930s and 1940s China," *Twentieth-Century China*, Volume 41, Number 2 (May 2016): 180-200.

Another project could place in a broader transnational perspective China's interwar and wartime uniformed youth movements, including both the Chinese Communist Children's League and the Nationalist Party's Boy Scouts and Girl Guides. Adopting a world history methodology, this endeavor could locate large-scale dynamics and processes that shaped and informed these movements, examine connections among global and local trends, and compare and contrast the Children's League, Chinese Boy Scouts, and Girl Guides both with each other and their global contemporaries. Indeed, some preliminary big-picture work has been done on this topic, though it remains overwhelmingly Eurocentric.[443] These studies conclude—and I agree based on my own preliminary work on the subject—that at the heart of these movements were issues of imperialism, virility, racial regeneration, and physical discipline. Such work on China's own uniformed youth movements during the period is likely to uncover the reality that China's children—rural and urban alike—took part and were represented in activities and discourses that transgressed national boundaries.[444]

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[443] Kristine Alexander, *Guiding Modern Girls: Girlhood, Empire, and Internationalism in the 1920s and 1930s* (Toronto: University of British Columbia Press, 2017); Mischa Honeck, James Marten, eds., *War and Childhood in the Era of the Two World Wars* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2019); Raza Ali, Franziska Roy, Benjamin Zachariah, eds., *The Internationalist Moment: South Asia, Worlds, and World Views, 1917-1939* (Los Angeles: Sage Publications, 2015).

[444] While not all of the titles below fall within the interwar and World War II period, these are good places to start in thinking about the intersection of children, childhood, and war with imperialism, race, and virility. Jeff Bowersox, *Raising Germans in the Age of Empire: Youth and Colonial Culture, 1871-1914* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013); Olga Dror, "Love, Hatred, and Heroism: Socializing Children in North Vietnam during Wartime, 1965-1975," *The Journal of the History of Childhood and Youth*, Volume 9, Number 3 (Fall 2016): 424-449; Rebecca Friedman, "Masculinity, the Body, and Coming of Age in the Nineteenth-century Russian Cadet Corps," *The Journal of the History of Childhood and Youth*, Volume 5, Number 2 (Spring 2012): 219-238; Jordi Getman-Eraso, "Too Young to Fight: Anarchist Youth Groups and the Spanish Second Republic," *The Journal of the History of Childhood and Youth*, Volume 4, Number 2 (Spring 2011): 282-307; Sarah Glassford, "Practical Patriotism: How the Canadian Junior Red Cross and its Child Members Met the Challenge of the Second World War," *The Journal of the History of Childhood and Youth*, Volume 7, Number 2 (Spring 2014): 219-242; Mischa Honeck, Gabriel Rosenberg, "Transnational Generations: Organizing Youth in the Cold War," *Diplomatic History*, Volume 38, Issue 2 (April 2014): 233-239; Alcinda Honwana, "Children's Involvement in War: Historical and Social Contexts," *The Journal of the History of Childhood and Youth*, Volume 1, Number 1 (Winter 2008): 139-149; H. W. Koch, *The Hitler Youth: Origins and Developments, 1922-1945* (New York: Cooper Square Press, 2000); Tracy H. Koon, *Believe, Obey, Fight: Political Socialization of Youth in Fascist Italy, 1922-1943* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1985); Olga Kucherenko, *Little Soldiers: How Soviet Children Went to War, 1941-1945* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011); Olga Kucherenko, *Soviet Street Children and the Second World War:*

The period of modern China's history that overlaps with the reign of Mao Zedong (1949-1976) is another incredibly rich vein for scholars to mine. Concerning this dissertation, for example, my preliminary observations have indicated that the communist child did not grow old following the establishment of the PRC in October 1949, but instead came to direct and inspire the generation of children that were born and grew up in the 1950s and early 1960s. Indeed, the communist child was seemingly ubiquitous, easily locatable in the cinematic productions and mass-produced comic books and textbooks of this period.[445] As discussed in this dissertation's introduction, significant work has examined representations of children and childhood during the Cultural Revolution (1966-1976). Little work, however, focuses on children as symbols during these early years of the high socialist period. Such a gap in the literature begs the question: as an ideal-type, did the communist child remain static and immutable, or did it change over time, reflecting the shifting political agenda and anxieties of different periods? A *longue durée* genealogy of the communist child should answer this and similar questions.

