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Half-Work Half-Study SCHOOLS in COMMUNIST CHINA

Recent Experiments With Self-Supporting Educational Institutions

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FOREWORD

This study of experiments with a new type of educational institution in Communist China is based upon an analysis of materials from Chinese Communist newspapers and periodicals. The information included in such sources, like all other data printed in Communist China, is "official" in the sense that its publication must be sanctioned by Communist political authorities. Thus facts may be exaggerated when they are favorable and omitted from mention when they are unfavorable; for example, the blackout of information about the agricultural middle schools in 1960–61 may be considered as an indication that they were not meeting with success at that time. Reliance upon a discriminating use of such materials is necessitated by the lack of impartial firsthand evaluations of these new institutions by qualified outside observers.

In preparing this study, general claims have been measured against the details in specific reports in an effort to piece together, from scattered accounts of varying comprehensiveness which are often vague and sometimes contradictory, an intelligible record of the course of experimentation with new institutional forms.

It is hoped that this study will help to clarify the Chinese Communist regime's approach to education, and some of the problems encountered in its attempt to mold an educational system suited to its economic and political needs and purposes.

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INTRODUCTION

THE MAGNITUDE of the problem of educational development in mainland China is in large measure attributable to the area's massive population. Although demographic data on China is imprecise, available information indicates that there were between 150 and 200 million children of primary and secondary school age in the latter years of the decade of the 1950's. In the 1957–58 school year, however, the actual enrollment in regular full-time schools was but a minor fraction of the school-age group. The officially reported enrollment in the 6-year primary schools was about 64 million; total enrollment in the 6-year secondary cycle was about 7 million, and was largely concentrated in the 3-year junior middle (7th through 9th grades) schools. In the same year, approximately 441,000 students were enrolled in full-time higher education in universities, colleges, and specialized institutes.[1]

By early 1958 the ruling Communist regime had become committed—in the context of the emerging "Great Leap Forward" in all fields of endeavor—to a rapid expansion of educational facilities, looking toward such goals as providing the opportunity for junior middle school education to all young people by 1967, and making higher education available to all by 1972. In the search for means to implement these ambitious plans, the regime was faced with a persistent problem: finding a way to finance a program of the necessary proportions. Pondering the immensity of their task, the authorities apparently came to the conclusion that the central government could not afford the heavy State expenditures that would be required to reach the desired goals. On the basis of this fundamental conclusion, they made two important related decisions. One was to delegate much of the responsibility for establishing and operating schools to the collective bodies which form the basic units in the social fabric of contemporary mainland China. The other was to encourage the establishment of part-time (usually half-time) schools in which the students would spend about half of their time in studying and the other half in

[1] State Statistical Bureau, *Ten Great Years; Statistics of the Economic and Cultural Achievements of the People's Republic of China* (Peking: Foreign Languages Press, 1960), p. 192.

productive labor. In addition to promising operational economies, this latter decision was in line with the regime's new basic educational policy—also adopted in 1958—which sought to combine education and labor more closely, in order to bolster the overall production effort and also to facilitate the inculcation of respect for physical work and loyalty to a political party which ostensibly represented the interests of the working class.

The most widespread and highly publicized type of "half-work, half-study" institution which appeared as a result of these decisions was the *nung-yeh chung-hsüeh*, or "agricultural middle school". The agricultural middle schools, in their original form, were designed as self-supporting junior middle schools in which operating expenses were to be met with the income from student labor in the schools' own farms and factories. These schools, which first received national publicity in the spring of 1958, spread rapidly and soon became the pivotal educational undertaking in the new communes which supplanted the agricultural cooperatives in the summer and autumn of that year. It is apparent from the early accounts of the schools that the regime was counting on them as the main means through which it could hope to fulfill its goal of bringing lower secondary schooling to the young people in the rural areas.

At about the same time as the early agricultural middle schools were attaining national prominence, a prototype institution in a similar "half-work, half-study" self-sufficient pattern was established at a more advanced educational level in Kiangsi province. This "Communist Labor University" and a companion institution founded in 1960 received considerable publicity as valuable new instruments for expending the opportunities for higher education.

The founding of "half-work, half-study" schools at these two levels constituted probably the most significant pedagogical experiment yet undertaken by the Chinese Communist regime. The significance of the experiment lies not only in the crucial role which institutions of this kind were expected to play in extending schooling to larger groups. It is to be found also—and more importantly—in the fact that these schools embodied in classic form the concept of the close integration of study and productive labor stressed in the educational reforms introduced in 1958. Thus a study of these institutions provides an important key to comprehension of the Chinese Communists' overall educational philosophy and policy.

THE AGRICULTURAL MIDDLE SCHOOLS

Reasons for Their Establishment

ONE MAY LOGICALLY BEGIN a discussion of the agricultural middle schools by examining in greater depth the regime's thinking as to the reasons why such schools were necessary and the main purposes the schools were expected to serve.

The need for middle schools in the countryside is clear: Lu Ting-i, Director of the Propaganda Department of the Communist Party Central Committee and the Party's main spokesman on educational matters, in an article in the February 1960 issue of *Jen-min Chiao-yü* (People's Education), acknowledged that prior to the establishment of the agricultural schools, middle school level education had "failed to penetrate" into the rural areas. In expanding secondary schools in these areas, initial efforts naturally had to be concentrated at the junior, or lower, secondary level. The reasons why a special type of junior middle school was deemed necessary in these areas were primarily economic. On the one hand, the regime felt it was unable to support a general academic-type junior middle school education for the great numbers of primary school graduates then emerging in the countryside. On the other hand, it saw a great need for a vast number of young people who possessed a minimal ninth-grade general education and who had in addition some knowledge of modern scientific agricultural methods and the ability to handle farm tools and machines. Furthermore, the relevant age group from 13 to 16 was not yet adjudged to be physically mature and capable of carrying a full load in the workaday world. Therefore, it was considered feasible and advisable to allow this group to continue its education to a point enabling it to play a more useful role in society, provided that this schooling would not involve large expenditures of public funds. A corollary of this view was that education for older rural youth at the senior middle level would generally be available only on a spare-time basis, since young people over 16 were needed for full-time employment.

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The need for "junior agricultural technical personnel" in the communes was seen as being very urgent. Lu Ting-i, in his February 1960 article in *Jen-min Chiao-yü*, stated that China would need 1,840,000 agricultural machine operators and 440,000 "technical farming cadres" in order to complete the task of mechanization and modernization of agriculture. These were the people who would be counted upon to drive the tractors and combines, maintain the electric motors powering irrigation equipment, perform skilled tasks in local fertilizer and insecticide factories, act as surveyors, veterinary assistants, and bookkeepers, and do similar lower-level technical work in commune farms and factories.

Initial Phase of Development (1958–60)

Origin and Early Growth

It is difficult for an outside observer to ascertain with assurance just when the type of institution referred to in recent years as the "agricultural middle school" first appeared on the Chinese scene. There are a few retrospective references in available materials to schools of a similar nature in existence in 1956 and 1957, but the genesis of the idea is usually credited in mainland sources to the authorities in Kiangsu province, where the first agricultural middle schools were reportedly established in March 1958. In any case, it was apparently the particular form developed in Kiangsu province which first received the stamp of approval of the central authorities. This approval was conveyed by no less a person than Lu Ting-i. Lu attended a conference concerning the new schools in Kiangsu in mid-March, and his favorable reaction was immediately reported in mainland news media.

In the wake of Lu's action, many reports of the establishment of agricultural middle schools began to appear in a pattern typical of the early stages of the implementation of any new movement in Communist China. The pace of frenzied activity can best be traced through the record of what happened in Kiangsu, where the course of the movement is best documented. Starting from a base of two such schools in mid-March, Kiangsu was reported to have established more than 2,000 by the end of the month. By April 21, when the authoritative Party Central Committee's journal *Jen-min Jih-pao* (People's Daily) gave firm editorial support to the campaign, that paper stated that there were already 5,600 agricultural middle schools in Kiangsu. A Kiangsu official later gave the figure for April 1958 as "over 6,000"

schools.[1] Meanwhile scattered accounts indicated similar activity in other areas. Domestic radio broadcasts reported that Anhwei province had established 2,654 agricultural middle schools by early April, that 608 had been set up in the outskirts of Shanghai by early May, and that by July there were more in Szechwan than in the model province of Kiangsu.

The national rate of growth of the agricultural middle schools during the following year and a half is difficult to trace, as reports for the latter part of 1958 and early 1959 are not available in sufficient numbers to establish a pattern. It would appear that during the hectic several months after the mass campaign to establish communes began in the late summer of 1958, the agricultural middle schools were revamped and adapted to the new organizational framework in rural areas. A domestic news release suggested as much when it later reported that the schools had been "comprehensively overhauled, consolidated, and improved" in the wake of the communization movement.[2] In the spring of 1959 there was again a flurry of publicity tied to the first anniversary of the official founding of these schools. By the latter part of 1959 and early 1960, the situation had apparently become sufficiently stabilized so that new statistics on the schools and their enrollment could be released.

The first of the new set of statistics, which came in piecemeal in the latter half of 1959, concerned the situation on the provincial level. By April 1960 the following data on the number of agricultural middle schools and their enrollment in various areas were available from mainland media:

Provinces, etc.	*No. of schools*	*Enrollment*	*Date*
Liaoning	930	n.a.	Aug. 1959
Shanghai (outskirts)	220	27,000	Aug. 1959
Hopei	2,125	230,000	Nov. 1959
Shantung	1,380	134,000	Nov. 1959
Kwangsi Chuang Autonomous Region	530	46,996	Nov. 1959
Inner Mongolian Autonomous Region	400	31,000	Jan. 1960
Kiangsu	2,174	279,890	Apr. 1960
Szechwan	4,640	385,113	Apr. 1960
Fukien	560	41,200	Apr. 1960

Although incomplete, the data was representative of the situation in various dissimilar parts of the country. These figures would indicate

[1] *Hung ch'i* (Red Flag), No. 7/1959 (Apr. 1, 1959); in *Extracts From China Mainland Magazines* [hereafter cited as *ECMM*] (Hong Kong: American Consulate General), No. 168 (May 18, 1959), p. 18.

[2] New China News Agency [hereafter cited as *NCNA*], Mar. 15, 1960; in *Survey of the China Mainland Press* [hereafter cited as *SCMP*] (Hong Kong: American Consulate General), No. 2228 (Mar. 31, 1960), p. 12.

a considerable shrinkage in number of schools, in at least some areas, between the early days of the spring of 1958 and the end of 1959. The later figures for Kiangsu, which were repeated in substantial agreement in several sources, are especially interesting. Whereas the province had been reported as establishing over 6,000 agricultural middle schools in a few months in the spring of 1958, only slightly over 2,000 were mentioned in the spring of 1960. The official explanation of this difference was that during the commune movement the agricultural middle schools underwent a process of "appropriate amalgamation" during which in some cases as many as 7 schools were combined into one.[3] Although some consolidation may have been logically called for by the amalgamation of many cooperatives into one commune, it is possible that other factors, such as unrealistic overextension or exaggerated reporting in the early stages, played a role in the cutback in numbers. It is noteworthy that the late 1959–early 1960 figures reported for the Shanghai hinterland and Szechwan province also suggested a substantial shrinkage from the 1958 accounts.

Toward the end of the period during which the partial figures reported above were being released, the regime issued the first comprehensive national figures for agricultural middle schools and their enrollment. Unfortunately, the resulting picture was not as clear as might be wished, as two very different sets of national figures were released within a month and a half. On February 2, 1960, the *Jen-min Jih-pao* reported that in the whole country there were "over 20,000" agricultural middle schools with 2,190,000 students. Six weeks later, the official news agency reported that there were "over 30,000" agricultural middle schools with a total enrollment of 2,960,000.[4] After the release in mid-March 1960 of the larger figures, however, they were cited on a number of occasions in the mainland press, whereas the smaller figures seem not to have been subsequently used.

It is immediately apparent that the number of agricultural middle schools averaged roughly about one such school per commune for the entire country.[5] The distribution throughout the country was uneven, however. The NCNA item of March 15, 1960, which gave the national figure of over 30,000 schools, stated that almost every commune had at least one agricultural middle school, and that some had as many as six or more.

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[3] *Hung Ch'i*, No. 9/1959 (May 1, 1959); in *SCMM* No. 179 (Aug. 5, 1959), p. 19.
[4] NCNA, Mar. 15, 1960; in *SCMP* No. 2228 (Mar. 31, 1960), p. 12.
[5] There were about 26,000 communes in China after the initial communization movement in 1958. The figures generally quoted for later years indicate that there were in the neighborhood of 24,000 in 1960. An average commune includes about 5,000 households.

The March 15, 1960, item also discussed the role then being played by such schools in the efforts to extend junior middle school education to a larger segment of the population. It reported that the 2,960,000 students in agricultural middle schools already represented 27 percent of the total enrollment at junior middle level in the whole country, and that these schools were currently "doing a third to a half of the work of universalizing junior middle school education." This latter phrasing was apparently a reference to the comparison between entering enrollments in agricultural middle schools and ordinary junior middle schools. The draft economic plan for 1960, submitted to the National People's Congress in March of that year, stated that the enrollment of new students in ordinary junior middle schools in the fall of 1960 would be 4 million, while another 2,800,000 would enter "agricultural and other vocational middle schools" at the junior middle level. The 1960 figures for entering students do not suggest that the Chinese Communists were closely approaching the goal of universalizing junior middle education at that time; data from the 1953 census would indicate, for example, that there were probably about 12 or 13 million young people of 13 years of age (the normal age for entering junior middle school) in mainland China in 1960.

However, the emerging role of the agricultural middle school in expanding the opportunity for middle school education, as seen in the spring of 1960, was a major one. For example, a Kiangsu delegate, speaking to the National People's Congress in April, reported that his province alone planned to have 1,450,000 students enrolled in agricultural middle schools by 1967. The attainment of such a level of participation on a national scale would enable the regime to approximate its goal of universalizing junior middle school education, since there will probably be between 40 and 50 million young people in the relevant 13–16 age bracket at that time.[6]

Characteristics of the Schools

Keeping in mind the role that the agricultural middle schools were playing in the total educational picture in 1960 and the importance ascribed to their future development, one may turn to a more detailed examination of the nature of this new type of institution and the kind of educational experience it offered to the boys and girls in rural areas.

