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ABSTRACT

Citing as a central focus of the Chinese government since the People's Republic of China was established in 1949, this paper presents a brief sociopolitical and historical description of China in the twentieth century and suggests reasons for its lack of modern development and low educational attainment as of 1949. The importance of education as a major factor in national policy is described with special attention to Communist ideological differences between the "red" or Maoist form and the "expert" or meritocratic model. Recent developments and the impact of economic and political reforms are having a continuing impact on Chinese educational policy. (CFR)

PEOPLE'S REPUBLIC OF CHINA, BRIEF HISTORY AND SCHOOL POLICY

by

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People's Republic of China

With a continuous culture of over 4,000 years, China dominates Asia as the world's third largest (after the U.S.S.R. and Canada), most populous (over one billion people), and rapidly developing country. China stands out as a third world country able to feed, house, clothe, and extend health care to one of every four persons on earth. It has built bridges, railroads, and industrial complexes in some of the world's most difficult terrain; exploded nuclear devices, launched satellites, and produced jets, submarines, tanks, missiles, and other weapons, along with cars, trucks, and large farm equipment; and given sizeable economic aid to other developing countries. Vigorous educational plans undergird China's intent to modernize rapidly by the twenty-first century.

Brief Facts

Largely agricultural, China is 85 percent rural yet has 46 cities with a million or more people each, including Shanghai (over 12 million), among the world's most populous cities. Only eleven percent of China's vast land is arable (growing rice, wheat, cotton and other crops), with food not easily grown nor livestock raised in the remaining mountains, deserts, wasteland, and urban areas. Most Chinese live on the coast or near three life-giving rivers (Yellow, north; Yangtze, central; Pearl, south), which have regularly overflowed or run dry. From the rich silt, by intense cultivation, South China, like Egypt on the Nile, grows several crops a year. Ninety percent of the people live on one sixth of the land, an average of 1,200 persons per square mile.

Most Chinese belong to the homogeneous Han group (94 percent); six percent or 60 million comprise 55 minorities: Mongols, Muslims, Tibetans, Manchus, and others, in sparsely settled border areas near China's fourteen neighbors, including the U.S.S.R., India, and Vietnam. China has had recent border clashes with each. Written Chinese is the same nationwide; the national spoken language is Mandarin. But many dialects are spoken. Chinese living a few hundred miles apart often do not easily understand each other.

China's Past

From 221 B.C. to 1911, dynastic emperors governed China under a "mandate of heaven," comparable to the West's divine right of kings. Time, weak neighbors, and a rich culture made China think of itself as the "middle kingdom," the central empire on earth, self-sufficient and culturally superior. Nearby Koreans, Vietnamese, Japanese, and others came to learn, pay homage, and leave tribute. To this inward sense of superiority was added a hierarchy of obligations within and from extended families to scholar-official civil servants up to the emperor. To obligation were added ethical behavior and legal control, a philosophical blend from Confucius, 551-497 B.C., who stressed the responsibilities of various classes, the superiority of the scholar, and the moral rightness of orderly government; Mencius, 372-289 B.C., who furthered Confucianism; Taoism (Lao-tzu, sixth century B.C.), or "the way," which stressed man's harmony with nature; and Legalism, which stressed social order and control under the emperor.

Confucianism

These beliefs were epitomized by Confucianism, source of China's long stability, also cause of its isolation and delayed modernization. Confucian classics emphasized order and harmony, moral responsibility and mutual obligation up the line of authority to the emperor. In self-interest, China's many rulers perpetuated Confucian respect for authority, obligation, and social order.

Europe Learns from China

When Europe was a chaos of small warring states, China was generally united, peaceful, and rich in literature, philosophy, art,

poetry, painting, and pottery. Europe learned from China how to weave silk, use machinery to spin and weave other textiles, use stirrups and harness for horses, make paper, porcelain, and print books. Before Europe, China used crank handles, piston bellows, water wheels, and gunpowder. Thirteenth-century Venetian Marco Polo was impressed by China's order, unity, cleanliness, postal service, and paper money. Son of a trader from Europe's greatest port, he marveled that China's ships were bigger and better made, used magnetic compasses, and had watertight compartments and more efficient sails and rudders. Jesuit Matteo Ricci (1552-1610), who lived in Peking because the emperor valued him as astronomer and mapmaker, attributed China's orderliness to Confucian teachings.

Opium War, 1839-42

The West entered China to convert the heathen and for commercial gain: the Portuguese in 1516 (settled in Macao, 1557), the British in 1637, Russians in 1689, and others in the nineteenth century.

Britain sold its manufactured goods in India, took on opium in India, sold it in China, and with the profits bought Chinese goods to sell in Europe: tea, porcelain, silk, cotton, art objects, jade, brass, and bronze. Alarmed by opium's ill effects, the Chinese government banned and destroyed British opium, provoking the Opium War, 1839-42. The British won and the resulting "unequal" Treaty of Nanking, 1842, began China's hundred years of humiliation. It forced China to cede Hong Kong to Britain, pay indemnities, and open five trade ports to Europeans, who operated under their own laws and languages. A British sign in a Shanghai park showed European dominance: "Dogs and Chinese not allowed."

Again over the sale of opium, the British and French defeated China in the Arrow War (or Second Opium War), 1858-60. The Summer Palace near Peking was looted, burned, and the emperor and his court forced to flee. More concessions were wrested from China.

