

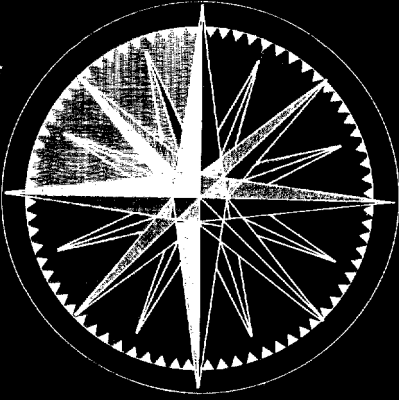
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SPECIAL REPORT

DISAFFECTION AMONG YOUTH IN COMMUNIST CHINA

CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY
OFFICE OF CURRENT INTELLIGENCE

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18 October 1963

DISAFFECTION AMONG YOUTH IN COMMUNIST CHINA

There is mounting evidence that disaffection among youth in Communist China has become a widespread and serious problem. The lack of good study and job opportunities, the discrepancy between the ideals expressed by the regime and present realities, and the prospect of a bleak future have alienated many of the regime's staunch supporters. Efforts to send young people to the already crowded countryside or to remote frontier areas are extremely unpopular and have had only limited success. Alarmed by youths' flagging zeal for communist ideals, Peiping is conducting the most intensive youth indoctrination campaign noted in years. The campaign, with its stark demand that youth in particular must prepare for a long period of struggle and sacrifice, has had little visible success, however, in rekindling enthusiasm for the Chinese brand of communism.

Causes of Discontent

The lack of educational and vocational opportunities is the basic cause for discontent among youth. [redacted]

[redacted], Premier Chou En-lai reportedly said that only a small number of this year's junior and senior high school graduates would be able to continue their studies at the senior high school or university level. [redacted]

[redacted] only 20 percent of those taking university qualification tests this summer were accepted. This is an unprecedented reversal of the pre-1961 policy that permitted almost all high school graduates to continue their education.

This fall, for the third consecutive year, fewer new

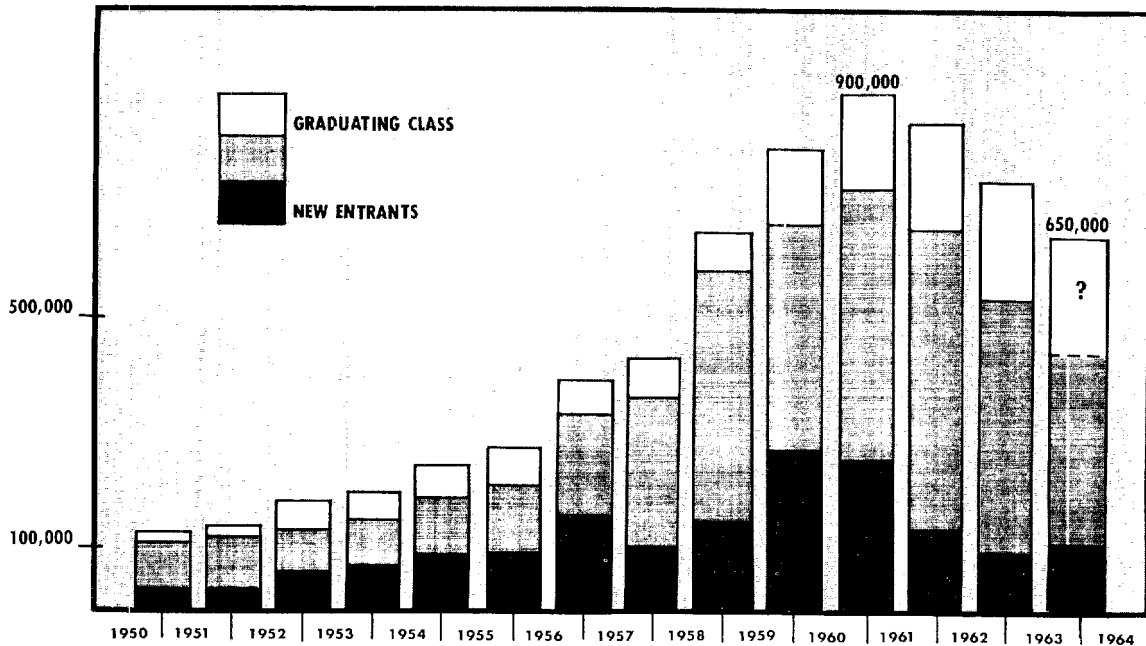
students were accepted by universities than were graduated in June. As a result, total enrollment has fallen steadily from a peak of 900,000 in the 1960-1961 academic year to about 650,000 at present (see chart).

The cutback in educational opportunities has increased competition for available jobs. Unemployment is already high, and China's stagnant economy is unable to absorb the large number of young people thrust into the labor force annually. Periodic recruitment drives to persuade urban youth to go to rural and frontier areas have met with only limited success. Of the 15 to 20 million city youth between the ages of 16 and 25, few seem to have been

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UNIVERSITY ENROLLMENTS IN COMMUNIST CHINA



SWOLLEN ENROLLMENTS IN THE 1958-60 GREAT LEAP PERIOD MEAN LARGE HARD-TO-PLACE GRADUATING CLASSES NOW.