[6] Lu Ting-i, in an open letter released at the time of the first anniversary of the founding of the agricultural middle schools, said that there were then about 87 million in the 13–16 age bracket. He added that only a little over 7 million of them could be accommodated in ordinary full-time junior middle schools. NCNA, Mar. 22, 1959; in *SCMP* No. 1985 (Apr. 3, 1959), p. 27.

First of all, it must be remembered that the agricultural middle school of this period was a *part-time* school. It was thus distinguished from the other two types of educational institutions in Communist China considered from the point of view of the daily proportion of the student's time spent in classes: The ordinary junior middle school was a *full-time* school; and many *spare-time* (i.e., after a normal working day) schools and classes at all levels were run by communes and factories. The agricultural middle school was often referred to in mainland sources as "half school, half farm," since its students normally devoted half their time to classes and the other half to productive labor, usually of an agricultural nature, the proceeds from which were used to finance the operation of the schools.

The size of these early agricultural middle schools seems to have varied considerably. The national statistics indicated that the average enrollment was about 100 students per school, but enrollment as high as over 600 was cited in the sources. In Kiangsu the recommended enrollment was between 200 and 500 per school, with 300 considered an ideal number, but the actual reported enrollment in the spring of 1960 averaged well below 200 per institution.

In theory, the students in agricultural middle schools were all in the normal junior middle school age bracket—13 to 16 years. In practice, however, a considerable proportion of the students were apparently over age. Articles in the Party journal, *Hung Chi* (Red Flag), by a Kiangsu official in May of 1959 and again a year later made it clear that a sizeable number of students in that model province were over 16.[7] At least in Kiangsu, the entrants were described as coming mainly from the families of the poorer peasants and hired farm laborers. It would appear from several accounts of early skeptical attitudes toward the schools [8] that this description of the entrants would be more broadly applicable, since many families seem to have held out hopes of getting their offspring into the ordinary schools.

Little data is available on the physical facilities assigned to the schools for classroom work. Early schools were apparently operated in temples, pagodas, and temporarily unused buildings and rooms. The *Jen-min Jih-pao* of April 7, 1958, described the classrooms as having a bare minimum of furnishings, with tables and benches brought in by the students from home or borrowed temporarily from offices. An article in *Hung Ch'i* on May 16, 1960, looking back in retro-

[7] *Hung Ch'i*, No. 9/1959 (May 1, 1959); in *ECMM* No. 179 (Aug. 5, 1959), p. 24, and No. 10/1960 (May 16, 1960); in *Selections From China Mainland Magazines* [hereafter cited as *SCMM*] (Hong Kong: American Consulate General), No. 215 (June 27, 1960), p. 18. In the 1959 article the author noted that in one school 86 of the 303 students were over 17 at the time of their enrollment. Again, in May 1960, he noted that many students were "relatively advanced in age."

[8] See p. 24–25.

spect on the early days of the movement in Kiangsu, said that "some of the [schools] were started . . . without fixed premises. The teachers taught . . . in the open, and doors were temporarily used as blackboards with the students squatting and using their knees as desks." Items describing the situation at a later date referred in some cases to new permanent classroom buildings, but offered no details. In view of the considerably greater attention given to describing the installations available for productive labor, this information left the impression that classroom facilities were rather limited.

It is not clear from available data to what extent the students lived on the school premises. Probably where housing existed, this practice was generally followed, but there are very few references to dormitories in the source materials. One article concerning the situation in Kiangsu in 1959 took up the question of whether or not the schools should be boarding schools, and concluded that this point was a controversial one after a year's experience. The author stated that the living-in system had some clear advantages where suitable facilities existed, but cautioned against large boarding institutions.[9]

Teaching staff.—More important than the physical facilities, in determining the total educational environment, is the teaching staff. In numbers, the teaching force available for agricultural middle schools in these early years was relatively small. For example, the February 2, 1960, item in *Jen-min Jih-pao*, which gave the national figure of over 20,000 agricultural middle schools with over 2 million students, said that there were 60,000 instructors in these schools—an average of less than 3 teachers for each 3-year school and one teacher for each 36 students. The reported ratio for Kiangsu and Szechwan (the only areas where provincial-level figures for total teachers are available) was approximately the same as the national ratio.

Teachers were drawn from several sources. When available, graduates of ordinary senior middle schools were used. Otherwise, the recourse was to ordinary junior middle school graduates, primary school teachers, government functionaries who had been sent to the countryside for work experience, local Communist Party leaders, and even experienced peasants. The principle behind teacher recruitment was that "every knowledgeable person can teach" and that formal teaching qualifications were not necessary. As a result of this approach and the general shortage of teaching personnel throughout the country, the agricultural middle schools were staffed largely with people who, at the time of their appointment, admittedly had had neither teacher training nor teaching experience.

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[9] *Hung Ch'i*, No. 7/1959 (Apr. 1, 1959); in *ECMM* No. 168 (May 18, 1959), p. 22–23.

The nature of this group posed persistent problems, and necessitated special training measures which will be discussed later. The problems were apparently not overcome after 2 years of experience with the new schools. A report on the situation in the Szechwan schools delivered to the National People's Congress in April 1960 stated that only slightly over half of the teachers in that province had had a senior middle school level education, and that inadequate political training and lack of teaching experience were prevalent shortcomings. A speech to the same convocation by a delegate from Liaoning acknowledged that the teachers in that province's schools were "not very good," and cited the difficulties experienced by a fresh graduate of an ordinary junior middle school assigned to teach in an agricultural middle school. According to an article in *Hung Ch'i* in May 1960, teachers in the early days of the Kiangsu schools were often poor: The author cited the case of a female teacher of agriculture who knew nothing of agricultural production, and of a teacher of agricultural mechanization who could not operate a tractor or identify parts of the machine. The article claimed that conditions in 1960 were much improved, and that 87 percent of the teachers in the province at that time had a senior middle school or better level of education.[10]

Time allotments for study and labor.—Such, then, was the educational environment into which a student of an agricultural middle school entered. But how did he spend his time while he was enrolled? As indicated previously, the student spent about half his time in classroom study and half in productive labor. Apparently the majority of the schools used a split day, and a minority used alternate days for study and work. Other arrangements, such as alternate-week systems and a system with study in mornings and evenings and work in between, were apparently tried and rejected because of poor academic results or the overburdening of the student.[11] The half-day or alternate-day system was a general practice, but was subject to alteration according to the farm calendar. A joint report to the National People's Congress in April 1960 by three Fukien delegates stated that the principle which governed division of time in that province was "less study during the busy farming season, more during slack farming season, occasional study during the busiest season . . . and all-day study on rainy days."[12] A Szechwan delegate told the same meeting that the work-study schedule in his province varied from month to month and that in busy seasons, teachers went to the fields to conduct brief review lessons or introduce new material. Schools in Kiangsu

[10] *Hung Ch'i*, No. 10/1960 (May 16, 1960); in *SCMM* No. 215 (June 27, 1960), p. 15.
[11] See *Hung Ch'i*, No. 7/1959 (Apr. 1, 1959); in *ECMM* No. 168 (May 18, 1959), p. 21–22.
[12] *Jen-min Jih-pao*, Apr. 16, 1960; in *Union Research Service* (Hong Kong: Union News Agency), Vol. 19, No. 17 (May 27, 1960), p. 250.

were reportedly in session for 11 months of the year, with either the equivalent of 5 months given to study and 6 months to labor, or 5 months for labor and 6 months for study. In Hopei, on the other hand, schools were apparently in session for virtually the full 12 months, with their overall time divided equally between study and labor.

The Kiangsu schools were variously reported to spend 20 or 23 hours per week in classroom study, and one Anhwei school was described as having 24 lesson periods per week. The schools presumably operated on the 6-day week basis which is the usual system for middle schools in Communist China. No weekly hours were reported for other provinces, but Szechwan schools were said to provide 900 "lesson-hours" per year, a figure which would average out to about 18¾ hours per week for an 11-month (48-week) year, and less for a longer school session.[18]

Curriculum and academic standards.—The curriculum in agricultural middle schools consisted of a limited number of subjects. There were four basic courses: Chinese language, mathematics, politics, and a course in agriculture which was most commonly referred to as "basic agricultural knowledge." Language and mathematics were cited as the two major courses in the curriculum.

No specific information on the coverage of the language course at this period is available, other than the general statement that it corresponded to that offered in ordinary junior middle schools. Since most accounts did not mention "literature" specifically, however, they left the impression that the course coverage was actually narrower than the scope of the course in Chinese taught in ordinary middle schools. It was not completely clear whether mathematics as taught in the typical agricultural middle school in Kiangsu included algebra and geometry, but presumably it did; a spokesman from Szechwan listed these subjects as well as arithmetic in the curriculum generally in use in his province. The course on politics included material presenting the regime's official explanation and interpretation of such subjects as important domestic and international current political topics, the program for agricultural development, and Mao Tse-tung's political thought. The coverage of the "basic agricultural knowledge" course was not well defined in the sources, but it apparently included such things as basic techniques of crop cultivation, irrigation methods, and fertilizer application. One source stated that the teaching materials for this course were derived from those used in ordinary junior middle school botany and zoology, and gave special emphasis to the regime's "8-point charter" for agriculture (a set of guidelines regard-

[18] *Ibid.*, p. 255.

ing close planting, deep plowing, fertilization, etc.).[14] Perhaps the best way to indicate what was included in the basic agricultural course is to cite some of the courses added to the original four in some schools. Most prominently mentioned among these was a course on agricultural machinery, indicating that this topic was not included in the basic agriculture course. Other special courses which were added to the curriculum in some areas included animal husbandry, gardening, and sericulture. It was claimed that some of the schools taught physics and chemistry to students in the second or third year of the 3-year course, but it was not clear just how widely these courses were offered.

There is unfortunately little indication of the way in which the 20-odd hours of weekly classroom work were divided among the various subjects. The writer found only one such schedule in the available data, and it pertained to a single agricultural middle school in Anhwei. The schedule covered a class week consisting of 24 "lessons" (presumably equal to class hours), and was divided as follows:[15]

	Lessons per week
Language	6
Mathematics	6
Politics	2
Biology	3
Chemistry	2
Cotton cultivation	2
Animal husbandry	2
Physical education	1
Total	24

Since it was not made clear for which of the 3 years this plan was designed, and since the plan does not include a basic agriculture course as such, and does include a course in biology which is not mentioned in other sources, it is impossible to generalize from this one example. It may be indicative, however, of a lack of standardization in the curriculum pattern of such schools.

What standards were achieved in the academic courses in the agricultural middle schools, and how did the record of performance of their students compare with that of students in the ordinary junior middle schools? The general claim repeated frequently in mainland press and periodical articles about the agricultural middle schools was that their students achieved standards comparable to those of students in the ordinary junior middle schools in the "main subjects" in their curriculum. But careful scrutiny of the claims reveals that they were

[14] *Ibid.*

[15] *Hung Ch'i*, No. 13/1960 (July 1, 1960); in *SCMM* No. 221 (Aug. 8, 1960), p. 42.

often considerably qualified, so that this evaluation would apply only to some of the students, or some of the schools, in a given area. A typical example of the resulting vagueness is a statement in a joint article by three officials from Kiangsu in the November 17, 1959, issue of the *Jen-min Jih-pao*. Discussing the schools in Kiangsu, the article said that " the standard of *several* subjects taught in the agricultural middle schools is not lower than that taught in the regular middle schools *in general*, while results achieved by students of *a number of* agricultural middle schools are even better than those achieved by the students of regular middle schools" (italics supplied).

As for achievements in specific subjects, there were several claims of equivalence or near-equivalence to ordinary middle school standards in language and mathematics, and one or two claims of comparable performance in tests on politics, but these claims were balanced by provincial reports which conveyed a different impression. A Kiangsu delegate to the National People's Congress in April 1960 stated that only about half of the Kiangsu schools covered in a survey equalled or surpassed the standards of local ordinary full-time middle schools in language and mathematics. A joint report to the same meeting by three Fukien delegates stated that in less than one-fourth of the agricultural middle schools in Fukien did the quality of language and mathematics teaching match that in ordinary schools. Tests in three areas in Hopei, reported in the *Jen-min Jih-pao* on August 10, 1960, showed that only 50 percent of the agricultural schools there had attained the standard of ordinary full-time schools in "cultural studies." It may be noted, also, that whereas there was frequent mention of admirable standards in language and mathematics, standards in physics and chemistry were almost never specifically cited.

Perhaps the best evidence of actual nation-wide standards in these new schools was contained in an editorial in the *Jen-min Jih-pao* published March 16, 1960, on the occasion of the second anniversary of the founding of the schools. Although praising the schools and calling for greater numbers of them on a national scale, the editorial said that since they were half-day schools, they "should naturally be regarded as different from the ordinary full-time middle schools in the standards of such fundamental subjects as cultural and scientific subjects." The editorial added that they "may be able to catch up" with ordinary schools in such "principal subjects" as "language, mathematics, etc." This evaluation was in line with that voiced by a Liaoning delegate to the National People's Congress the following month. He told the meeting that "generally speaking, the students of agricultural middle schools are still somewhat behind the students of

full-time middle schools in book knowledge, but their knowledge of productive labor far exceeds that of the latter." [16]

It is clear from the available data that in the period from 1958 to 1960 the agricultural middle schools in general offered a substantially watered-down course of study compared to that obtainable in the ordinary junior middle schools. It may well be true, as claimed, that by offering only a limited number of basic courses, the schools provided as many annual hours of instruction in these courses as are offered in the ordinary schools. But it also is evident that the complete absence of the usual junior middle school courses in history and geography, and the indicated lower standard in physics and chemistry where these science courses were offered, sufficed to draw a clear line of distinction between graduates of these new schools and the ordinary schools.

Productive labor activities.—The foregoing material has provided a brief outline of the way in which the student in an agricultural middle school spent that half of his time which was devoted to classroom study. It now remains to consider his use of the other half of his time—that devoted to productive labor. The picture derived from numerous accounts indicates that the student's labor was performed in a variety of enterprises in "production bases" made available to the schools through the local communes. The production bases were of two kinds: agricultural and industrial. Schools had their own crop farms, part of which were experimental plots. They also often had livestock and poultry farms, orchards, and tree nurseries. In some cases they had vegetable gardens, tea plantations, aviaries, and stocked fish ponds. The factories run by the schools were generally small, many of them in the nature of handicraft workshops. The two most commonly mentioned types of small plants were those producing local types of fertilizer (both chemical and bacterial) and insecticides. Other shops engaged in the processing of economic crops such as soy beans. The *Jen-min Jih-pao* of March 16, 1960, stated that the principal undertakings of productive enterprises run by the schools should be cultivating high-yield economic crops and making handicraft products of the types produced by rural people as sideline occupations.