Taiping Rebellion, 1850-64

Merged with these defeats was the memory of the Taiping Rebellion, 1850-64, an explosive internal groping for modernization

which hastened reform. The central figure, Hung Hsiu-ch'uan (1814-64), failed the civil service exams three times, became ill, and in delirium spoke of strange visions based on Christian tracts. He and his converts controlled southern China. Declaring himself Jesus' younger brother and the second son of God, he preached a strange blend of Christian reform, anti-Christianity, and Confucianism. His eventual defeat in 1864 by the Manchus and Confucian gentry led to his alleged suicide.

The Taiping leaders' 14-year near-successful challenge to imperial rule shocked the Chinese, who saw it as a confused groping to modernize by religious, social, and economic reforms. After Taiping, imperial rule seemed hopelessly outdated and unable to bring China into modern times.

Modernization Attempts, 1860s

Forward-looking Chinese wanted to learn Western languages, embrace science and technology, and start modern universities and public schools. Christian mission colleges had Westernized some Chinese youth. The 1858 Tientsin "unequal" treaties that forced open 11 new trade ports required contracts in European languages. China wanted modern armaments to suppress uprisings such as the Taiping Rebellion and to overcome humiliating defeats.

Yung Wing (1828-1914), first Chinese graduate of Yale (B.S., 1854), in 1871 officially organized Chinese students' study in the West. More important were language colleges to train interpreters for business and diplomatic negotiations: T'UNG-WEN KÜAN, a government college in Peking, 1862; and similar colleges at Kiangnan Arsenal, Shanghai; an arsenal in Canton; and at Foochow Navy Yard. These colleges taught English, French, Russian, and German; later were added mathematics, astronomy, physiology, and international law. Thus, European trade and armaments China wanted for self-defense forced the learning of Western languages, science, and technology.

Sino-Japanese War, 1894-95

China was further shamed by defeat in the Sino-Japanese War, 1894-95. Japan, once China's vassal nation, had, after 1868, adopted

Western science and technology, armaments, and education. By 1894, Japan, crowded, ambitious for empire, moved to take Korea, long under China's influence. China resisted; lost the Sino-Japanese War of 1894-95; had to give up Korea, Taiwan, and other islands; and pay Japan indemnities. China's shame forced more trade concessions to the West.

Behind China's Weakness

Besides lost foreign wars, resulting indemnities, and wealth Western imperialism extracted, China suffered overpopulation on too little crop land: 65 million people, late fourteenth century; 200 million, eighteenth century; and 450 million, mid-nineteenth century. Droughts during 1877-79 left 15 million dead. China's Confucian orderliness ignored, was traumatized by, and was finally overpowered by Western and Japanese military might.

Some intellectuals argued that China must reform or perish, among them K'ang Yu-wei (1858-1927), Cantonese scholar. He and others encouraged the Hundred Days of Reform, 1898, which was put down by the Manchu Empress Dowager.

The Boxer Rebellion

China's frustration, expressed in the 1900 Boxer Rebellion, encouraged by the old Empress Dowager, involved a secret society hostile to foreigners and to Christian converts. Again defeated by Western troops, China paid more indemnities. Reforms were promised, but too late. The end of the ancient examinations in 1905 ended the long Confucian era. The Empress Dowager died in 1908, succeeded by a child emperor, who abdicated in 1911 when revolutionaries founded a republic.

Sun Yat-sen, 1866-1925

"China is an open dish, fit to be carved up and eaten by foreigners," said Sun Yat-sen, China-born revolutionary, educated in mission schools, a physician in Hong Kong, and agitator among overseas Chinese for reform. In 1905, headi· · the Chinese Revolutionary Alliance in Japan, he proposed his famous "Three Principles of the People: nationalism, democracy, and people's livelihood." He

inspired ten abortive uprisings, hurried back to China when the October 10, 1911, revolt succeeded, became provisional president of the Republic of China, and headed the Kuomintang Party (KMT) in 1912. Conceding the weakness of the revolution, he transferred power to military strongman Yüan Shih-k'ai (1859-1916), who soon tried to found a new dynasty. On Yüan's death Sun Yat-sen returned from refuge in Japan to head the battered Republic. Because only the U.S.S.R. gave foreign aid, he formed an alliance with the small Chinese Communist Party before he died in 1925.

May 4th Movement, 1919

The Chinese Communist party was founded in 1921 in the intellectual aftermath of the May 4th Movement. That movement was provoked by the 1919 Versailles Treaty which gave Japan special rights in China. Japan aided the Allies in World War I, ousted the Germans from Shantung in 1914, and demanded Shantung and Manchuria. The Allied payoff of Chinese territory to Japan for World War I aid roused Chinese nationalism to fever pitch.

On May 4, 1919, thousands of Peking students marched in protest against Japan. The movement spread. Simultaneously the New Culture Movement arose, led by, among others, Hu Shih (1891-1962), who had studied at Cornell and Columbia Universities and was a John Dewey disciple (Dewey lectured in China, 1919-21). Hu, writer and pragmatist, urged language reform. He wanted Chinese literature to be in the vernacular for the masses and not only in classical Chinese for scholars. He and other key New Culture Movement leaders taught at Peking University, then under sympathetic Chancellor Ts'ai Yüan-p'ei (1867-1940).

Chiang Kai-shek (1887-1975)

Chiang Kai-shek, merchant's son, military school graduate, and army officer under Sun Yat-sen, studied military organization in the U.S.S.R. in 1923 and headed Whampoa Military Academy in 1924, training ground for China's future military leaders. Rising in alliance with the Chinese Communists and the KMT's left wing, he became president of the Republic of China in 1928.