Beyond symbolism and representation, future studies might consider how the institutions established during the wartime period were consolidated, expanded, and utilized following the

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Welfare and Social Control under Stalin (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2016); Brenda Ralph Lewis, *Hitler Youth: The Hitlerjugend in War and Peace, 1933 – 1945* (Osceola, WI: MBI Publishing, 2000); Robert Macdonald, *Sons of the Empire: The Frontier and the Boy Scout Movement, 1890-1918* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1993); Berry Mayall and Virginia Morrow, *You Can Help Your Country: English Children's Work During the Second World War* (London: Institute of Education, University of London, 2011); David I. Macleod, *Building Character in the American Boy: The Boy Scouts, YMCA, and Their Forerunners, 1870-1920* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1983); Aaron Skabelund, "Leadings Dogs and Children to War," *The Journal of the History of Childhood and Youth*, Volume 7, Number 1 (Winter 2014): 5-13. Two primary sources that provide a sense of how Chinese thinkers engaged with the interwar transnational uniformed youth movement are Luo Yanguang, *Ge guo qingnian xunlian shuyao* [A Brief Introduction to Each Countries' Youth Training] (Beijing: Beijing zhongxian tuofang keji fazhan youxian gongsi, 2012); Shen Jieren, *Ge guo qingnian xunlian yu xin shenghuo huodong* [Each Countries' Youth Training and the New Life Movement] (Beijing: Beijing zhongxian tuofang keji fazhan youxian gongsi, 2012). These are reproductions of the original primary sources, which were published in 1930 and 1935, respectively.

[445] Representative films include *Jimaoxin* [The Letter with Feathers], directed by Shi Hui (1954; Shanghai dianyingshipian guang); *Hong haizi* [Red Children], directed by Su Li (1958; Changchun dianyingzhipian guang); *Xiaobing Zhang Ga* [Little Soldier Zhang Ga], directed by Cui Wei and Ouyang Hongying (1963; Beijing dianyingzhipian guang).

PRC's founding. These inquiries might focus on primary school education or the transformation of the Children's League into the Young Soviet Pioneers. Of course, these are not the only two subjects or themes around which historians might excavate the lived experience of historical children. Indeed, a comprehensive genealogy must pay attention also to the intersection of children and childhood with family life, welfare, medicine, maternal health and reproduction, childbirth, consumerism, legal and local practices, and the experience of non-Han children.[446]

One important theme regretfully underdeveloped in this dissertation is gender. My analysis of the wartime historical record leads me to agree with the body of work that has examined representations of "belligerent children" in art, film, and literature. These scholars conclude that, more often than not, child-centered tropes that align with the communist child are overwhelmingly gendered male. That is, combative and triumphant male heroes are commonplace, whereas heroines are utterly absent.[447] When female children do appear in the wartime historical record, however, it is overwhelmingly as passive victims rather than active agents. One exception, as I have discussed in chapter five, concerns female models, which used their emotional labor as a means to persuade nonconforming peers and adults to adopt and adhere to the new socialist state's moral standards.

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[446] An excellent body of work exists on these topics individually. Future scholars should mine the following monographs to gather information on how children appear in these histories. Xiaoping Cong, *Marriage, Law and Gender in Revolutionary China*, 1940-1960 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016); Susan L. Glosser, *Chinese Visions of Family and State, 1915-1953* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003); Susan L. Glosser, "The Business of Family: You Huaigao and the Commercialization of a May Fourth Ideal," *Republican China*, Volume 20, Issue 2 (1995): 80-116; Helen M. Schneider, *Keeping the Nation's House: Domestic Management and the Making of Modern China* (Toronto: University of British Columbia Press, 2011); Nicole Elizabeth Barnes, *Intimate Communities: Wartime Healthcare and the Birth of Modern China, 1937-1945* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2018); Johanna S. Ransmeier, *Sold People: Traffickers and Family Life in North China* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2017); Tina Phillips Johnson, *Childbirth in Republican China: Delivering Modernity* (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield, 2011).

[447] See for example Farquhar, *Children's Literature in China*, 181; Orna Naftali, "Chinese Childhood in Conflict: Children, Gender, and Violence in China of the 'Cultural Revolution' Period (1966-1976)," *Oriens extremus* (December 2014): 85-110.