No national figures were released for acreage of farmland cultivated or the number of workshops operated by agricultural middle schools; however, provincial-level figures for three provinces were reported. In Kiangsu, the 2,174 schools were said to be cultivating 115,400 *mou* (a *mou* equals about one-sixth of an acre) and operating 1,466

[16] *Jen-min Jih-pao*, Apr. 12, 1960; in U.S. Joint Publications Research Service report No. 6491 (Dec. 29, 1960), p. 93.

handicraft workshops and factories in April 1960. In Fukien at the same time, 560 schools were tilling 16,500 *mou* and running 330 "factories and farms." In August 1959, 930 schools in Liaoning were cultivating 4,532 *mou* and operating 1,016 factories. These figures indicated a rather wide variance in the scope of productive enterprises in the three areas and suggest that in many schools the students were confined to agricultural labor or work in enterprises not run directly by the schools.

The production plans of the schools were incorporated into the overall plan of the commune, and the commune assisted the schools in obtaining draft animals and large agricultural tools, making arrangements for the supply of raw materials for the workshops, and organizing the marketing of products. Division of labor within the schools was reportedly based on age and sex, with the older students specializing in agricultural labor and the younger ones in handicraft production. The boys were commonly assigned to heavier work, and the girls undertook lighter tasks such as feeding animals and poultry.

There is little information available on the type and volume of products produced by the school workshops. One account of a school in Anhwei reported that it had trial-manufactured 98 kinds of insecticides and 177 different kinds of chemical and bacterial fertilizers, and that over a period of 2 years it had produced over 4 million catties (a catty is slightly heavier than a pound) of insecticides and 37 million catties of fertilizer for market.[17]

Part of the staff of the school was charged with the special responsibility for supervising productive work. For example, one Kiangsu school with 303 students was reported in the spring of 1959 to have 7 "experienced peasants" and "technical workers" in charge of production, in addition to the 11 teachers on its staff.

Financial self-sufficiency.—A description of the productive enterprises of the agricultural middle schools leads logically into a discussion of their finances, since at this period the schools were designed to be virtually self-sufficient through their own production activities. The proudest boast concerning these schools had to do with the economy of their operation.

In discussing the economic advantages of the agricultural middle schools, the regime released some interesting figures on the comparative costs of educating a youth in agricultural middle schools and ordinary junior middle schools. The figures used in the discussion were based on statistics collected in the model province of Kiangsu. Three somewhat different versions of these figures are available in the data, but perhaps the most authoritative is the one included in a

[17] *Hung Ch'i*, No. 13/1960 (July 1, 1960); in *SCMM* No. 221 (Aug. 8, 1960), pp. 39–41.

detailed report to the National People's Congress in April 1960 by a Kiangsu delegate. The figures, on a per student per year basis, were as follows: [18]

	Cost to state (yuan)	Cost to family (yuan)
Ordinary junior middle school	187	108
Agricultural middle school	13	38

The figure for the cost to the state of ordinary middle school study was roughly confirmed by another source, which reported that it cost the state about 500 *yuan* to put a junior middle school student through his 3-year course.[19]

It is not completely clear what was meant by "cost to the state" in the case of agricultural middle schools. This expenditure may have been actually charged to the communes, but it is possible that the provincial or lower-level governmental subdivisions still played a small role directly in the financing of the schools. In any case, it is apparent that the expense borne by the authorities in running the agricultural schools was but a small fraction of the cost of supporting ordinary junior middle schools. The reduction in the financial burden on parents was not so great, but was still equal to two-thirds of the cost of supporting a student in the ordinary schools.

Any expense involved in the initial steps in establishing the schools, such as making available school buildings and farmland, was usually borne by the communes out of their welfare fund. From that point on, the school was expected to strive as quickly as possible to earn enough to pay its teachers' salaries and its students' tuition, to provide operational funds, and to supply the students with food, books, and other needed school supplies.

The extent to which self-sufficiency was actually achieved by these schools is difficult to determine. There were glowing accounts of individual schools or groups of schools which paid all their expenses and returned a profit to the communes, and there were frequent statements that "many" agricultural schools were "wholly or partially" self-supporting. Few hard statistics were released, however, and those which did become available indicated that the goal of self-sufficiency proved to be elusive. The case of Kiangsu is again illustrative: In May 1959, after one year's experience with these schools, a Kiangsu official wrote in *Hung Ch'i* that all the agricultural middle schools in his province should be entirely self-sufficient within 2 years—i.e., by

[18] NCNA, Apr. 7, 1960; in *SCMP* No. 2240 (Apr. 19, 1960), p. 15. The other two versions of these figures differ mainly in the cost to the state of the agricultural middle schools, which is variously cited as 10 and 18.20 yuan. One U.S. dollar equals roughly 2 to 2½ yuan.

[19] *Jen-min Jih-pao*, Nov. 27, 1959; in *SCMP* No. 2156 (Dec. 15, 1959), p. 40.

the spring of 1961. About a year later, in July 1960, an enthusiastic NCNA English-language news release stated flatly that most of the schools in Kiangsu were already able to cover all their expenditures. But Kiangsu delegate Kuan Wen-hui's speech to the National People's Congress a few months earlier suggests that this report was premature. In this speech (in April 1960) Kuan stated that at that time only 19 percent of the Kiangsu schools were "wholly self-supporting," another 18.6 percent were "to a large extent self-supporting," and 31.8 percent were "partly self-supporting." The implication left was that the remaining 30.6 percent were still wholly dependent on outside sources. In the same speech it was reported that the plan now called upon the schools in Kiangsu to "strive for self-support, partly or wholly" within "2 years or a little longer," indicating that full independence was not seen as attainable before 1962 or later.

Reports concerning Fukien in the spring of 1960 suggested a similar situation. Of the 560 agricultural middle schools there, 55 were reported to be able to pay their teachers' salaries fully, and another 61 to be self-sufficient in food. Individual cases of schools which had paid for teachers' wages, food, and other expenses were cited, but the impression conveyed was that only a relatively small minority of the schools were able to pay the major part of their expenses.[20]

The best available example of the way in which a typical agricultural middle school sought to balance its budget was given in an article in *Hung Ch'i* on May 1, 1959. It concerned a school in Kiangsu, and presented the school's balance sheet of receipts and expenditures in 1958 as follows:[21]

Receipts:

Source	*Amount (yuan)*
Agricultural products	13,824.40
Silkworm rearing	400.00
Wool	76.00
Pig rearing	280.00
Rabbit rearing	11.00
Manufacturing of straw ropes	25.00
Manufacturing of rush mats	300.00
Manufacturing of fertilizer and insecticides	1,100.00
Total	16,016.40
Expenditures (not itemized)	18,792.00

For 1959, the same school planned to attain complete self-sufficiency by earning a total of 30,890 *yuan* through cultivating 135 *mou* of wheat, 121 *mou* of paddy rice, and 5 *mou* of soy beans, and by grow-

[20] *Jen-min Jih-pao*, Apr. 16, 1960; in *Union Research Service*, vol. 19, No. 17 (May 27, 1960), pp. 251–52.

[21] *Hung Ch'i*, No. 9/1959 (May 1, 1959); in *SCMM* No. 179 (Aug. 5, 1959), pp. 22–23.

ing vegetables and ramie, raising pigs, sheep, chickens, and fish, and making rush mats.[22] Expenses contemplated for 1959 were as follows:

Item	Amount (yuan)
Yearly boarding charges (calculated at 6 *yuan* per capita per month)	22,608
Wages and salaries of teachers and staff	5,160
School operating expenses	1,100
Books and stationery	1,212
Total	30,080

Research and experimental work.—In addition to producing goods for market to achieve self-sufficiency, the agricultural middle schools, like all middle schools and colleges in Communist China, were supposed to give substance to the tripartite combination of learning, labor, and research by engaging in various types of experimental work. The schools were generally reported to be devoting at least a part of their agricultural acreage to experimental plots, and there were numerous reports of their achievements in attaining high yields. A number of schools were reported to conduct experimental work in meteorology (weather forecasting) and water conservation. Some schools apparently also did research on fertilizer, insecticides, and soil analysis, and their students designed (as well as trial-manufactured) new types of farm implements and machinery. In regard to this latter category of investigation, one report stated that upperclassmen in Kiangsu agricultural middle schools had "created" 10 kinds of modern agricultural tools, including a mowing machine, a fodder mixing appliance, an insecticide sprinkler, and rice and wheat threshing machines.[23] As has been noted previously, another account stated that students in one school in Anhwei had trial-manufactured 98 different kinds of insecticides and 177 kinds of chemical and bacterial fertilizers.

This kind of activity was considered to be very important. After 2 years of experience with the schools, the regime emphasized their role as "strongholds for scientific research for the people's communes" and exhorted them to do more in this field.[24] In carrying out experimental work, the schools were urged to focus on problems confronted in current production and to seek solutions through native methods appropriate to local conditions.

Communist Party leadership.—The importance attached to the agricultural middle schools is apparent in the particularly intimate role which Communist Party functionaries played in the daily life of the schools. From the days of their inception, reports from all areas

[22] The breakdown of income among these several sources was not given.
[23] *Kuang-ming Jih-pao*, July 23, 1960; in *SCMP* No. 2336 (Sept. 13, 1960), p. 8.
[24] *Jen-min Jih-pao*, May 18, 1960; in *SCMP* No. 2275 (June 13, 1960), pp. 11–12.

stressed that the secretaries of the Party Committees in the communes commonly acted as heads of the schools. They or other high-ranking local Party functionaries usually were reported to teach the political courses in the schools. An unsigned article in the *Jen-min Jih-pao* on February 2, 1960, stated that throughout the country, Party committees at all levels actively supported the schools, included discussions of their work on the agenda of their daily meetings, and inspected them regularly. An editorial in the same paper on March 16, 1960, emphasized strengthened leadership by commune Party committees as the basic guarantee of the success of the schools, and stressed the familiar dictum that "politics must be in command" and the ideological and political consciousness of both students and teachers must be brought to a high level. Due attention was paid to the fostering of membership in the Young Pioneers and Communist Youth League (for students) and the Communist Party (for teachers).

Trial Extension to Senior Middle Level

Although the original agricultural middle schools and the overwhelming majority of them consisted of a 3-year course at the junior middle school level, it should be noted in passing that during the early period there was some experimentation with the idea of establishing a continuation of such schools at the senior middle (10th through 12th grade) level. This idea was first publicized in the fall of 1959, when it was reported that in Kiangsu province a small number of senior agricultural middle schools had been established. The first reports in late November 1959 indicated that 50 such schools with an enrollment of 1,300 students were in existence. The figures released in April 1960 stated that of Kiangsu's 2,174 agricultural middle schools with an enrollment of 279,890 students, 51 were on the senior middle level and enrolled 4,930 students. Thus the proportion of schools and students at senior level was but a very small fraction of the total. An NCNA English-language news release of March 5, 1960, stated that "a number of" senior level schools had been set up in Kiangsu, Hopei, and "a few other provinces," but no further details on their establishment outside of Kiangsu were released.

Reasons cited in Kiangsu for the extension of the agricultural middle school system included the claimed successful results of the junior middle level schools and the need for more "intermediate-level" technical personnel in the communes. Also mentioned was the desire for further educational opportunities expressed by students in the junior level agricultural schools and graduates of the ordinary junior middle schools who were unable to gain entrance into the limited number of

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ordinary senior middle schools. The curriculum in the senior level schools was not given in detail in the sources, but an item in the *Jen-min Jih-pao* on November 27, 1959, indicated that physics and chemistry were definitely being taught and that the mathematics courses included algebra and geometry. A second item in the same issue of the paper said that botany and planting and crop cultivation techniques were being taught in the senior schools. A speech to the National People's Congress by a Kiangsu delegate in April 1960 stated that 30 percent of the students in senior level schools should concentrate on "basic lessons" and be trained to be teachers, while the other 70 percent should concentrate on "professional lessons" to prepare to take their places as technical and management cadres in the communes.

As of 1960, the prospects for further development of the senior agricultural middle schools seemed quite limited. Lu Ting-i, the Party educational spokesman, gave the existing ones qualified endorsement in his *Jen-min Chiao-yü* article in February 1960, but added pointedly that "it is impossible to set up many half-day senior middle schools at present." A Kiangsu education official was even more specific when he wrote in the *Kuang-ming Jih-pao* (Kuang-ming Daily) on July 27, 1960, that "present economic conditions do not permit more half-day session senior middle schools to be built." It thus appeared that the regime's basic policy—that the vast majority of the physically mature youths over 16 years of age should further their education in spare-time study after a full working day—would preclude any rapid development of senior agricultural middle schools.

The First Graduates

The foregoing pages have provided a detailed description of the schools and the way they functioned in the 1958–60 period. Before going on to a summary discussion of the advantages then seen by the regime in schools of this type, as compared with the acknowledged problems and criticisms which their launching engendered, it may be useful to take a close look at the first graduates of these new institutions in order to see what knowledge they were actually claimed to have acquired and to ascertain what plans the regime had for them.

Inasmuch as most of the 3-year agricultural middle schools are considered to have been established since the beginning of 1958, it came as something of a surprise to outside observers that a number of graduates of these schools emerged in the summer of 1960. Actually, this development seems not to have been expected by even so eminent a personage as Lu Ting-i, for the Party spokesman stated flatly in his February 1960 article in *Jen-min Chiao-yü* that the first graduates

would come out "next year"—i.e., in 1961. Nevertheless, less than a month later articles began appearing with the news that there would be graduates in the summer of 1960. The first of these articles to become available, published in the *Kuang-ming Jih-pao* on March 12, stated that about one-fourth of the students who had entered the third year of the course in one school in Kiangsu would graduate the following summer. It added that the early graduates had been "transferred [into the schools] from a supplementary class," thus suggesting that some of the students may have gained advanced standing through spare-time study before their entry into the agricultural schools. Another possibility was that students had actually been transferred with advanced standing from ordinary junior middle schools.

Kiangsu was not to be allowed an unchallenged claim to the first graduates, however. A speech to the National People's Congress in April by a Szechwan delegate asserted that a school in his province had turned out 34 graduates in 1959, and an article in *Hung Ch'i* later in the year (July 1, 1960) claimed that in 1959 1 school in Anhwei had graduated 298 outstanding students ahead of time, to meet the needs of the commune.