Under cover of U.S.S.R. aid, Stalin directed the fledgling Chinese Communist Party to work with the KMT and take over from within. Chiang broke with the Communists in 1927 and fought them in a bitter civil war complicated by Japanese aggression in Manchuria and elsewhere after 1931. In December 1936 the Communists forced Chiang into an unwilling alliance against the Japanese. During the Sino-Japanese War, 1937-45, Chiang, using U.S. arms, fought the Communists and the Japanese, redoubling efforts to oust the Communists after World War II. Both sides were brutal, but the long-harried and frequently retreating Communists deliberately wooed China's peasant farmers. From this base, using captured KMT arms (supplied by the U.S.) and strengthened by KMT deserters who joined them, the Communists forced Chiang to flee to Taiwan.

The Communists faced an awesome task. China had not been united since dynastic rule ended in 1911. Warlord chaos had subverted Sun Yat-sen's republican idealism. Civil war with the Communists and Japanese aggression had frustrated Chiang Kai-shek, permitting only a decade of uncertain nation building, 1927-37. On October 1, 1949, Mao Tse-tung declared the founding of the People's Republic of China. "China," he said, "has stood up."

Mao Tse-tung, 1893-1976

Mao's thought and personality largely shaped Communist China's first quarter century. The rebellious son of a strict father who was better off than most peasants, Mao attended local primary school (age 7-13), where he memorized classics without full understanding. He also secretly devoured romantic novels about heroic rebellions. Quarreling about schooling denied him (his stern father wanted the son's labor), he left home at age 17 to attend Dongshan Primary School in his mother's hometown, then went to Changsha, capital of his native Hunan Province, 1911, where he witnessed the revolution, cut off his pigtail, and joined the revolutionary army. During 1913-18 he attended First Teachers' Training School in Changsha (officially a good secondary school) and in 1918 became an underpaid clerk at Peking University Library, where he read revolutionary books. He joined the few Chinese sympathizers with the Russian revolution who founded the Chinese Communist Party in 1921 and attended its first congress in Shanghai.

His future now linked to the Party, Mao was an adult educator of study circles in Hunan Province, propaganda secretary, journal editor, and increasingly a strategist in the growing civil war after the KMT-Communist split. He emerged as Party leader during the "Long March," 1934-35. Encircled by Chiang Kai-shek's forces, 100,000 Communist men, women, and children broke out of the trap, marched for 370 days through 11 provinces, over some 6,000 miles, fighting the cold and mountainous terrain as well as Chiang's forces. Only 20,000 Communists and their families reached safety in Yenan, Shensi Province, in the north. Later glorified, Long March veterans became the iron core of the Party and the army. Yenan was the seedbed for Communist policies, including school policy.

The battered Communist remnants passed through lands tilled by 200 million peasants. When not fighting, Communist soldiers were under orders to help peasants till the land, harvest crops, and build and repair homes. It was a strategy that worked as peasants, contrasting the less disciplined KMT soldiers, aided the Communists, allowed their sons and daughters to join the Communist army, and noted that more and more KMT soldiers deserted to serve the Communists.

Building Communism, 1950s

Mao's strategy was to politicize the peasants. He trusted their practical sense and distrusted intellectuals. Communism's first task was land reform. An estimated half million landlords were shot or imprisoned during 1946-1951. Farm cooperatives were organized and were widespread by 1954. The Marriage Law of 1950 was a step toward women's economic and political equality.

Foreign firms were taxed out of existence, mission schools nationalized, prostitutes and beggars trained for factory work, and civil servants and business people brought into line with Communist ideals. In 1952 the "three antis" campaigns began against corruption, waste, and bureaucracy; and the "five antis" campaign started against bribery, tax evasion, fraud, theft of state assets, and theft of state economic secrets. In cities, uncooperative elements were harassed; there were some suicides but relatively few executions and imprisonments. With U.S.S.R. aid, industry, mineral exploration, rail and road

infrastructure increased in the first Five-Year Plan (1953-58), at the end of which China produced for the first time its own tractors, cars, planes, ships, machine tools, and penicillin.

Hundred Flowers Bloom, 1956

Two development policy lines contended, later contrasted as "red versus expert." Ideologists like Mao, a romantic, wanted to speed up history and move quickly from capitalism to socialism. Others (Liu Shao-ch'i, 1898-1974; Chou En-lai, 1898-1976; Teng Hsiao-p'ing, 1904-) took a traditional planned development view, including educating the brightest as experts. The Mao-inspired "eight antis" had been directed at expert-oriented merchants, industrial managers, teachers, students, writers, artists, and some bureaucrats who had fared better under the old regime and lacked enthusiasm for rapid communization. Mao distrusted intellectuals, many of whom blamed ideologists like him for forced land reform excesses. Khrushchev believed that Mao deliberately provoked the more critical intellectuals to speak out in his May 2, 1956, speech: "Let a hundred flowers bloom, let a hundred schools of thought contend." Critical letters appeared in the press. Student criticism was virulent. Peking University students covered "democracy wall" (outdoor bulletin boards) with large posters of criticism. The amount and vehemence of the criticisms made Mao crack down. "Poisonous weeds," he said, "must be rooted out from the flowers." Ringleaders were executed. The more outspoken were made to clean latrines or do farm work.

Great Leap Forward, 1958-60

Determined to achieve Communism in one bound, Mao initiated the Great Leap Forward. Communes were launched from cooperative farms and agricultural collectives. Men, women, and children marched to fields; lived and ate in communal barracks; used slack time for irrigation, flood control, and dam building; and made iron and steel in backyard furnaces. Under this forced pace of development, some 700 million lives were regimented and transformed.