Future scholars of gender and girlhood studies might consider how in rural China age and physiology worked to segregate female children from their male peers. Concerning the Anti-Japanese Children's League, for example, female children were prohibited from maintaining their membership in the organization as they neared puberty. Upon beginning their menstrual cycle, adolescent girls immediately entered the Women's Federation. Male children, however, remained in the Children's League until the age of fifteen, when they then joined an iteration of the Youth League. It was only in their early to mid-twenties that males finally joined an adult organization, whereas females joined at around age fifteen. While the onset of puberty and the concomitant biological changes the body incurs may seem like an obvious enough reason to segregate the sexes, nowhere in the historical record did I find a specific rationale for male-female separation spelled out. Was the thinking surrounding this practice a legacy of female seclusion? How did the onset of puberty affect what the ideal child could be? How did puberty affect how outspoken children could be in public spaces and the degree to which they could participate in civic life? Similarly, a vast majority of child-centered border region legislation sought to constrain in some form or another female bodies. Such laws included banning infanticide, abolishing child betrothal and trafficking, and limiting the length of girls' and women's hair. Lastly, more must be done on how gender affected labor responsibilities. It is evident that even at a young age there was a clear division of labor. What types of invisible, unpaid, and productive labor did female children participate in, and how did gender determine labor expectations?

Finally, a definitive genealogy of the communist child will consider the ideal-type's implications for contemporary China. It has been clear from my own research that at the very least the communist child survives today in the form of art, literature, film, and education.

Present-day primary school textbooks display images of bloody children hanging from trees being beaten by Japanese soldiers. The stories of child martyrs like Wang Pu and Wang Erxiao and of models like Wen Sanyu are retold not just in textbooks but in museum exhibitions and Patriotic Education memorial sites throughout the country. In this regard, the communist child lives on in Chinese historical memory. Yet in what ways might the Chinese Communist Party's ideal-type child have changed since the Reform Era began in 1978? Certainly, the CCP no longer asks children to sacrifice their lives in violent combat. How, then, has primary school education adapted to suit the needs of Chinese society in the twenty-first century? How does today's Communist Party conceive of children and childhood? What are the means and ends of contemporary Chinese childhood? In what ways does the present-day Young Pioneers—now the world's longest-standing and largest Communist children's organization—mobilize children to realize these goals? And what role does the historical communist child play in all of this?[448]

[448] Some illuminating studies to begin exploring these questions include Mette Halskov Hansen, *Educating the Chinese Individual: Life in a Rural Boarding School* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2014); Edward Vickers and Zeng Xiaodong, *Education and Society in Post-Mao China* (New York: Routledge, 2017); Zheng Wang, *Never Forget National Humiliation: Historical Memory in Chinese Politics and Foreign Relations* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2014); T. W. Woronov, "Performing the Nation: China's Children as Little Red Pioneers," *Anthropological Quarterly*, Vol. 80, No. 3 (Summer 2007): 647-672; Kate Foster, *Chinese Literature and the Child: Children and Childhood in Late Twentieth-Century Chinese Fiction* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013); Bin Zhao and Graham Murdock, "Young Pioneers: Children and the Making of Chinese Consumerism," *Cultural Studies*, Volume10, Issue 2 (1996): 201-17; Vanessa L. Fong, *Only Hope: Coming of Age Under China's One-Child Policy* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2006); Orna Naftali, "Marketing War and the Military to Children and Youth in China: Little Red Soldiers in the Digital Age," *China Information: A Journal of Contemporary China Studies* 28 (1) (March): 3-25; Jing Jun, ed., *Feeding China's Little Emperors: Food, Children, and Social Change* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2000).

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Fujian sheng jiaoyu kexue yanjiusuo, Zhonggong Longyan diwei dangshi ziliao zhengji yanjiu weiyuanhui, eds. *Minxi suqu jiaoyu ziliao xuanbian* [Compendium of Education Materials from the Western Fujian Soviet Era]. Fujian sheng jiaoyu kexue yanjiusuo, Zhonggong Longyan diwei dangshi ziliao zhengji yanjiu weiyuanhui, 1986.

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———. *Shanxi qingnian yundong lishi ziliao: Jin-Sui geming genjudi fence, di san ji (1942-1945.9)* [Historical Materials from the Shanxi Youth Movement: The Jin-Sui Revolutionary Base Area, Volume 3 1942 to September 1945]. Taiyuan: Shanxi sheng dang'anguan, 1986-1987.

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Gongqingtuan zhongyang bangongting, ed. *Zhongguo qingnian yundong lishi ziliao di 1 ce 1915-1924* [Historical Materials from the Chinese Youth Movement: Volume 1, 1915-1924]. Gongqingtuan zhongyang bangongting, 1981.

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