Despite these early suspiciously competitive-sounding claims—reminiscent of the previous apparent competition for the credit for establishing the first agricultural middle school—the main cluster of publicity concerning the "first" graduates came in the late summer of 1960. Between late July and early September scattered accounts revealed that about 50,000 graduates of the schools were turned out that summer in 6 provinces. Once again, according to these reports, Kiangsu came out second best: Hopei province was reported to have graduated over 37,000 who were said to have studied for 3 years, while Kiangsu's 6,000-plus graduates were said to have been in school for only 2½ years.[25]

In the fanfare surrounding the emergence of the first sizeable numbers of graduates, their accomplishments were highly praised. The *Kuang-ming Jih-pao*, for example, speaking of the Kiangsu graduates, said:

> The half-farming and half-study agricultural middle schools have produced rich fruits. The rural people's communes now begin to have a research force of new-style intellectual and technical cadres trained by themselves. This is a great victory of the thought of Mao Tse-tung and a great victory of the Party's educational program.[26]

[25] For these figures and other details concerning the graduates, see especially a group of four items in the *Jen-min Jih-pao*, Aug. 10, 1960; in *SCMP* No. 2323 (Aug. 23, 1960), pp. 22–26.

[26] *Kuang-ming Jih-pao*, July 23, 1960; in *SCMP* No. 2336 (Sept. 13, 1960), p. 7.

The skills acquired by the new graduates were enumerated in detail. A *Jen-min Jih-pao* commentary of August 10 affirmed that "most" of the graduates had learned how to cultivate farm crops and raise animals; that some of them had learned how to make native-type fertilizers and insecticides and to repair farm implements; and that some had mastered the basic techniques of operating electric motors, diesel engines, lathes, and other machine tools. The article on Hopei's 37,000 graduates in the same issue of the paper reported that 8,000 of them had learned to drive tractors, 12,000 had learned to operate machines used in irrigation and drainage work, and "quite a few" had learned to make and repair machines, to make soil surveys and plans for water conservancy. Shensi graduates were generally reported to be able to cultivate various crops, control plant diseases and insect pests, irrigate fields, feed and care for domestic animals and fowl, operate agricultural machines, do farm accounting, and make fertilizers and insecticides; "many" among them had learned how to operate special plows and weeding and sowing machines. Data on Kiangsu cited the example of one school where all the graduates had learned to cultivate major crops and raise animals, and just under one-third of them had learned either to make native chemical fertilizer and insecticides or to repair farm tools; another group of slightly under one-third of the total had learned such things as weaving, sugar making, and wine brewing, while "some" (apparently a still smaller group) had grasped the main techniques of operating motor-driven machinery. It would appear from these accounts that not all graduates emerged from the schools with the same skills, as a result of either specialization within the school or differentiation on the basis of ability.

The question of the assignments of these graduates was discussed in the same articles. As expected, the principle was firmly stated that most of the graduates would remain in the rural areas and go to work in the communes. The authoritative *Jen-min Jih-pao* commentary on the graduates said nothing about any of them going on to further study, stating merely that "they will stay in the rural areas to work, as required by the people's communes." The *Kuang-ming Jih-pao* article concerning Kiangsu asserted that 80 percent of the graduates in that province would stay in the communes, and the remainder would go on to higher studies. Other reports simply stated that most graduates would take up work assignments, with a small number going on to school.

Graduates were assigned to the commune to work as tractor drivers and mechanics, bookkeepers, workers in weather stations and agricultural experimentation centers, teachers in local primary schools, and as holders of a variety of "technical" positions in agricultural ma-

chinery, fertilizer, and insecticide plants. Some of them were assigned to take further short-term training in such specialities as agricultural technical work, accountancy, chemistry, health work, pedagogy, and meteorology before undertaking their jobs.

Claimed Advantages and Acknowledged Problems

Most of the advantages seen by the regime in the 1958–60 period in the institution of the agricultural middle schools have been mentioned earlier in this study. To summarize briefly, the Chinese Communist leadership viewed these schools as a means to satisfy growing popular demands for post-primary education. It also saw them as a way to train large numbers of rural youths to serve the communes in a variety of lower-level technical and administrative jobs requiring a rudimentary form of junior middle school education plus vocational training in crop-cultivation agriculture and other related rural occupations. It placed high value upon the form of the schools because they were at least potentially able to be self-supporting. They were also able to function with fewer teachers than ordinary middle schools and to utilize local sources of teaching personnel.[26] It was also claimed that the integral combination of education and labor in these half-day schools provided the student with an ideal environment in which to see more clearly the relationship between theory and practice and, through opportunities to apply his learning directly and immediately to practical work, to digest and better understand the things he was taught in class. The research and experimental work performed by the schools was considered to be especially valuable because it was closely geared to current local problems and its results were directly popularized among the local rural people through the students who lived and worked among them.

One final advantage of the schools was seen in the political sphere. The student body was given political instruction and was then used as an organized young activist group in the furtherance of the various centrally inspired mass movements through which policy is implemented in Communist China. One account, for example, noted that because of their active role in the campaign to establish the communes in 1958, the Kiangsu schools "were praised as 'political propaganda stations', while their students were called 'propagandists'."[27]

Although the agricultural middle schools were highly praised and their allegedly great advantages were frequently cited in the available mainland sources of the period, these same sources also made it clear

[27] *Jen-min Jih-pao*, Nov. 27, 1959; in *SCMP* No. 2156 (Dec. 15, 1959), p. 41.

that the establishment of the schools elicited criticism from some quarters and resulted in a number of admittedly difficult problems. Among the difficulties mentioned as encountered by the new schools in their early days were shortages of competent teachers, lack of needed school facilities and equipment, shortages of funds, inadequate provision of production facilities, and poor arrangements for the division of time between study and labor. As a result of these problems, there was apparently considerable early skepticism about these schools on the part of the masses and some cadres, and these doubts were reflected in low enrollments and, in some cases at least, a serious rate of dropouts.

As early as July 12, 1958, a few months after the big push to establish such schools began, a domestic radio broadcast reported that some people were saying that the quality of the schools was low, that there were no good instructors in them, and that they were not welcomed by the masses. A Kiangsu official, writing later about the early days of the schools, stated that some people showed a "negative attitude" toward them, asking: "What would be the use for farmers to learn farming?" He added that others predicted that the schools would be failures from beginning to end. The official himself acknowledged that in the early stages the schools were "inadequate and inferior" in relation to the ordinary middle schools in regard to both facilities and teaching quality.[28] An article in the *Kuang-ming Jih-pao* on August 14, 1959, stated that after a careful "propaganda campaign," that year's graduates of primary schools in one Kiangsu area were saying that they would "cheerfully apply" to get into the agricultural middle schools if they failed in entrance exams for the ordinary full-time school—a clear indication that the agricultural schools were considered to be second-rate.

Further criticisms of the early days were belatedly acknowledged in the spring of 1960. An NCNA Chinese news release of March 15 revealed that some critics had complained that the schools were "supposed to be institutions of education and production but are in fact neither." A Szechwan delegate to the National People's Congress reported in April that ideological problems had been prevalent among both teachers and students. This situation was later reflected in an article in *Hung Ch'i* on July 1, 1960, which stated that at first "the hearts of the teachers and students were not in the school." The author illustrated the point by saying that after early results in one Anhwei commune's school turned out to be "poor," 16 students of an original 80 dropped out in less than half a month and there were "grumblings" among the masses. A Liaoning delegate to the 1960

[28] *Hung Ch'i*, No. 9/1959 (May 1, 1959); in *SCMM* No. 179 (Aug. 5, 1959), p. 19.

National People's Congress told the meeting that "those obsessed with the capitalist class view of education" said, when the schools were first set up, that since the teachers had not finished senior middle school and the schools were run by the masses, they could not be run well and would not last very long. Perhaps the sharpest early criticism was that reported by Ch'en Kuang in an article in the May 16, 1960, issue of *Hung Ch'i*. The Kiangsu official said that at the beginning "persons with bourgeois viewpoints" derided the agricultural middle school and "called it a school for beggars." He acknowledged that some parents were unwilling to have their children attend.

Apparently the children and their parents were not the only ones who took a dim view of the schools in their early stages. An article in *Hung Ch'i* on April 1, 1959, chastized those cadres who were running the schools "like a spare-time and temporary school." A year later a Kiangsu delegate to the National People's Congress criticized "a small number of lower-level cadres" who had felt that attendance at the schools took too much time away from production: "They intended to turn agricultural middle schools into spare-time schools, and . . . would consider these schools as production shock teams."[29]

The majority of the above-mentioned acknowledged criticisms, it will be noted, were publicized only belatedly, and their revelation was customarily accompanied by assertions that the problems which elicited the complaints had been overcome. But some authoritative items in the mainland press published as late as the spring of 1960 indicated that the new schools were not yet accepted as completely successful at that time. For example, an unsigned article in the *Jen-min Jih-pao* on February 2, 1960, made the distinctly qualified evaluation that the agricultural middle schools "have now begun to shape up" and "have fulfilled fairly well their teaching and productive labor plans." An editorial in the same central Party journal on March 16, although calling for more of the schools throughout the nation, conceded that "not everybody is clearly aware of the great significance of the agricultural middle schools. Some say that the agricultural middle schools do not look like schools."

Probably the most persistent single problem faced by the regime in attempting to consolidate the schools was the recruiting of sufficient teachers with adequate preparation. The existence of this problem was not surprising, since there is abundant evidence of a chronic shortage of qualified teachers in the schools at all levels in Communist China.[30] But the frequent references to the problem and accounts of

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[29] NCNA, Apr. 7, 1960; in *SCMP* No. 2240 (Apr. 19, 1960), p. 17.

[30] In this connection, see Theodore H. E. Chen, *Teacher Training in Communist China*, Studies in Comparative Education series, OE-14058. Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1960.

a variety of stopgap measures taken to deal with it show that it was particularly serious in the agricultural middle schools. Reference has been made earlier in this study to the calibre of teaching personnel and their level of qualifications. The problem arising out of the recruitment of such people was recognized by the regime. A Kiangsu official, writing in *Hung Ch'i* on May 16, 1960, stated that at the beginning, when the agricultural schools had no full-time teachers and therefore borrowed instructors from the ordinary schools, the policy question arose as to whether it was better to train teachers first, or to set up the school first. It was decided to establish a school, obtain a staff, and then train it. This training was given through correspondence courses, short-term special vacation courses organized by normal schools and normal colleges, and in some cases by sending outstanding teachers to attend normal schools. The aid of teachers in the ordinary schools was solicited, and teachers in the agricultural schools visited their classes and learned from them.

There is evidence that not all the teachers were happy with their assignments. Acknowledged ideological problems affecting the teachers in Szechwan have already been mentioned. A similar problem was also faced in Kiangsu, where many of the teachers, most of whom were from the city, were admitted to have at first disliked the countryside and their appointed tasks there. Their views were reported to have changed as a result of political indoctrination and their salutary experience with labor.[31]

The regime encountered one new problem in the summer of 1960, when the first sizeable contingent of graduates emerged from the agricultural middle schools. This was the disgruntlement of graduates upon learning that they would not be allowed to continue their schooling. The Director of Education in the Kiangsu Provincial Party Committee acknowledged in an article in the *Kuang-ming Jih-pao* on July 27 that he himself had received a number of letters from "graduates who expressed unwillingness to obey the unified assignments of communes and demanded higher education. Some even expressed reluctance to stay in the countryside and take part in agricultural production." He added that the reasons for going to work in the countryside "are not adequately understood by all graduates . . . . Not a few of them are unable to adjust their thoughts." The Director's answer was to address a stern lecture to the recalcitrant students, telling them that if they were unwilling to take part in labor, it was because they were subject to the "extremely harmful" influence of "bourgeois ideas." He also called upon all the authorities concerned to conduct "penetrat-

[31] *Hung Ch'i*, No. 10/1960 (May 16, 1960); in *SCMM* No. 215 (June 27, 1960), p. 15.

ing ideological education" among the graduates to explain the necessity for the assignments to jobs.[32] The duty to devote themselves to rural work was also stressed in the commentary accompanying the several reports hailing the graduates published in the *Jen-min Jih-pao* on August 10, 1960.

Summary: Status of the Schools in Mid-1960

Despite these problems, the agricultural middle schools were hailed by the regime throughout the first 2 years of their existence as a valuable new educational development. When Lu Ting-i wrote his authoritative and widely cited article on the educational reforms of 1958 in *Hung Ch'i*, he said:

> Two measures taken at the end of last year and early this year stimulated the advance in education. One was to apply in all schools the principle of diligent work combined with thrifty study [i.e., the combination of education and labor]. The other was the opening of agricultural middle schools.[33]

On the occasion of the first and second anniversaries of the founding of the schools, in the spring of 1959 and 1960, Lu again lent his prestige to them by writing commemorative pieces.

Lu's important endorsement of the schools was seconded by enthusiastic articles in authoritative newspapers and magazines during the same 2-year period, as has been noted. There was a significant clustering of publicity for the agricultural middle schools around the March anniversary date in 1959 and 1960, but other items appeared from time to time throughout the period. At the time of the second anniversary of the founding of the schools, in March 1960, the *Jen-min Jih-pao* forcefully repeated its earlier editorial endorsement of them and called for the opening of such schools "at once" in all areas where they did not yet exist. It described the setting up of new agricultural middle schools and the strengthening of the old ones as an "urgent task" in rural educational work.[34] This strong approval voiced by the central Party journal was reflected a few months later, in the summer of 1960, when the emergence of the first agricultural middle school graduates was greeted with a fanfare of publicity. Thus as late as the summer of 1960 there was every indication that the schools had established themselves as an important and highly regarded new feature of the educational system and as the object of continuing favorable comment in mainland media.

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[32] *Kung-ming Jih-pao*, July 27, 1960; in *SCMP* No. 2336 (Sept. 13, 1960), pp. 15–17.
[33] *Hung Ch'i*, No. 7/1958 (Sept. 1, 1958); in *Current Background* (Hong Kong; American Consulate General) No. 516 (Sept. 2, 1958), p. 1.
[34] *Jen-min Jih-pao*, Mar. 16, 1960; in *SCMP* No. 2228 (Mar. 31, 1960), pp. 16–17.