The unprecedented social engineering failed. Three years of bad harvest, floods, and droughts played havoc with agriculture. The steel industry was wrecked; the economy collapsed. The Great Leap

Forward ended July 23, 1959. Mao said, "I take responsibility." Pragmatic leaders took over from him daily management. He never controlled production again.

Critics called the Great Leap a disaster. In defense, Maoists held that some blast furnaces had worked, that new coal and other mineral deposits had been discovered, that commune and factory schools were built, that work-study began, and that almost overnight peasants became more self-reliant.

Great Leap excesses appalled the U.S.S.R. In 1960 the Russians suddenly withdrew their advisers, blueprints, and aid, a withdrawal hastened when Khrushchev refused to help Mao build an atomic bomb. Behind the U.S.S.R.-China split were also border clashes and deaths and, more subtly, Mao's belief that he should be acknowledged as leading world Communist strategist.

Another Great Leap consequence occurred in Mao's Socialist Education Movement (1962-66): intellectuals and cadres (local leaders) were again sent to the countryside to live with and learn from peasants. Mao assumed that they would become sympathetic to peasant needs and thus gain renewed enthusiasm for socialist transformation (doctrinal "redness"). The Great Leap was prelude to a larger upheaval: the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution.

Cultural Revolution, 1966-76

Mao had many motives in the Cultural Revolution: errors to put right, angers to redress, and enemies to punish. Disapproving of the way moderates governed, he blamed Liu Shao-ch'i, successor as National People's Congress chairman, and Teng Hsiao-p'ing, Communist Party secretary-general, for incorrectly advancing China's development, relaxing tensions, and allowing intellectuals too much freedom. Placing economic development before Communist ideology was, to Mao, "revisionism" that kept youth from experiencing political fervor and made them forget the revolution. Mao believed in perpetual revolution and in spreading world revolution. He opposed the U.S.S.R.'s detente with the West and its experiment with consumer capitalism and felt China was going the same wrong way. He saw moderate leaders as "capitalist roaders," using profit incentives rather than Communist ideology to motivate people and train experts

(who were becoming privileged elites). Old and angry at being pushed aside, Mao vowed to return China to doctrinal "redness."

He was backed by army head Lin Piao, who had compiled Mao's speeches and writings in "The Little Red Book" as the answer to every problem. Mao Tse-tung study groups and thought reform, used by China in the Korean War, 1950-53, became widespread.

Mao and Liu had quarrelled over reasons for the Great Leap's failure. Liu's book, HOW TO BE A GOOD COMMUNIST, sold 15 million copies during 1962-66, equalling sales of Mao's books; but the many-sided Cultural Revolution owed its vehemence less to Mao's grievance as an author than to his intent before he died to reinstate Communist fervor, initiate permanent revolution, and punish and counter the moderate developent "experts" who had forced him aside.

To spearhead the Cultural Revolution, Mao pushed forward his fourth wife, Chiang Ch'ing, a 1930s Shanghai actress who had made enemies in the film world and in the chaotic early Communist period. Aided by her League of Left-Wing Dramatists—failed writers, minor actors, disgruntled film directors who had difficulty getting their works performed—she radicalized the arts. There was precedent for this in the U.S.S.R. In 1946 A.A. Zhadanov had purged Soviet writers and composers for pandering to and not being critical of Western culture.

In June-July 1964 Chiang introduced 37 new operas on revolutionary themes and publicly criticized China's 3,000 professional theatrical companies for perpetuating old themes and heroes (emperors, princes, generals, ministers, scholars, and other "monsters"). In February 1966 Lin Piao named her cultural advisor to the army. Her May 15, 1966, circular quoted Mao's invitation to violence: "Chairman Mao . . . says there is no construction without destruction." On May 18 Lin Piao said publicly, "Seizure of political power depends on gunbarrels and inkwells."

Deliberately orchestrated Red Guard activism began May 29, 1966, when middle school students, aged 12-14, attacked Tsinghua University, Peking. They were soon joined by other students. Red Guard ranks, swelled when schools were deliberately closed, included some of China's 90 million primary school children and many of the

ten million secondary school and 600,000 university students. Mao encouraged them at gigantic Red Guard rallies in Peking. Given free rail and truck transportation and army barracks food and housing, they formed competing Red Guard bands, put up large posters, cut off girls' long braided hair, ripped off foreign-style clothes, confiscated foreign goods, closed private shops and independent theaters, ransacked libraries and museums, denounced and burned Confucian and other books, smashed art objects, paraded through streets teachers and professors wearing dunce caps and placards, ransacked foreign embassies and harassed, beat, and killed officials and cadres charged with being "capitalist roaders." Chaos reigned.

It was a xenophobic revolt of illiterates and semi-literates against intellectuals ("spectacle wearers"), a great witch hunt of history, to which the army and local and secret police turned a blind eye. Chiang Ch'ing ruled with an iron hand over theater, film, radio, television, music, art, ballet, and other cultural media, denouncing as decadent and obscene capitalist jazz, rock and roll, striptease, impressionism, abstract art, and everything old or not sufficiently revolutionary. Old scores were settled. Kidnapping, torture, and gang wars were rampant. Teng Hsiao-ping was denounced, arrested, shamed, and made to work as a restaurant waiter. Chou En-lai escaped personal harm but not his colleagues and followers.

In late summer 1967 Mao, alarmed at excesses and concerned about Party interests, toned down the struggle. In autumn 1967 the People's Liberation Army (PLA), China's ten million active reservists, restored order.