Later Phase of Development (1961–62)

Renewed Attention After a Period of Silence

Although all evidence indicates that the agricultural middle schools were highly evaluated and approvingly publicized by the regime in the spring and summer of 1960, the onset of the fall of the year marked the beginning of a prolonged period during which virtually no ne[redacted] of the schools appeared in Chinese Communist sources. Throug[redacted] the fall and into the spring of 1961 there was no indication in avai[redacted] materials that these new institutions were discussed at any appreciable length in the mass media. Up until March 1961 the absence of such accounts was not particularly noteworthy, as gaps of several months had occurred between earlier flurries of publicity on the subject. But when the third anniversary of the officially celebrated founding of the schools passed in March 1961 without notice, the contrast with earlier anniversaries was rather striking. Logically, the third anniversary should have been an especially auspicious one, since it marked the approach of the close of the third year in the life of the new 3-year schools and thus the potential occasion for the first large-scale emergence of their graduates.

The continued existence of the schools was confirmed in an editorial in the *Jen-min Jih-pao* on February 28, 1961, which was addressed to the problem of a continuing shortage of personnel capable of handling tractors, irrigation equipment, and other agricultural machines. The editorial mentioned in passing that the opening of numerous agricultural middle schools had been one factor in the training of operators of agricultural machines, but it placed no particular stress on their role in the training of such personnel. The impression left by the editorial was that the schools might not have been very effective in accomplishing what had been previously cited as one of their main purposes. This impression was bolstered by several other news items released during the spring of 1961 which discussed various measures for solving the shortage of machine operators, but made no mention whatsoever of the role of the agricultural middle schools in this connection.

The net effect of the long absence of any particular attention to the schools in mainland sources, and the criticism implied in such references to them as did find their way into the mass media, was to suggest that perhaps the schools had encountered some new difficulties, either as a result of inherent defects discovered in their own makeup or as a consequence of the severe crisis in the agricultural economy which was well advanced in late 1960 and 1961.

The long period of virtual silence on the agricultural middle schools was finally broken in the middle of 1961, and during the latter half of the year scattered reports concerning the status of schools in various parts of the country gradually began to appear once again in mainland publications. By the spring of 1962 reports had become available in sufficient number to enable one to reconstruct in general outline, if not in detail, the picture of what had been happening to these institutions during the preceding year and a half.

The new material released in late 1961 and 1962 did nothing to update the statistical data available on the status of agricultural middle schools in the nation as a whole. No new national figures were offered for either numbers of schools or total enrollment. Nor were there any reports on the number of agricultural middle school graduates in the whole country in 1961 or 1962, despite the fact that under normal conditions these figures could logically have been expected to be rather impressive.

The figures which were published often covered only a small part of one province, and sometimes only one school. The only national-level report, which was released in early January 1962, stated that the school year had begun in "thousands" of agricultural middle schools throughout the nation in the preceding months.[35] The use of the term "thousands" was possibly significant in view of the fact that several *tens of thousands* of such schools had been reported to be in existence in early 1960; if the report had meant to say tens of thousands, it could have done so very easily, since the Chinese language has a special word for this number and it is a commonly used counting unit. The suggestion that the numbers of agricultural middle schools might have declined between 1959 and 1961 was further strengthened by new data available from two areas where the number of schools in earlier years had been previously reported. Kiangsu province, which had nearly 2,200 schools in April 1960, was reported to have only 1,500 in November 1961; the Shanghai outskirts, which had 220 schools in August 1959, had only 171 in December 1961. No 1961–62 data on numbers of schools was available for any other area. It is perhaps noteworthy in this connection that a conference in Fukien in October 1961 called for the "re-establishment" of a number of the schools in that province.[36]

New total enrollment figures were given for only one province (Kirin), and they could not be compared with any available earlier data. The only enrollment comparison that could be made involved the outskirts of Shanghai, and it indicated that enrollment (as well as

[35] NCNA, Jan. 2, 1962; in *SCMP* No. 2654 (Jan. 9, 1962), p. 28.
[36] *Kuang-ming Jih-pao*, Oct. 8, 1961; in *SCMP* No. 2604 (Oct. 24, 1961), p. 11.

numbers of schools) had sharply declined in that area; the decline in enrollment between 1959 and 1961 was from 27,000 to 16,000.

With regard to graduates, most of the new reports were confined to giving cumulative figures for the total number of graduates that had emerged from the schools in various areas since their founding. Such cumulative figures covering the situation in several provinces through 1961 were released. The total graduates accounted for in these reports was between 225 and 230 thousand, a substantial figure considering the small number of provinces represented, but still a far cry from the much larger national figures that could logically have been anticipated that year. No new figures for graduates at either national or provincial level became available in 1962.

Thus the statistical data released in late 1961 and 1962 leaves a clouded but essentially unimpressive quantitative picture of the number of agricultural middle schools, their enrollment, and recent graduates.

Adoption of a Modified System

New schedule for annual school session.—The new material published in the 1961–62 period makes it quite clear, however, that in a gradual process which apparently began in the autumn of 1960 and culminated sometime in 1961 in most areas, the system under which the schools operated was modified to a considerable degree. According to the data of the 1958–60 period, most of the schools at that time were run nearly all year round on a split-day basis, with students' studying for half of the day and then working in the school's own farms or factories for the other half of the day. In the new more flexible pattern which came to be generally adopted in 1961, some of the schools were reported to be operating on the split-day (or alternate-day) basis and others were run on a spare-time basis, but most were on a still different schedule. The new system, of which there were a number of variations, provided essentially for the schools to operate on a full-day basis in the slack season of the agricultural year, and then to close down during the busy season. The length of the schooling period apparently varied from as little as 4 to as many as 7 months, but generally was of about 5 months' duration. In most parts of the country, school was in session more or less continuously, except for a vacation break around Chinese New Years in January or February, from early November until the end of March or sometime in April. During the balance of the year, the students generally returned to their homes and worked in the commune's fields with other peasants. While working in the communes,

the students were expected to do regular self-study and participate in small group study sessions in their spare time; the teachers traveled around an assigned area and gave periodical individual tutoring and group guidance during the labor months. Under this system, during the working period the students were supposed to study by themselves for about an hour a day and to meet three or four times a month in groups for several hours of group discussion or instruction.

Judging from the several accounts of schedules for the study months, it would appear that the schools which are in session for 5 months of the year have about 120 days of classes during this period, allowing for a 1- or 2-week vacation at Chinese New Years and for Sundays off. This is roughly comparable to, but slightly less than, the approximately 130 days (in terms of full-day equivalents) which were obtained under the former split-day system. During the approximately 20 weeks in which students are attending classes, they have about 5 hours per day (or 30 hours per week) of classroom work, amounting to a total of about 600 hours for the school year. Students in regular full-time junior middle schools, on the other hand, have about 1,000 hours of class-time in their much longer (37 to 40 weeks) school year. The indicated relationship between class hours for regular and agricultural junior middle schools is roughly confirmed by an article in the *Kuang-ming Jih-pao* which stated explicitly that the total study time in agricultural middle schools in Kiangsu was only about one-half of that in regular junior middle schools, on an annual basis.[27]

Reasons for the change.—The rationale behind the change in the system under which the agricultural middle schools were operated was indicated in several items in mainland publications. The primary reason for the move was clearly the need to have more labor power available for use during the busy season in the agricultural calendar. This was a reflection of the regime's overriding concern, from 1960 on, with the mobilization of all resources to bolster lagging agricultural production. But a question of pedagogical efficiency was also cited as one of the justifications for the change. It was acknowledged that the former year-round split-day or alternate-day system provided the advantages of a built-in continuous interplay of theory and practice. Yet the constant shifting from study to labor had resulted in special problems: the teachers had insufficient time to prepare their lessons, and the students were unable to "consolidate" their learning. Under the new system, the opportunity to immediately apply knowledge to concrete problems was sacrificed to some extent, but lessons were related to everyday life by a strong "practical" orientation.

[27] *Kuang-ming Jih-pao*, Mar. 12, 1963; in *SCMP* No. 2710 (Apr. 2, 1963), p. 15.

Furthermore, during the prolonged period of labor the teachers could have time to develop their teaching materials, and the students were able to review and digest their lessons in organized and supervised spare-time study. The basic economic and pedagogical rationale behind the change was best summarized in an article in the authoritative *Jen-min Jih-pao* at the end of 1961, which stated:

> When the agricultural middle schools were first established, the method of dividing a day into half for labor and half for study, and the method of labor and study on alternate days, were adopted. Later it was found that such methods could not enable the students to provide full support to agriculture during busy seasons, nor to devote their full energy to study during slack farm seasons. But after the present method has been adopted, we have been able to meet more satisfactorily the needs of agricultural production, and the time for study has been more concentrated, to the satisfaction of students, teachers, and parents.[38]

Another aspect of the economic advantages seen in the new system had to do with the financing of the operation of the schools. Under the new system the schools were largely financed by tuition fees paid by the students out of their earnings as laborers on the communes during the busy season. It was claimed that in most cases these earnings were sufficient to pay the tuition and have something left over to bolster the finances of the student's family.

The tortuous path actually followed by one of the schools in arriving at the new system was outlined in a revealing item published in a leading mainland newspaper in December 1961.[39] This item traced the vicissitudes through which the school passed from the time of its founding, and the record is worthy of discussion in some detail. When first established in the latter part of 1957, the school reportedly got off on the wrong foot. It had no fixed "production base" (school farm or factory) in which its students could work, and at the same time it overambitiously attempted to emulate a regular middle school in its curriculum. The unhappy result was that both study and productive labor activities were admittedly "confused". In early 1958, the school was given a substantial amount of land and it was "demanded" that it become self-supporting. It eventually became largely self-sufficient, but the ensuing "excessive pursuit of economic profit" subjected the students to a heavy burden of labor, and resulted in an acknowledged "failure to accomplish the tasks of education". The school "almost turned itself into a production team, arousing the uneasiness of some teachers and students to such an extent that some students even asked permission to leave the school". Faced with this unsatisfactory situa-

[38] *Jen-min Jih-pao*, Dec. 18, 1961; in *SCMP* No. 2652 (Jan. 5, 1962), p. 18.
[39] *Kuang-ming Jih-pao*, Dec. 14, 1961; in *Union Research Service*, vol. 27, No. 17 (May 29, 1962), pp. 297–98.

tion, the Party officials in the province in which the school was located decided to switch to the "5 and 7" system (5 months study in the slack season, 7 months labor in the communes). Under the new system, all of the productive activities operated by the school were returned to the jurisdiction of the communes and their sub-units, and the students worked in the fields like other peasants to earn the money to cover their tuition expenses.

Other significant aspects of the revised system.—As indicated in the foregoing, the single most significant change in the system was that the student's time for study, although still described as approximately "half-time" on an annual basis, was concentrated in about 5 months of full-time schoolwork rather than being spread virtually throughout the year on a half-day or alternate-day basis. The time for labor was similarly concentrated in the approximately 7 months remaining in the year. Involved in this basic change, however, was the virtual abandonment of one of the most fundamental features of the agricultural middle school in its original (1958–60) form. This was the self-sufficiency feature—the principle that these schools were designed to be self-supporting on the basis of the income to be produced by students and teachers working in farms and factories established and run by the schools. In the new material available in 1961 and 1962, there were a few references to schools having farm acreage or experimental fields, but there were no references whatsoever to the operation of any factories or workshops, and claims of partial or complete self-sufficiency were conspicuous by their almost total absence. The new system of financing was based upon tuition payments made by the students out of their earnings during the labor season. These tuition payments accounted for the bulk of the cost of operating the schools. They were supplemented by appropriations by the commune and, in some cases, government subsidies. There is some evidence that the earlier system of financing the schools with the income from their own productive enterprises had not worked out satisfactorily. For example, a report on the schools in Kirin province published in the *Jen-min Jih-pao* described the change in fiscal arrangements as follows:

> In the past, the administrative expenditure of agricultural middle schools in various areas was met by the income derived from . . . production or by subsidies given by the communes; as a result, some schools were not adequately financed. But after the [new] method has been adopted, when the students return to their production teams to work, they receive the same pay for work as other commune members, and in this way increase the income of their families. The small amount of miscellaneous charges by the schools will not increase the burden on the families of the students.[40]

[40] *Jen-min Jih-pao*, Dec. 18, 1961; in *SCMP* No. 2652 (Jan. 5, 1962), p. 18.

One example of the cost of schooling and its place in the family budget under the new system was available in the data. It cited the case of a student who earned about 70 *yuan* by working in the fields during the busy season. His annual expenses at the agricultural middle school were as follows: [41]

	Yuan
Board	33
School fee (tuition)	4
Books	2
Total	39

His earnings thus covered his school expenses and left a surplus of about 30 *yuan* to add to the family coffers.

Available information suggests that the tuition fees at agricultural middle schools were about two-thirds to 1 *yuan* for each month in which the school was in session (or 4 to 5 *yuan* per year). Since the data indicates that the students earn about two-thirds *yuan* per day for agricultural work in the communes, this would mean that it would take about 1 to 1½ days' work to cover the cost of 1 month's tuition, or about 1 week's work to cover the annual fees.

The curriculum in the agricultural middle schools under the new system remained basically concentrated on the four subject areas included in the early period: language, mathematics, agriculture, and politics. The main difference between accounts of the curriculum published during the two periods was that the later material explicitly and strongly emphasized the "practical" bias observed in the teaching of all courses. For example, it stressed that language courses paid special attention to training students to handle common everyday writing such as letters, reports, records, notices, and labor contracts. It mentioned that instruction in bookkeeping, "accounting", and "statistics" had been introduced in new added courses or covered in language or mathematic courses. Mathematics courses were widely reported to include instruction in the use of the abacus and the calculation of areas and volume. Courses in physics and chemistry were quite frequently mentioned, but in nearly half of the reports there were indications that the course content was narrower than that covered in the regular full-time junior middle schools and was focussed on practical applications of these sciences, such as the working of agricultural machines and the manufacture of chemical fertilizers.

[41] *Chung-kuo Ch'ing-nien Pao* (China Youth Daily), Sept. 20, 1961; in *SCMP* No. 2595 (Oct. 10, 1961), p. 14.

The net effect of the new material, when considered in comparison with that of the 1958–60 period, was to make it more explicit that the courses were different from those of similar title offered in the regular schools at that level, and also to suggest that the schools had become more a vehicle for producing people to handle the paper work in the communes and production teams, rather than the mechanical and technical jobs. This impression was strengthened by the 1961 and 1962 accounts of how recent graduates of the schools were being used in various parts of the country. These accounts mentioned assignments as accountants, bookkeepers, "statisticians", and work-point recorders much more frequently than assignments as machine operators, mechanical maintenance men, and general agricultural "technicians". They also mentioned prominently that many graduates had been given administrative posts as heads of production teams or secretaries of Party or Youth League branches, or were serving as school teachers.