It took a decade (1966-76) for the Cultural Revolution to end completely. Reflecting on his last, largest social engineering, Mao wrote: "The present Great Cultural Revolution is only the first . . . the people of the whole country must not think that everything will be all right after one or two great Cultural Revolutions, or even after three or four."

Red Guard leaders were "rusticated" (sent to work in rural communes). They were part of the millions of youths during the Cultural Revolution sent from urban areas where there were few jobs to do farm work, many for long periods. Other educational consequences of the Cultural Revolution included: organizing May 7th

(1966) schools for intellectuals and cadres to work with peasants and to reflect on renewing their own revolutionary fervor; putting half-time work-study students in communes and factories; placing schools under Revolutionary Committees (consisting mainly of non-educator party cadres); shortening and "enriching" secondary and higher school programs; and increasing peasant-worker youth admissions after two or more years' postsecondary work to higher education on the recommendation of supervisors and fellow peasant-workers.

Since Mao, 1976

The Mao era ended in 1976: Chou En-lai died of cancer January 8; Mao died of Parkinson's disease September 9; and on October 6 Chiang Ch'ing was arrested as leader of the "Gang of Four" for Cultural Revolution excesses. Moderate Hua Kuo-feng (1920-) succeeded Mao as party head, 1976-81; pragmatist Teng Hsiao-p'ing has been in full command since 1981. Teng, restored by Chou En-lai in 1973 after surviving several Cultural Revolution purges, began far-reaching changes: a selective market economy, some profit incentives, Western investments and products, advertising, consumer goods, open markets, and resumed private family farm plots. The speed and scope of his development and education plans are intended to achieve modernization for China by the year 2,000.

In Retrospect

Twentieth-century China saw Confucianism decline with the end of the civil service exams, 1905; the end of dynastic rule, 1911; failed KMT nation building efforts, 1927-37; Japan's destructive invasion and war, 1931-45; the new Communist order initiated at Yenan, 1936-46; Communist victory in the civil war, 1949; chaotic social engineering in the Great Leap, 1957-59; and Cultural Revolution destruction, 1966-76. The recent two-policy "red versus expert" conflict is now clearer: Maoists trying to bring China's peasant four-fifths into political life and in the process destroying remnants of the old literate ruling class; and moderate meritocrats trying to use education and technology to industrialize and modernize China. Under Teng's modernization drive in the mid-1980s, observers see real prospects for China's rapid progress.

School Policy

Red vs. Expert: Communist Ideology vs. Meritocracy

Belief that progress comes from the clash of opposite opinion is characteristic of Marxist-Leninism: thesis, antithesis, synthesis. School policy since 1949, reflecting leaders' ideological differences, veered between Maoist "redness" ideology and pragmatic "expertness." Opposing factions have different priorities: Maoists, Communist ideologists, often called experts "poisonous weeds" and "capitalist roaders." Expert meritocrats, also Communists, want the best minds educated for economic development and modernization, and have dominated under Teng Hsiao-p'ing since Mao's death in 1976.

Maoist School Model

The Maoist model put socialist political consciousness before academic skills (being "red" is more important than being "expert") and practical knowledge before theory. Work is as important as study, productive labor is part of the curriculum, and fast learners should help slow learners in the same classrooms and schools. Mao believed that doctrinally motivated people can work miracles of economic development and modernization, eliminate intellectual elitism, break down mental and manual labor differences, and promote equality. They base secondary and higher education admission on political zeal, on worker-peasant-soldier background, and lastly on intellectual ability. Such education policy, Maoists argued, produces perpetual revolutionaries.

Meritocratic School Model

The meritocratic or "expert" school model puts students' academic and technical skills ahead of socialist political consciousness. Theory is stressed over applied knowledge (theory undergirds and improves practice). Meritocrats, wanting to produce educated people to advance the economy, select the brightest for special classes and best schools under able teachers using efficient methods and materials. Meritocrats see value in competitive ability grouping, with the brightest getting more theory, spending less time in work assignments, enrolling in longer full-time school programs, and being

admitted selectively to the better supported key secondary schools, special schools, and colleges and universities. Meritocrats choose to spend major resources to educate the fewer best and remaining resources to educate the many average and below average students also needed to help expand the economy. Meritocrats concede that inequality may result; that intellectual, professional, and cadre family children may benefit more than worker-peasant-soldier children. Yet, ability, not ideology or family background, matters most. Any resulting inequality and elitism is not a serious drawback and is a price worth paying if China is to modernize quickly.

School Policy: 1949-53 Consolidation

After 1949, the Communist regime began to move China from its long backwardness and high (80 percent) illiteracy. Agriculture was gradually collectivized, industry was enlarged and expanded, health campaigns were launched, schools were nationalized, and educators were "remolded," particularly those in higher education. Maoist work-study ideas, developed during the Yenan period, were introduced. But pre-1949 meritocratic impetus remained dominant: higher education admitted mainly high school graduates with academic skills shown by entrance examination scores. University students from privileged families predominated because home advantages helped their academic attainment. An attempt was made to increase the number of worker-peasant-soldier background youths after 1951. Special primary school programs were offered to improve their academic skills. Thus, the Maoist model coexisted with the meritocratic model.