There were few indications of the relative proportion of time given to the various courses in the curriculum, but such reports as became available suggested that from one-half to three-fourths of the class time was devoted to instruction in language and mathematics, and one-fourth or less to courses on agriculture. One account concerning a school in Shansi province stated that during the whole 3-year course the students spent just slightly over two-thirds of their time on "cultural" courses (mainly language and mathematics, but also simplified courses in chemistry and physics; no other "cultural" subjects were mentioned), one-fourth of their time on "technical" courses in agriculture, and between 6 and 7 percent on political courses.[42] The proportion of time devoted to language and mathematics is more typical of the pattern in Chinese primary schools than that in regular junior middle schools; in the latter considerably less than one-half of the total time is given to these two subjects. The earlier claims that a student in the agricultural middle schools receives as many total hours of instruction in language and mathematics as a student in the regular full-time junior middle schools were repeated in the 1961–62 data, but must be measured against the indications that the material covered was not at the same level of sophistication. The evidence of different course content is strengthened by several references in available material to new textbooks which had been, or needed to be, compiled for use in the agricultural schools.

Material published in the 1961–62 period indicated that some of the agricultural middle schools had classes at the senior middle level. There was no real evidence that the idea of continuing these schools

[42] *Jen-min Jih-pao*, Jan. 6, 1962; in *SCMP* No. 2660 (Jan. 17, 1962), p. 15.

at the higher level was being implemented very widely, however. The senior schools in Kiangsu, where this extension of the idea was first tried out in 1959, were still described as experimental in the spring of 1962.

Problems and Difficulties—Old and New

Most of the acknowledged problems encountered in running the agricultural middle schools under the new system were continuations of some of the difficulties faced in the earlier years. Not all of the financial difficulties were resolved under the new arrangements, and the need for improvement in the quantity and quality of the teaching force and for better facilities was frequently expressed. The Secretary of the Kirin Party committee, writing in a major national newspaper in the summer of 1961, acknowledged that the schools in his province were at that time still "unstable" and that the study conditions they offered were "somewhat difficult".[43]

The change in system apparently did not allay the doubts of some students about the advisability of entering the schools. In the same article cited above, the Kirin official admitted that "at present, a considerable number of students who will be graduated from senior primary schools this year still think that the agricultural middle schools are irregular schools and are therefore unwilling to enroll for their entrance examinations". According to an account in the same newspaper on December 1, 19[illegible] a similar problem was manifested when the system was changed at a school in Shansi. Students and teachers "generally" objected that the new period for study was too short and that the change amounted to converting the schools into spare-time classes or virtually closing them down.

The reluctance of graduates of the schools to return to work in the communes and forego the chance for further schooling was also apparent in the later data. As before, additional "ideological education" to counteract this tendency was recommended.

One new problem connected with the new system appeared in 1961. It posed a further complication of the already vexing teacher shortage. When the teachers traveled during the long labor season to give on-the-spot tutoring and group guidance to the students, each teacher necessarily was assigned to a certain geographical territory. He met with all students in that area and had to give instruction in all subjects and at each of the three year-levels represented in the school. This need for versatility placed a further strain upon the limited qualifications of the teaching personnel available for these schools.

[43] *Kuang-ming Jih-pao*, July 17, 1961; in *SCMP* No. 2563 (Aug. 23, 1961), p. 20-21.

Future Outlook for the Schools

Despite the continuation of problems and the acknowledged necessity for further improvement, the schools in their new form received sufficient publicity in the national press to indicate substantial approval by the leadership of the regime. The economic crisis centered in the countryside during the early 1960's served to reinforce the regime's conviction that it could not afford the investment of capital and manpower necessary to enable all young teenage rural youths to attend a full-time regular junior middle school. In this situation, the agricultural middle school remains clearly the only instrumentality through which the regime can hope to make this level of education available to a majority of the relevant age group. This fact was recognized by the Kirin Party Secretary quoted above, when he wrote that "in the future, when primary school education is universalized, the number of senior primary school graduates will be ever increasing and most of the problems in connection with their going for further study in higher schools will be . . . solved by the agricultural middle schools".[44] The same realization was reflected a few months later in an article in a national magazine which stated that the schools, in the new form in which they were being operated at that time, were in conformity with national needs, since "at the moment and for a fairly long period to come, the regular course middle schools in the country shall not be able, under the present circumstances, to meet the demand of the higher primary school graduates in the villages. . . ."[45]

From the point of view of an outside observer, it is still too early to evaluate this critical experiment with the agricultural middle school as a way of extending secondary education into the rural areas. It seems clear that in their original form, in which they were designed to be self-supporting on the basis of the income produced by the labor of their students in enterprises run by the schools, the institutions were a failure under the conditions existing in most parts of the country. The system apparently did not provide an economically efficient way of financing the operation of the schools, and at the same time it was not pedagogically effective.

The costs of education were apparently causing a general retrenchment in education in the spring of 1962. On May 31 of that year the *People's Daily* commented that Communist China "cannot afford to spend more money for expanding the educational network for children."

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[44] Ibid., p. 19.

[45] *Shih-shih Shou-ts'e* (Current Affairs Handbook), No. 19/1961, Oct. 8, 1961; in *SCMM* No. 288 (Nov. 20, 1961), p. 17.

The new mold in which most of the schools were cast by 1962 had some obvious economic advantages in that it enabled the students' labor to be better integrated with that of the rest of the working rural population and provided a more stable and less complicated method of meeting the costs of the schools. From the standpoint of pedagogical effectiveness, the main problems would seem to be (1) whether the desired "practical" bias can be maintained without the frequent built-in opportunities for applying the knowledge and skills acquired; and (2) whether the arrangements for guided self-study during the long labor period between abbreviated school years will be sufficient to sustain the continuity of the learning process.

It must be remembered that the regime itself has set rather definite standards that must be met before an agricultural middle school can be adjudged to be successful. An article in a leading national newspaper in the spring of 1962 said, in connection with the schools, that "failure of a student to acquire the same basic knowledge (about main subjects like Chinese language and mathematics) as from an ordinary middle school would naturally make a mockery of an agricultural middle school." [46] Considering the indicated level and coverage of the agricultural middle school courses in these subjects, it is by no means clear as yet that the necessary standard can be generally attained by schools of this type. It may well be that the nature of the school will have to undergo still further revision before a fully acceptable form is devised.

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[46] *Kuang-ming Jih-pao*, Mar. 12, 1962; in *SCMP* No. 2710 (Apr. 2, 1962), p. 15.

THE HALF-WORK, HALF-STUDY UNIVERSITIES

EXPERIMENTATION WITH THE IDEA of a half-time self-supporting school—although apparently conducted most extensively at the secondary education level—was not confined to that level alone. In the summer of 1958, a new half-time institution which was described as a "university" was established in the province of Kiangsi. This institution, and a similar companion "university" founded in the same province in early 1960, were in effect the counterparts, on a more advanced level, of the agricultural middle schools. They were ostensibly the prototypes of a new kind of higher educational institution, particularly designed to conform with the principles promulgated in the educational reforms of [redacted].

Establishment and Growth of the New Institutions

In mid-summer 1958, when the official news agency of Communist China reported that a new type of "university" had been set up in the city of Nanchang in southeast China, the institution was said to have been jointly sponsored by the highest governmental and Communist Party bodies in the province. The brief report stated that the new university would "give priority" to workers and peasants, and that it had initially enrolled recently discharged servicemen and members of the province's agricultural cooperatives as well as students from the ordinary schools. It added that the school would be operated on the principle of combining study with labor, and would turn out "qualified workers" to aid in the development of the province's upland resources.[1] Other available descriptive accounts released during the first year of the school's operation made it clear that the institution was designed mainly to admit workers' and peasants' children who had little formal schooling. It was planned that students would attend classes for 2 to

[1] NCNA, Aug. 5, 1958; in *SCMP* No. 1830 (Aug. 12, 1958), p. 11–12.

4 years on a half-time basis, devoting the other half of their time to productive labor at the school's own farms, forest areas, and factories in order to meet their living expenses. At the end of their training they would obtain "diplomas," certifying that they had received instruction in such departments as agriculture, forestry, and animal husbandry, and would be ready to take assignments in the mountain regions. The aim of the university was stated to be "the mass training of laborers for socialist and Communist construction who possess higher political consciousness and the standard of higher education in science and cultural subjects".[2]

The scale on which the new institution was launched was indeed an ambitious one. The August 5, 1958, announcement of its establishment (issued only 4 days after the institution was formally opened) stated that the "university" already consisted of a central site in Nanchang and 30 "branches" in outlying parts of the province. The beginning enrollment was given as 20,000 students, but this figure reportedly was expected to climb to 50,000 during the school's first year. Looking to the more distant future, the same announcement foresaw an institution with at least 100 branches and 400–480,000 students by 1962.

During the ensuing months, press reports traced the growth of the new institution. By April, 1959, it was reported to have 75 branches and a total enrollment of 31,000. At the same time it was announced that the university and its branches had 52 attached "technical schools" which enrolled another 11,000 students. By August 2, 1959, on the first anniversary of the university's founding, the president of the institution—which was by then known as *Kung-ch'an chu-yi lao-tung ta-hsüeh* or "Communist Labor University"—reported in a newspaper article that there were 84 "branch universities," and that the total university enrollment at the central and branch sites was just under 33,000. The president's report suggested that there had been some retrenchment from a possibly over-extended development at certain stages during the year, since he stated that the number of attached technical schools was then only 26 (half the number reported 4 months earlier) and that their enrollment at that time totalled only 4,400. He also confirmed that the enrollment in the whole institutional complex (including the attached technical schools) had once topped 42,000, and had been reduced to the total of approximately 37,000 by a process of "repeated screening".[3]

By late November, 1959, after the new school year had begun, there were reported to be 116 branches of the university, and the total en-

[2] *Kiangsi Jih-pao* (Kiangsi Daily), Aug. 7, 1959; in *SCMP* No. 2089 (Sept. 3, 1959), p. 44.
[3] *Kiangsi Jih-pao*, Aug. 2, 1959; in *SCMP* No. 2089 (Sept. 3, 1959), p. 39.

rollment was said to consist of 2,400 students at the main university campus in Nanchang and more than 55,000 in the branches and attached technical schools.[4] In an article published in the *Jen-min Jih-pao* at the end of the year, the president gave the figure of 55,000 as representing enrollment in the whole institutional complex (main campus, branches and attached technical schools). He added that a total enrollment of 100,000 was planned for 1961, by which time the university would be admitting 40,000 new students annually—a matriculation rate which it hoped to maintain during the next decade. In the same article the president stated that the number of branches then stood at 88 (a few more than he himself had reported the previous August, but substantially less than had been reported in November) and that the number of affiliated technical schools was then only 14 (half the number he himself had reported in August).[5] These statements indicated once again that the system had been undergoing further adjustment, perhaps to make allowances for earlier expansions which had proved to be "on paper" only. For the balance of the 1959–60 school year the statistics reported for the number of units in the institutional complex and the total enrollment remained substantially the same as those contained in the president's December article. A lengthy report in the *Jen-min Jih-pao* of June 12, 1960, for example, repeated the same unit count and the over-55,000 figure for aggregate enrollment in the institution.[6]

Meanwhile, as Communist Labor University and its 50,000-odd students entered 1960, they were joined by a new institution set up on the same pattern. In late February, the establishment of another half-time university with headquarters in Nanchang was announced. The new institution was named *Kung-kung lao-tung ta-hsüeh* or "Industrial Labor University."[7] It was clear from the outset that its organization and rationale were essentially the same as those of its counterpart, founded 1½ years earlier. Industrial Labor University also offered 2–4 years of schooling in a half-work, half-study system. The

[4] *Kiangsi Jih-pao*, Nov. 27, 1959; in *SCMP* No. 2178 (Jan. 18, 1960), p. 16. The 55,000 figure was not broken down further.

[5] *Jen-min Jih-pao*, Dec. 30, 1959; in *SCMP* No. 2178 (Jan. 18, 1960), p. 21.

[6] It should be noted that none of the several available sources giving the 55,000 figure indicated how many of these students were in the university (main center or branches) and how many were in the attached technical schools. The details included in enrollment statistics released before the 55,000 figure became current would suggest, however, that the great majority of these 55,000 students were enrolled in the university rather than in the technical schools. Only 4,400 of the 37,000 total enrollment in the whole institutional complex had been in the technical schools in August 1959 (see above, p. 40). After that time the number of technical schools had been drastically reduced, so there is no reason to believe that their students represented a larger percentage of the total enrollment in the complex in the summer of 1960 than in the summer of 1959.

[7] To avoid needless repetition, the English names of the two institutions may appear hereafter in abbreviated form consisting of their initials—C.L.U., I.L.U.

main characteristic that distinguished it from its sister institution was its concentration on industrial and communications specialties rather than agricultural and forestry training. The new university, presumably profiting from the experience gained in C.L.U., got off to an even faster start than its forerunner. Beginning its organizational work in January, it started enrolling students on February 23, and one month later was reported to be formally in operation with some 30,000 students enrolled in the central unit in Nanchang and 35 branches set up in cities, factories, and mining enterprises throughout the province.[8]

Thus by the spring of 1960 more than 85,000 students were reportedly enrolled in the various components of these two new half-time universities founded within the preceding 2 years. Yet this enrollment was obviously considered by the Kiangsi authorities to be only a first step. According to the province's draft economic plan for 1960 it was planned to admit a total of 80,000 new students into C.L.U. and I.L.U. in that year, bringing their combined enrollment to 135,000.[9] The extent to which the province was shifting emphasis to these two new institutions was evident in the fact that in the same year the authorities were planning to admit only 7,000 new students to the province's regular full-time universities, bringing their enrollment to just under 20,000.

Since the summer of 1960, very little new data concerning these two institutions has become available. Scattered reports in domestic news media in the fall of 1961 and early 1962, however, served to confirm that Communist Labor University was continuing in existence and recruiting new students. These accounts contained little concrete information on the institution, but suggested that it was still operating substantially in its original form. Most noteworthy among the sparse details offered was the revelation that C.L.U. then included 88 "branch schools" and 4 "technical schools" and had a total enrollment of 32,000. When compared with the figures which had been reported in 1960, these statistics indicated a significant further reduction in the scale of the institution's activities. The enrollment figure, for example, was over 20,000 less than the figure reported in the latter part of the 1959–60 school year, and a far cry from the 1961 enrollment target of 100,000 envisioned in earlier planning.

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[8] NCNA, Feb. 26, 1960; in *SCMP* No. 2213 (Mar. 10, 1960), p. 37; and NCNA, Mar. 26, 1960; in *SCMP* No. 2228 (Mar. 31, 1960), p. 36.

[9] The total of 135,000 would be 80,000 more than C.L.U.'s enrollment of approximately 55,000 at the beginning of 1960. Since I.L.U. was set up only in 1960, its opening enrollment of 30,000 was apparently included in the figure of 80,000 new entrants scheduled for the two institutions in that year. Therefore, C.L.U. could not have been scheduled to take in more than a maximum of 50,000 new students in the fall of 1960.

Despite the uneven pace of their development, and the impossibility of determining with certainty their present status, it is clear that the critical nature of the experiment involved in the establishment of these institutions is sufficient to justify a more detailed examination of their essential characteristics.

Basic Characteristics of the Two Universities

In the foregoing material, the two new "universities" have been briefly characterized in general terms, and the course of their development has been traced insofar as available material allows. In what follows, more detailed consideration will be given to the organizational structure and system of administrative supervision in the institutions, the nature of their student body and teaching force, the apportionment of time between study and labor, the pattern of departments and course offerings, the special teaching methods adopted, the academic standards achieved and skills taught, and the productive labor activities aimed at achieving self-sufficiency.

From the beginning it was clear that both universities were organized under the close supervision of the Communist Party. The central unit of Communist Labor University in Nanchang was described as being under the "direct leadership" of the Party Provincial Committee and the Provincial People's Council, the counterpart government body. Liu Chün-hsiu, a secretary of the Party Provincial Committee, served concurrently as president of the university during its formative period. C.L.U.'s branches and technical schools were under dual leadership of the central university administration and local Party committees. The local Party committees had the authority to delegate the leadership of the university's branches to the state-operated land reclamation centers to which they were attached in the upland areas, but the central university administration retained the responsibility for guidance, inspection, and assistance in training teachers and compiling special textbooks for the branches. When Industrial Labor University was established, its organization followed a similar pattern. It was announced that a secretary of the Party Provincial Committee would act as president, that two of the vice-presidents would be directors of the Departments of Industry and Communications in the Party Committee, and that the heads of the university's branches would be the secretaries of the Party committees in the districts, cities, factories and mines where they were located.[10]

[10] *Kiangsi Jih-pao*, Aug. 2, 1959; in *SCMP* No. 2089 (Sept. 3, 1959), p. 43; and NCNA, Feb. 26, 1960; in *SCMP* No. 2213 (Mar. 10, 1960), p. 37.

Since most of the components of Communist Labor University were located in backward areas of the province, the bulk of its physical facilities had to be newly constructed. Press accounts reported that in most branches the students and teachers themselves built all the buildings and furniture during the first months or years of the university's existence. The president of C.L.U. reported in December 1959 that the school's main site had been developed from a barren tract of wasteland in less than a year by students and faculty who first erected crude huts and then gradually replaced them with more substantial classrooms and dormitories. No accounts of the physical facilities at the newer I.L.U. are available; in view of the fact that a substantial number of its branches were attached to factories and other industrial enterprises in urban areas, the need for construction of new buildings may not have been as pressing as in the case of its sister university, but presumably student and teacher labor was called upon to prepare the necessary space and equipment.

Student Body and Teaching Staff

As mentioned earlier, these two "universities" were obviously designed to take in students who had had little previous schooling. The enrollment regulations for C.L.U. stipulated that entrance would be sought in accordance with "the principle of recruiting students mainly from the children of workers and peasants and also admitting an appropriate number of intellectual youths who have attained the standard of education of junior middle schools". The regulations stated further that applications should be open to

> . . . all workers, peasants, commune cadres, and demobilised servicemen, irrespective of sex, who possess definite production knowledge and have attained *a definite standard* in education, and to all students and youths of society, irrespective of sex, who have attained the standard of junior middle schools, provided they are between 17 and 30 years of age, have a clean personal record, and are physically fit.[11]

It is evident from the phrasing that the institution was interested in two distinct groups: (1) workers, peasants, and lower level functionaries who had little or no formal schooling; and (2) students who had gone as far as junior middle school. Entrance examinations were different for the two groups. For "industrial and agricultural laborers," the regulations called for an examination of "common knowledge" in

[11] *Kiangsi Jih-pao*, Aug. 7, 1959; in SCMP No. 2089 (Sept. 8, 1959), p. 37. Note the vagueness of the phrase to which italics have been added; it is not clarified anywhere in the regulations.

politics, Chinese language, and arithmetic, and also an oral test and a "practical test". Youths who had had some secondary schooling, however, were examined in physics, chemistry, and biology as well as the other three subjects; they were also given an oral test. It is clear from a number of accounts that the students were in fact drawn, as the entrance regulations say, "mainly" from the former group. At C.L.U., over 90 percent of the students were described as being from worker or peasant groups and as having had several years of working experience.

At I.L.U., the admission requirements were apparently similar and perhaps even less stringent. One news account described the university as open to "workers, shop assistants, commune members, demobilized servicemen, and youths . . . who possess certain political qualifications and have definite production experience," thus suggesting that there was no formal schooling requirement whatsoever. This impression is bolstered by another account which, in discussing the "simple enrollment procedures," stated that the entrance examination could be taken by correspondence and that applicants who took it in person could be informed the same day as to whether they had passed.

As a result of these entrance policies, the two universities consisted of students whose educational background was not only weak but was also lacking in uniformity. To illustrate this point, one may cite the academic qualifications of a group of students who entered Communist Labor University during its first year of operation. The students had the following educational backgrounds (expressed in terms of percentage of the group): [12]

Junior primary (4th grade) education—10.3%
Senior primary (6th grade) education—58.9%
Junior middle (9th grade) education—30.4%
Senior middle (12th grade) education— .5%

It is thus evident that in this group more than two-thirds of the entrants had no more than a primary school education. In some cases enrollees apparently had even less than a fourth-grade educational background; one account, for example, told of students in a branch of C.L.U. who were completely "illiterate" at the time of their enrollment in the university.[13]

Such was the nature of the student body entering these new half-time universities. Some of the problems engendered by the differing backgrounds of the various groups, and the methods devised in an attempt to cope with these problems, will be discussed later.

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[12] *Jen-min Jih-pao*, June 12, 1960; in U.S. Joint Publications Research Service report No. 5453 (Sept. 7, 1960), p. 44.

[13] *Kiangsi Jih-pao*, Nov. 27, 1959; in *SCMP* No. 2178 (Jan. 18, 1960), p. 18.

At this point, the teaching force which was called upon to handle this disparate body of students may be considered. Although Communist Labor University was reported to have thousands of "teachers and employees," no concrete figure for teachers alone was released, and there was clear acknowledgement of a shortage of qualified teachers and the necessity for temporary expedients and emergency training measures. According to one account, most of the original teachers were government and Party cadres and demobilized servicemen who had been sent to the mountain areas, and who lacked teaching experience. Such people, and other locally available technicians and skilled workers, were used extensively during the first year of operation. But even as late as June 12, 1960, a lengthy article in the *Jen-min Jih-pao* suggested that the university was still using "advanced producers, model workers, agricultural cadres and professional military officers" to teach some of its courses. The same article told of measures taken at C.L.U. to train more teachers through both long and short training sessions, cooperative teachers study groups, and a variety of other self-help devices.

Allotment of Time to Study and Labor

Although both Communist Labor University and Industrial Labor University were generally described in Chinese Communist sources as "half-work, half-study" institutions, details on the apportionment of time for study and labor at C.L.U. indicate that the actual distribution varied somewhat from a strict half-and-half allocation. From mid-1959 on, the division of time in the basic 4-year university course at C.L.U. was consistently reported as follows:

	No. of months of classroom study	*No. of months of productive labor*
1st year	5	6
2d year	6	5
3d year	7	4
4th year	7	4

The university was thus designed to be in session for 11 months each year, with the 12th month (apparently the month of July) as vacation time. The classroom study time averaged out to 6¼ months per year over the 4-year period. Although the point was not made entirely clear, it would appear that generally the study time and labor time were arranged in two multi-month blocks. Evidently, some further leeway in scheduling of time may have been allowed to the scattered branches of the university. One account, giving the general pattern

as above, also mentioned that students in the branches could study on rainy days and work on clear days, study during slack agricultural seasons and work during the busy seasons, or make other suitable arrangements for combining work and study. How the actual number of classroom instruction hours per year worked out in one branch was illustrated by an account which reported that students completing the second year of attendance in the summer of 1960 had had 1,339 hours of classroom work, or an average of about 670 hours per annum.[14] The details of the way in which time was divided between work and study in the 2-year technical schools attached to C.L.U. were not given in available sources, nor was the exact breakdown of time in the "half-work, half-study" system at I.L.U. discussed in the data.

Courses of Study and Departmental Organization

Both Communist Labor University and Industrial Labor University were described as offering two different courses of study lasting from 2 to 4 years. Originally, at its inception in the summer of 1958, C.L.U. apparently planned to offer both a 2-year and a 4-year course at the "university" level, in addition to a lower-level 2-year program in its attached technical schools. By the summer of 1960, however, the university was said to be offering a "regular" 4-year course and a "special course" of 3 years' duration, both of which were open to graduates of either junior middle or senior middle schools—i.e., to students who had had either 9 or 12 years of prior schooling. Students with a 6-year primary school education, and workers and peasants "who are unable to go through a longer period of study because of their age"—the latter category apparently being a separate one, and therefore perhaps including some individuals who had less than a primary-school education—were admitted into the 2-year course at the attached technical schools. The pattern at the new Industrial Labor University set up at the beginning of 1960 was similar. I.L.U. was described as having a "regular" or "standard" 4-year course and also a "vocational" course of 2 or 3 years' duration—both open to students with "education standards of junior or senior middle school students".[15] There was no mention of attached "technical schools" in connection with I.L.U.

[14] *Jen-min Jih-pao*, June 12, 1960; in U.S. Joint Publications Research Service report No. 5453 (Sept. 7, 1960), p. 44. In order to put in 1,339 hours of classroom work (a total which is roughly comparable to that taken in two years at a regular full-time university) in the 11 months of study time available in the first 2 years at C.L.U., students would have to have spent an average of about 28 hours per week in classroom work during the 11-month period.

[15] NCNA, Mar. 26, 1960; in *SCMP* No. 2228 (Mar. 31, 1960), p. 36. Note that it is not clear that the candidates had to be *graduates* of junior or senior middle schools in order to qualify. The phrasing leaves open the possibility that anyone who had attended one or more years of the 3-year junior middle school would be eligible.

In addition to these regular courses, both C.L.U. and I.L.U. were reported to have a "preparatory course" designed to bring students with insufficient preparation up to the standard required to enter the 2-, 3-, or 4-year courses which were ostensibly offered on the university level. The preparatory course at C.L.U. lasted for 2 years, and that at I.L.U. for either 1 or 2 years, as required. The existence of the preparatory course at C.L.U. was not mentioned in the earliest available data on the institution, but was described in material dating from the second year of the university's operation; the preparatory course at I.L.U. was mentioned in the earliest accounts of that institution's founding. It is therefore interesting to speculate as to whether the adoption of this device was an afterthought prompted by difficulties encountered by C.L.U. during its first year in coping with entering students of widely varying academic backgrounds. It is also of note that C.L.U.'s preparatory course was specifically described as being designed to raise students to the level of junior middle school graduates, while no such precise language was used in describing the goal of I.L.U.'s version of the course. This difference seems to further bolster the outside observer's impression that the academic qualifications required to enter the ordinary courses at I.L.U. were even lower than those obtaining at the older institution.

The course work at the two universities was organized under "departments". At Communist Labor University departments of agriculture, forestry, animal husbandry (sometimes listed as including veterinary science), and social science were generally noted in reports issued early in the institution's history. A separate department of sericulture was also mentioned in some accounts. Departments of mathematics, physics, and chemistry were listed in most accounts dated in late 1959 and in 1960. In the latest departmental listing available (in a report published in June 1960) departments of hydrobiology, economics, and teacher training were added, and a department of "industry," listed frequently in earlier accounts, was omitted. The omission of C.L.U.'s department of industry in 1960 may be related to the establishment of the separate Industrial Labor University earlier in that year. I.L.U. was listed in the spring of 1960 as having the following departments: metallurgy, coal industry, machinery, electricity, light industry, textile industry, geology, building construction, railways, highways, aviation, water transport, petroleum, chemical engineering, and chemistry. Apparently not all of the branches of the two universities, by any means, had departments in each of these fields. There was evidence of specialization among the branches based upon their location: for example, departments of forestry were set up in branches located in forest areas, departments of hydrobiology were

established in lake areas, and departments of animal husbandry were set up in grazing regions.[16]

Details regarding course offerings are available only for C.L.U.'s department of forestry, which was obviously one of its most highly developed constituent parts. In this department there were seven "major special courses": general forestry, forest botany, silviculture, tree measurement, forest pathology, forest entomology, and forest management planning. A total of 856 hours of teaching time was devoted to these seven courses. Other "fundamental" courses included surveying, meteorology, soil fertilization, and plant pathology. There was also a course on "forest hereditary seed selection". The department admittedly did not offer certain courses found in forestry departments in a Chinese full-time university (e.g., forest farm management, forest birds and animals, and "forest utilization"). It had no separate courses devoted to "economic forests," water and soil conservation, lumbering, or subsidiary forest production, although material on these subjects was included in other courses. Students in the forestry department also had to study other subjects such as Chinese language, mathematics, physics, and chemistry.[17]

Special Teaching Methods and Curriculums

In order to train needed specialists in an abbreviated period of time, the authorities at the two new universities reportedly engaged in a major effort to revise teaching methods and teaching materials and to adapt curriculums to the special character of the institutions. The guideline for these changes was contained in the oft-repeated slogan "narrow but deep". In practice, as interpreted at Communist Labor University, this involved an attempt to reduce the amount of general cultural education in the curriculum to a minimum, to define specializations narrowly, and to concentrate attention on the central courses in the field of specialization. In accordance with this guideline, fundamental cultural material was reduced to essentials. This was accomplished by dropping outdated, repetitious, and less relevant material from some courses, while at the same time adding material needed for practical purposes to other courses. For example, agricultural and animal husbandry students at C.L.U. took less mathematics than they would have taken in similar courses at full-time universities, but industrial and forestry students (the latter of whom need mathematics for surveying) took more. In order to make up rapidly for mathematics

[16] *Jen-min Jih-pao*, June 12, 1960; in U.S. Joint Publications Research Service report No. 5453 (Sept. 7, 1960), p. 53.