U.S.S.R. Influence: 1953-57

Along meritocratic lines, Soviet education advisors upgraded the curriculum, had Russian textbooks translated into Chinese, helped form comprehensive universities and specialized technical and polytechnical institutes, reinforced meritocratic ability grouping (tracking or streaming), and in general relied on "expert" intellectual teachers and administrators. Maoist resistance to Soviet-aided meritocracy was felt in Mao's crackdown on intellectuals after the 1956 Hundred Flowers Movement. Maoists abhorred the fact that only one-third of college students were from worker-peasant-soldier families, protested

students' low political zeal, and criticized student objection to manual labor.

Great Leap Forward: 1958-60

Breaking with the Soviet meritocratic model in the Great Leap Forward, Mao attempted rapid agricultural collectivization in communes, massive development of heavy and light industry, "thought reform" of intellectuals and bureaucrats, politicization of education, and egalitarian school expansion in factory and commune-run spare-time schools after work, part-time schools during work periods, and half-work half-study schools built by zealous volunteers.

Amid ideological fervor, intellectuals and cadres believed to have made themselves too comfortable were forced by Maoist peer pressure to spend months in the country to "learn from the masses." Educated youths, mainly urban and unemployed, were resettled for long periods in the countryside. Resisted by the meritocrats, whose influence rose after the Great Leap failed, the Maoist model made some inroads and heralded what was to come in the Cultural Revolution.

Retrenchment: 1960-63

The U.S.S.R.-China split caused Soviet advisors, including educational advisors, to leave abruptly in 1960, taking with them plans, blueprints, and financial aid. Great Leap economic failures were aggravated by floods, droughts, and crop losses. Meritocratic education standards were reasserted, especially in higher education. Many part-time colleges were abandoned, and less time was spent on political education and productive labor. A hierarchy of educational institutions was developed in 1962 at all school levels, key schools were designated as conduits for bright students to become future leaders, scientists, and professionals. At mid-level were general full-time schools to train middle-level technicians, engineers, and teachers—most of them intended for rural work. At the bottom were part-time schools (half-work, half-study) to provide basic education for future peasants and workers and for lower-level technicians and engineers in rural modernization projects. Little publicized elite boarding schools served children of high ranking cadres.

Two-Line Struggle: 1964-66

Maoist influence was reasserted: over 300,000 educated youths were permanently resettled in rural communes, schools re-emphasized politics and productive labor, open-book examinations were tried, and an attempt was made to convert all schools to part-work, part-study. Meritocrats resisted and key schools remained.

The scene was set for the bitterly fought Cultural Revolution between Maoists and meritocrats, a battle fought mainly in the arts, media, and among youths from closed schools. It was a showdown between the Maoist belief that Communist ideology through political education can work miracles in economic development and the meritocratic belief that economic modernization must precede political and social gains.

Cultural Revolution: 1966-76

New school policy was laid down in Mao's "May 7th Directive" (1966): school terms and programs should be shortened, revolutionized, and schools should teach industrial work, farming, and military affairs; all intellectuals, teachers, administrators, cadres, and other leaders should periodically work and think in rural communes to learn from peasants. In June 1966, university entrance exams were abolished and college enrollment postponed for six months. In fall 1966 most schools were closed, most formal education ceased, and students were urged to criticize elitist teachers and administrators. Hastily formed and competing Red Guard units harangued and frightened not only intellectuals, experts, meritocrats, and other "capitalist roaders," but anyone not waving and quoting from Mao's Little Red Book. Chaos reigned as Red Guards rampaged the country.

In June 1967 new university entrance rules required high school graduates to work several years before seeking university admission. They had to be recommended by co-workers and supervisors on the basis of socialist zeal, work record, class background, and lastly intellectual ability. In July 1968 the Workers College at the Shanghai Machine Tools plant became the model for all higher education: factory-connected colleges stressing productive labor and study.

Theory and academic skills became subservient to politics and production. Lower schools remained closed until 1968.

Cultural Revolution excesses subsided in 1970 as higher education institutions began to reopen. Maoist politics remained in command in the higher education "Open Door Policy," by which students worked in nearby factories and communes several months of the school year; and selected workers-peasants-soldiers lectured in their areas of specialization. Full-time education was shortened, key schools eliminated, and school differentiations blurred.

By 1973 meritocratic reforms began to reappear, theory was re-emphasized, university entrance exams (watered down, sometimes oral) were reinstated. Mao's death on September 9, 1976, and the Gang of Four's arrest on October 6 ended the Cultural Revolution. While vestiges of the Maoist-meritocratic struggle linger, modernization has been officially endorsed and assiduously pursued.

School Ladder/Curriculum

Preschool includes nurseries for ages one-and-a-half to three and kindergartens for ages three to six. Then follows a six-three-three school ladder consisting of a six-year primary school for ages seven to 12 (there is a move to lower entry ages from seven to six), three-year junior middle school for ages 12-15 (comparable to U.S. middle school or junior high school), and senior middle school for ages 16-18 (comparable to U.S. senior high school). In practice, depending on local finances, middle school years vary slightly. Higher education averages four years. Graduate education follows. Key middle schools and key universities are designated as centers of excellence to advance bright youth and to expand developing areas. There is also a considerable informal and highly developed part-time work-study adult education system that parallels all school stages.

Preschool

Because most Chinese women work, full-time nursery care is extensive. About half of urban and fewer of rural one-and-a-half to three-year-olds are in nurseries, staffed by nurses and usually attached to commune, factory, or other workplace. These day-care centers are supported by the workplace, subsidized by public funds,

and aided by parents who pay for food and a general fee of four to six yuan a month (two yuan = U.S. $1).