[17] *Kiangsi Jih-pao*, Nov. 27, 1959; in *SCMP* No. 2178 (Jan. 18, 1960), p. 18.

deficiencies on the part of many of its students, the university reportedly revised teaching methods in this field, eliminating repetitious material, dropping some of the quasi-calculus material included in higher algebra, and narrowing the scope of solid geometry.

In the specialized fields, work was narrowly subdivided; the student took fewer courses and focused on their essential contents, thus avoiding what was seen as a wasteful dispersion of energy. It was claimed, for example, that although courses in the department of forestry at C.L.U. were simplified and reduced from the 20 offered in other institutions to only 14, and total class hours were reduced from 2,000 to 1,500, the contents of the really vital courses in the department and the time spent on them still remained about the same as in other universities.

Other innovations in teaching methods stemmed from an insistence on close coordination between classroom study, productive labor, and experimental work. The scheduling of lecture topics for agricultural students was closely geared to the timing of seasonal agricultural work, and forestry students studied scientific afforestation in class and then applied what they had learned to their tree-planting labor activities.

One particular aspect of what would be called general education in Communist China was not neglected in classroom work at Communist Labor University. This was political education. One account stated that half of the classroom time should be spent in "theoretical courses" and half in practical "labor courses," and added that within the category of theory courses, politics should be allotted the "largest proportion" of the time.[18]

The new pedagogical approach and revised teaching methods outlined above gave rise to claims of great acceleration in the teaching-learning process in these institutions. Some examples of these assertions are interesting in themselves, as well as indicative of the academic standards of students in the two new universities. It was claimed, for example, that students with only a 6-year primary education could finish junior and senior middle school mathematics in 313 instruction hours; that senior middle school and college-level organic and inorganic chemistry (which ordinarily require a total of 400 instruction hours in full-time schools) could be taught in 209 hours; that senior middle school and college-level general and analytic chemistry could be taught in 120 hours; and that a combined physiology-embryology-anatomy course could be taught in 320 hours (whereas separately, these subjects would take 400–500 hours).[19] A number of cases of

[18] *Kuang-ming Jih-pao*, Mar. 30, 1960; in U.S. Joint Publications Research Service report No. 3680 (Aug. 10, 1960), p. 20.

[19] *Jen-min Jih-pao*, June 12, 1960; in U.S. Joint Publications Research Service report No. 5453 (Sept. 7, 1960), pp. 51–52.

students who profited from such accelerated methods were cited in available data on C.L.U. But curiously, most of the cases referred to those students who achieved remarkably rapid progress in making up deficiencies in their primary and secondary education. For example, "illiterate" students taken into one branch of the university were said to have reached fourth grade standards in half a year, and many students who entered with a full 6 years of primary education were said to have reached the standard of junior middle school graduates after about a year's attendance at the university. The students referred to in these case examples were presumably enrolled in the preparatory courses. One additional account said that students entering a university branch with 9th grade qualifications had reached the 11th grade level in some subjects and were studying some higher education textbooks after 1 year in the regular (i.e., 4-year) course; another report stated that after somewhat over 1 year in the regular course, all of the students in one group had reached the level of senior middle school (12th grade) graduates, and 40 percent of them had reached "college or specialized school level" in one or two of their specialized subjects.[20] Since the available examples of acceleration include cases where the make-up work of pre-university preparation extended well into the 4-year regular "university" course, they would seem to provide another indication of the generally low academic standards prevailing at Communist Labor University.

Academic Standards and Production Skills

In general, the academic qualifications of entering students at C.L.U. were acknowledged to be low as well as diverse. The usual claim was, however, that because of their superior motivation and the special pedagogical methods employed, these students would be able to reach college-level standards during the period of their attendance. With regard to Communist Labor University, for example, one report insisted that the institution, although of a new type, "really possesses the standard of an institution of higher education." Industrial Labor University was similarly described as a place where the students "will be able to attain the education standards of the ordinary university students in four years." [21] Since no accounts of the qualifications of students who have completed a 4-year course of study at one of these institutions have yet become available, it is difficult to estimate to what extent this expectation is being realized. In this connection, however,

[20] *Ibid.*, p. 44.

[21] *Kiangsi Jih-pao*, Nov. 27, 1959; in *SCMP* No. 2178 (Jan. 18, 1960), p. 19; and NCNA, Mar. 26, 1960; in *SCMP* No. 2228 (Mar. 31, 1960), p. 26.

it is interesting to consider several published accounts of the knowledge and skills acquired by university students in their first year or so of attendance. These specific reports are particularly noteworthy when viewed against the backdrop of general claims such as those which have been mentioned above.

One report stated that a senior middle school graduate who entered Communist Labor University in the fall of 1959 had been able, within only a few months, to learn how to trim branches on orange trees, to transplant shoots from the trees, to treat them for insects and disease, and to pick the fruit without damaging the trees. Another report stated that in one branch of C.L.U. the 360 students had mastered the following skills:[22]

No. of students	*Production skills mastered*
30	general agricultural and forestry techniques
60	technique of wine-brewing
40	making of bricks and tiles
230	production of charcoal

Since the number of students accounted for in the itemized list of skills exactly equalled the total number of students in the group (360), the impression conveyed by the report was that each student specialized in, and concentrated on attaining, just one of the four skills mentioned in the list. Unfortunately, in this case there was no clear indication of how long it took these 360 students to master their respective accomplishments. But still another account stated that in the first year of attendance at C.L.U., "the students made considerable progress in cultural and scientific knowledge". The report then continued:

> They learned to breed pigs and sheep, to cure rubber, [and] to make paper, and were capable of cultivating edible fungi and planting agricultural crops. They also learned to cut and transport bamboo and timber, to dredge the rivers and to blast away shoals, and to build bridges and roads.[23]

The contrast between the skills mentioned in these detailed accounts and the general claim that the institutions were offering college-level work is rather striking.

Productive Labor and Financial Self-sufficiency

With this indication of the standards obtaining in the academic work at the two new "universities," one may now turn to a more detailed consideration of how the students spent that half of their time which was devoted to productive labor. It should first be stressed,

[22] *Jen-min Jih-pao*, Feb. 1, 1960; in *SCMP* No. 2194 (Feb. 11, 1960), p. 23.
[23] *Kiangsi Jih-pao*, Nov. 27, 1959; in *SCMP* No. 2178 (Jan. 18, 1960), p. 16.

however, that productive labor was viewed at these institutions as having a twofold purpose: (1) an ideological purpose—expressed, for example, in such terms as the aim to "intensify the labor discipline" of students and teachers; and (2) an economic purpose—to enable the institutions to achieve financial self-sufficiency. The "productive base" in which the labor was performed was also seen as "a natural classroom or laboratory for the improvement of pedagogy and the development of scientific research".[24]

At Communist Labor University, the students' labor time was spent in a variety of production bases maintained by the institution. These bases were of four main kinds: crop farms (including orchards in some cases), livestock farms, forest tree farms, and small factories. In the middle of its first year of operation (in January 1959), C.L.U. (including its branches) was reported to have 37 crop farms, 51 livestock farms, 17 forest tree farms and 141 small factories. Lumbering was apparently the main productive activity in the early months, but the new factories were reported to have trial-produced such things as a plant stimulant, bacterial fertilizer, insecticides, and antibiotics. During the next year the production enterprises were evidently greatly expanded. Between the end of 1959 and mid-1960, available reports, based on figures from over 90 percent of the university's branches, placed the number of crop farms at 84, covering some 50,000 *mou* (or over 8,000 acres); the number of livestock farms at 93; the number of forest tree farms at 35, covering over 400,000 *mou*; and the number of small factories at 208.[25] The factories operating in late 1959 and 1960 were reported to be producing such items as paper, wines, synthetic petroleum products, synthetic fibers, cement, tanning extracts, and vegetable oils.

No figures have become available for the quantities of these items produced by the farms and factories run by C.L.U., except for incomplete data on livestock. But some figures were reported for the monetary value of the total production. During the first year of its operation (up to June 1959) the university had a reported income from production of 8,400,000 *yuan*, or about 240 *yuan* per student. By the end of 1959 income had risen to an annual rate of about 12,000,000 *yuan*; in a few branches it ran as has as 300—400 *yuan* per capita.

The attainment of this income allegedly made possible a high degree of financial self-sufficiency in the university. As early as mid-1959, two-thirds of the branches were said to be self-supporting as far as the students' food and living expenses were concerned. By the end

[24] *Jen-min Jih-pao*, Dec. 30, 1959; in *SCMP* No. 2178 (Jan. 18, 1960), p. 24.
[25] *Ibid.*, p. 22.

of that year, the president of the university reported that 80 percent of the university's component units were self-sufficient for essentials and could now look toward re-investing present or future surpluses. Throughout the second year of the institution's operation, while its rate of income receipt was growing by about 50 percent, various reports stated that an expenditure of 14–20 *yuan* per student per month was considered as an appropriate level of spending for food and other living expenses.

Details concerning the production bases used by Industrial Labor University are not available. Since many of its branches were supposed to be located at industrial enterprises, it may be assumed that its students worked mainly in such enterprises. The new institution was clearly reported to be striving, like its forerunner, for the early attainment of complete self-support, which was considered to be well within reach as long as production planning was firm and reasonable.

Problems and Criticisms Encountered

The advantages which the sponsors of Communist Labor University and Industrial Labor University claimed to see in these new-type institutions have been indicated in the foregoing material. It now remains to consider in greater depth the substantial amount of criticism which these new institutions encountered in Communist China. The nature of this criticism and the arguments used to rebut it are very revealing with regard to the real conditions in the universities and the problems and difficulties involved in their establishment and development.

From the beginning it was clear that the establishment of Communist Labor University engendered criticism from those whom its supporters labeled as being affected by "bourgeois" or "capitalist" conceptions of academic matters. This criticism, which apparently was voiced both inside and outside the university, was countered by what the university's president once referred to as a "stubborn struggle against erroneous ideas," carried out within the institution through the familiar pattern of debates, wall posters, and competitive emulation campaigns. While these efforts may have lessened internal criticism, they did not silence all critics; the president acknowledged in December 1958, 1½ years after the establishment of C.L.U., that there were still "a number of persons" who wrongly viewed the institution from a bourgeois viewpoint.

In general, the criticism was based on the contention that Communist Labor University did not have teachers of suitable quality or ade-

quate facilities and equipment, and at the same time took in students of very low and uneven qualifications and then offered them only an irregular exposure to teaching. This was the essence of the criticism, and it obviously struck at very fundamental aspects of the system. But the critics apparently did not always confine themselves to such relatively mild language in discussing the school. Not only were there accounts that people were saying that the institution simply did not look like a university, and that its "fourth year class is no better than a senior middle school in standard." There were also reports that some people considered it as "laughable" and a real "eyesore;" and, most notably, there were even charges that the university was "nothing more than a labor brigade" and "a camp for reforming people through labor".[26]

The answer of those responsible for the schools to the fundamental criticisms mentioned above has been indicated earlier in this account, and need only be briefly summarized here. In general, the fact that the students were poorly prepared and that the teachers and equipment were sub-standard was acknowledged. But the customary rejoinder was that there was a role for other than full-time regular colleges in producing the skilled workers needed for developing the country; that the working experience and "knowledge of the class struggle" possessed by students of worker and peasant class origin compensated for their lack of book knowledge; and that their high motivation, when exploited through new revised teaching methods, would enable the students to reach college standards in an abbreviated time. The keys to the further development of the university, as seen by the president at the end of 1959, were (1) the gradual improvement in the quality of instruction and the allocation of time for study, labor, and rest; (2) the successful management of varied production enterprises to assure self-support, and (3) the strengthening of Party leadership in the university's affairs.

Significance of the Experiment

In the foregoing pages, the nature of these new prototype "universities," their relationship to some other recent noteworthy educational developments—especially the establishment of the agricultural middle schools—and some of the problems encountered in their growth

[26] These strong charges are particularly reflected in the two previously cited articles by the president of the university—one in the *Kiangsi Jih-pao* on August 2, 1959, and the other in the *Jen-min Jih-pao* on Dec. 30, 1959—and in the article in the *Kiangsi Jih-pao* on Nov. 27, 1959.

have been discussed. This discussion leads to reflection upon the significance of this educational experiment.

It seems evident that these new institutions were not, in any generally recognized sense, really institutions of higher education. The fact that a ninth-grade education was apparently considered completely acceptable as a qualification for entrance into their regular 4-year courses, and the fact that the 4-year courses consisted of only half-time study in a narrow specialized curriculum, would suggest that graduates of these institutions would possess training which was, at best, comparable to that normally obtainable in a technical or vocational school at the senior secondary level. That institutions of this character are referred to as "universities" would seem to be but one example—albeit a rather striking example—of the extent to which customary educational terminology has been abased in Communist China in recent years.

The founding of Communist Labor University and Industrial Labor University extended the experimentation with the idea of a self-supporting half-time school into the higher education sector. But it should be noted in passing that this particular type of institution seems not to have received quite the degree of endorsement by the national Party and government organs that was accorded to its counterpart on the secondary school level—the agricultural middle school. The formative period in the life of Communist Labor University and its sister institution, Industrial Labor University, was described at length and with enthusiasm in articles which appeared in the central Party newspaper (*Jen-min Jih-pao*) and in the national newspaper focusing on cultural and educational affairs (*Kuang-ming Jih-pao*) in 1959 and 1960. This treatment implied strong and sympathetic interest on the part of the government and Party leadership. In addition, brief reports concerning later developments at C.L.U. were circulated in the mass media in 1961 and early 1962, and the latter year was marked by the establishment of another institution of comparable character—the "Socialist Labor University" in Shantung province in north China. But, as far as this writer can determine, the institutional design exemplified in these "universities" never has been explicitly endorsed as national policy in a hortatory editorial in the *People's Daily*—as was the case with the agricultural middle schools.

As has been noted heretofore, the current status of these new "universities" cannot be known with certainty on the basis of presently available materials. Nevertheless, these institutions retain their significance as the products of experimentation with an institutional pattern designed to embody the basic principles underlying the Chinese Communist regime's educational policy since 1958.

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