Kindergartens for ages three to six are run by communes, factories, or local education bureaus; are usually in residential areas; and are staffed by professionally trained teachers. Activities include singing, dancing, drawing, some number work, and simple study of Chinese characters, although reading begins in the primary school. Cooperative tasks are introduced, such as hanging up towels, folding quilts, sweeping and tidying the school and grounds. Political education is introduced through songs, dances, and recitations.

Primary School, Ages 7-12

Almost 95 percent of those aged seven to 12 attend primary school (pre-1949 attendance was 40 percent urban, five percent rural). First to third grade courses include Chinese language, mathematics, physical education, music, drawing, and painting. A foreign language (English or Japanese) is introduced in the third year. These subjects and political education are continued in the fourth and fifth year, plus general history, geography, natural science, and labor at a nearby farm or factory. The Chinese language, with thousands of characters, requires one-third to half of curriculum time. Work experience, emphasized during the Cultural Revolution for doctrinal reasons and to aid local production, has since been reduced to two weeks during the nine-and-a-half-month primary school year. Raising academic standards, recently emphasized, included (from 1978) key primary schools in each county or district as a step toward excellence; since 1982 key schools have been abandoned at the primary level.

Middle (Secondary) Schools, Ages 12-15, 16-18 (Varies)

In the mid-1970s about 80 percent to 90 percent of urban primary school graduates and 60 percent to 75 percent of rural primary school graduates entered middle (secondary) schools. Smaller percentages in each case complete middle school, especially in rural areas of limited resources where only junior middle schools exist. Much more affected by the Cultural Revolution than were primary schools, middle schools have since 1976 returned to a more academic

curriculum. The 14 subjects taken in middle school are: Chinese language, mathematics, foreign languages (English, Japanese, or other), politics, physics, chemistry, biology, history, geography, agriculture, physiology and hygiene, physical education, music, and fine arts.

Junior middle school students do six weeks and senior middle school students nine weeks of manual labor per nine-month school year. The purpose is to gain practical understanding of local agricultural or industrial conditions. During the Cultural Revolution, when middle schools were more closely linked with productive labor, there was little distinction among academic, vocational, technical, and agricultural middle schools. These distinctions have since reappeared, particularly since reinstating in 1978 the intensely competitive higher education entrance examinations. Only ten percent to 15 percent of middle school graduates are offered higher education places. The danger of an examination-oriented curriculum that leaves most school leavers ill-prepared for productive and socially useful work has been recognized.

For this reason, vocational subjects have been introduced into many senior middle schools for the majority (85 percent to 90 percent) not going to higher education. Some ordinary middle schools are being changed into specialized technical, vocational, and agricultural middle schools to train middle-level technicians. There are 347 specialties in eight professions being prepared in specialized middle schools: 242 specialties in engineering, 25 in agriculture, 11 in forestry, 12 in medicine, 34 in finance and economics, one in physical education, 20 in arts, and two in teacher training.

Key middle schools, intended for academic excellence, are better staffed, financed (by the Ministry of Education), and have richer and longer programs. Their graduates are more successful on competitive higher education entrance exams. In rural areas, key schools tend to be in county towns and consequently draw talent away from more remote middle schools, some of which have had to close.

Higher Education

Higher education enrollment, which rose from 117,000 in 1949 to 1,144,000 in 1980, could have increased considerably but for policy

shifts since 1949 and Cultural Revolution setbacks. In the 1949-53 consolidation period, the Maoist "red" model coexisted with the pre-1949 meritocratic model. Universities were organized into specialized institutions with technical training emphasized over basic theory. Courses were somewhat shortened and entrance requirements lowered to increase the numbers of cadres and soldiers as students. Consequently, the dropout rate rose among those unable to keep pace.

The U.S.S.R. influence period, 1953-57, shifted toward meritocracy, but proved inefficient in training professionals needed for national development. Mao's 1958-60 Great Leap Forward, which broke with the Soviet meritocratic model, initiated factory and commune-run spare-time "universities" to increase enrollment of less prepared peasants-workers-soldiers and to break the monopoly of university-trained elites. Great Leap failure, economic retrenchment, the 1960 Soviet advisor withdrawal, and the closed universities (1966-71) were setbacks from which higher education still suffers.

Under Teng's modernization drive from 1977 and the restored national college entrance exam from 1978, applicants are generally under age 26, senior middle school graduates (or equivalent) admitted on their overall score plus high score on one of the six parts of the entrance exam: politics, Chinese language and literature, math, a foreign language, physics and chemistry (for science majors), and history and geography (for liberal arts majors). The Ministry of Education allots college places to each province and administers the tests. Provincial education bureaus review test results and candidates' political records before a physical test and college admission.

In 1982 there were 675 very diversified higher education institutions, 96 of them designated key universities and institutes. As in the U.S.S.R., a small number of comprehensive universities offer a broad curriculum in arts, social science, and pure science. A larger number of polytechnical institutes offer a wide range of applied sciences. Most are specialized institutions offering over 800 specialties in engineering, medicine, teacher training, finance, trade, foreign languages, and others. More than 500 of the specialties are in science and engineering, which account for 39 percent of total higher education curriculum.

For the first time since 1949, four-year bachelors' degrees were conferred in spring 1982 by 450 of the 675 institutions of higher education authorized to grant degrees by the Academic Degrees Committee of the State Council. Graduate education, organized since 1978, is still limited to selected university departments authorized to recruit candidates for the M.A. and Ph.D. degrees, the first of which were also conferred in spring 1982. In 1980 there were 22,600 postgraduate students (compared to a total of 16,000 between 1949-66). No fees are charged for higher education (except for some day students and TV university students). Most students receive state stipends covering minimum living expenses. Mature students who have worked for five years before entering universities draw their regular salary while in higher education. Women constitute 24 percent of full-time higher education students, probably because of traditional pressures through family ties and general expectations.

Expansion has been attempted through branch campuses of established universities and institutes, each with separate administrations and funding but able to benefit from teaching resources, libraries, and equipment of parent institutions. Branch campuses are mainly day schools which recruit from the locality and do not provide housing. Enrollment has also been expanded in main universities by enrolling day students who take most of their classes in the afternoon and do not live on campus. The major task of the 96 key institutions of higher education is to raise standards to international levels in their respective fields. They select the most talented students from across the country and receive priority in funding, facilities, and capital construction.

Spare-Time Universities

Organized originally to teach basic literacy and during the Cultural Revolution to aid production, spare-time schools, colleges, and universities have become a fully developed system to raise the cultural and scientific level of workers while on the job. They are extensive, an important supplement to regular schools, and are managed by factories, farms, and other state economic enterprises. In 1980 455,000 people were enrolled in spare-time universities.

Central Radio and Television University (CRTVU)

Educational television, started in 1960 in Peking, Shanghai, and other cities, was suspended in 1966 at the onset of the Cultural Revolution, but graduated 8,000 of the 50,000 who had taken single credit courses. CRTVU was launched February 1979 in Peking and connected with 28 provincial and municipal universities. The central Ministry of Education develops curriculum and distributes printed support material. The Ministry of Broadcasting produces, transmits, and finances programs. In spring 1983, of 600,000 enrolled, 360,366 were full-time students. Full-time and part-time students must have worked for at least two years, are released from work while they study (employers pay most of the cost), and return to their job after graduation, usually at higher pay. An estimated two to six million spare-time students tune in the programs, secure materials from bookstores, and may take tests and receive certificates if they pass. Of CRTVU's first generation who started in 1979, 78,031 graduated in July 1982. A 1983 World Bank loan helped expand CRTVU. The major problem is too few TV sets: six million in a population of one billion.

Symbol of expanding higher education is China Experimental University, first Western-style graduate computer science and engineering university, set to open fall 1986 near Hong Kong. It will initially offer a two-year master's program in engineering, with 250 students, 70 percent from China and 30 percent from Hong Kong, the U.S., Southeast Asia, and Europe. By 1998 seven constituent colleges are planned, including law, medicine, and agriculture. Founding President Shu-park Chan, a China-born University of California (Santa Clara) professor, planned the project in 1980 with Teng Hsiao-p'ing. Said Chan, "It will be the role model in higher education for all of China, combining the best of East and West."

Teacher Education

Standard qualifications for teaching at the three lower school levels are: (1) to teach in kindergarten or primary school, a middle school graduate must complete a three-year secondary teacher training program; (2) to teach in a junior middle school, a senior middle school graduate must complete a two-year teacher training program;

and (3) to teach in senior middle schools, a senior middle school graduate must complete a four-year higher teacher training program.

Teacher education remains a pressing need because of vast enrollment and damage still felt from school closings and attacks on teachers during the Cultural Revolution. Talented youths still show little interest in teaching. One study shows the shortage of qualified teachers in 1979: Only 47 percent of primary school teachers were qualified with secondary school preparation or above; only 10.6 percent of lower middle school teachers had specialized senior middle school education or above; and only 50.8 percent of senior middle school teachers had the required four-year teacher training course or above. In-service teacher education is being stressed, but much more quality and quantity are needed in pre-service teacher education.

Administration and Finance

National school policy is set by the National People's Congress and is carried out by the central Ministry of Education (CMOE), with decentralized educational bureaus at province, municipal, prefecture, county, and district levels. School administration and finance are decentralized with the county exerting most local control. A parallel Communist Party structure acts as a centralizing, inspectoral, and corrective agency. Each commune has had an education officer, but as communes are being dissolved, their educational function is being transferred to county education bureaus.

Higher education control is divided among the CMOE (40 institutions, including 30 key institutions), other central ministries (about 230 institutions), and provincial educational bureaus (over 50 institutions). CMOE, with other agencies, allocates funds for higher education. CMOE and provincial and municipal education bureaus also control some key secondary schools. County and district education bureaus control and largely finance (with state aid) primary and secondary schools: curriculum, exams between school levels, and in-service teacher education. In 1982 education (including culture, science, and health) received 11.55 billion yuan, or ten percent of total state expenditure of 115.331 billion yuan.

Prospects and Problems

The educational emphasis in China's modernization drive is on improved quality at all school levels, on more secondary vocational and technical training, and on expanding and diversifying higher education. Formidable problems remain: latent tension between development-minded leaders and ideologists, a vast and inefficient bureaucracy, and the struggle to modernize ancient ways of life. China seeks more mechanization of farm and industrial production, more efficient manpower training and manpower needs forecasting, more rapid communication, and improved transportation.

This one-fourth of mankind is moving hesitantly from rigidity to less control, from self-reliance to selective free enterprise, from state-guaranteed jobs to a fluctuating market economy, from rationing to a consumer mentality, and from thought control to a global-village outlook.

Said China's best known actor about the tempo of change: "We are trying to compress the Renaissance, the Reformation, and the Industrial Revolution in a single decade." Despite a century of revolution and the changes brought by Communism, yet another transformation awaits China's rural masses: the shock of modernization. Education, vital to material advancement, must somehow also prepare an old, wise, and buffeted people for new things to come.

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