BECAUSE OF ECONOMIC RETRENCHMENT, CLASSES ENTERING NOW ARE SMALL AND TOTAL ENROLLMENT IS DECLINING SHARPLY.

convinced by propaganda allegations that there is a great need for "cultured peasants," and it appears that only about 100,000 urban youth were recruited for rural areas, mostly for service at state farms, from mid-1962 to mid-1963.

After mid-1963 the Chinese authorities expanded their efforts. [redacted], about 30,000 young people were recruited in Shanghai alone during a drive initiated in July 1963 to resettle unemployed

youth in agricultural farms in Sinkiang. The timing of the new drive strongly suggests that the regime is removing idle youth to Sinkiang not only to reduce a source of social unrest in cities but also to increase ethnic Chinese influence in an area near the Soviet border where minority nationalities have been rebelling.

Many urban youth, repelled by the low pay and hardship of rural and frontier life, have found ways to dodge these

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assignments. These unemployed young people have become a serious social problem in Shanghai and Canton and probably in other large cities as well. The term "social youth" has been coined since 1961 to describe urban idlers, many of whom have turned to thievery and black-marketeering.

Probably the most disillusioned and disgruntled group is the current graduating class of 200,000 university students. They had been led to believe they were to play a vital role in building a strong China, but few are being assigned to posts of responsibility or to posts where they can make full use of their skills. These graduates were frankly told last summer that, because of "re-adjustments" in the economy, not enough job openings existed in the specialties for which students had been enrolled in 1958-59. Students who could not be immediately placed in appropriate jobs--apparently the large majority--were told to expect assignments to the countryside, to frontier areas, or to "basic levels" where they would be given apprentice-type work at low pay.

Discontent is also widespread among undergraduates, especially those in the upper grades. Although an improvement in food supplies this year has reduced one cause of grumbling, many still see little prospect that job opportunities will have improved greatly by the time they graduate, resent

the heavy doses of political indoctrination, and dislike the requirement that a month of the school year be devoted to manual labor. To be sure more time now is spent in class work than during the "leap forward" era of 1958-1960, when students often spent entire semesters doing farm or construction work, but extracurricular demands are still heavy. Occasionally the norms for these requirements are exceeded [redacted]

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Cartoon in the 10 August Peiping People's Daily, during a drive to recruit youths for Sinkiang and other frontier areas (Chinese cartoons tend to be inspirational rather than humorous):



我儿子是解放军，在边疆保卫祖国
我儿子今年大学毕业，也分配到边疆参加祖国建设

1st pedicab driver (proudly): [redacted] 25X1
My son is in the army, helping defend the frontier.

2nd pedicab driver:
My son who has just graduated from college, is also leaving to help build up the frontier.

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[redacted], only two months were spent on genuine class work in the past year, the remaining time having been spent in political meetings or in rural clinics.

A fortunate few have been able to escape the harsh conditions in China by leaving for Hong Kong. Nearly 15,000 students, most of whom had relatives in Hong Kong, left the mainland in 1962 for visits and almost none went back. The exodus has continued in 1963, although on a somewhat smaller scale because of stricter controls in granting exit permits.

Although little evidence is available on rural attitudes, disgruntled young peasants have been fleeing to Macao and Hong Kong in fairly substantial numbers in the past two years. Since 1961, regime policies have kept peasants firmly tied to their collective farm, eliminating outlets open to those who wanted to improve their lot. Through 1960, some were conscripted into the army every year, some were able to continue their education by entering high schools in nearby towns, and many, during periods of rapid industrialization, migrated to the cities where they found jobs.

All this has changed. The army has shifted conscription activities to the cities, where a more literate class of recruits is available. High schools, which have been

reducing enrollments and raising standards, now accept few farm students. And not only are jobs in the city scarce, but strict population controls have also been instituted to prevent aimless migration of country boys in search of a better livelihood.

Ideological Concern

The aging Chinese Communist leadership has seemed increasingly worried in the past year that its fundamentalist brand of communism will not survive in the next generation. This concern was reflected in the 1 July issue of China Youth:

"The enemy at home and abroad always wants to exploit the weakness of young people. On his death bed, Dulles, the notorious former Secretary of State of the US, still emphasized the need of corroding 'the third generation' of the socialist countries with 'the Western civilization and way of life' so as to bring about their degeneration. In real life, there do not lack instances where young people, corroded by bourgeois thought, have indeed degenerated."

What Peiping sees as backsliding in the USSR is regarded as proof that even an old established communist society can be corrupted. Determined not to let this happen in China, Peiping last spring ordered

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Lei Feng - "Chairman Mao's good fighter"

When he went out on duty he always lent a hand to the old and the young.

向雷锋同志学习

A widely displayed poster of an inscription in Mao's handwriting;

"Learn from Lei Feng -- Mao Tse-tung"

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LEI FENG MOVEMENT



Lei Feng (left) putting a stitch in his friend's quilt.
To Lei Feng helping others was always a pleasure.



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the most intensive indoctrination campaign noted in years, to try to stem ideological backsliding and to instill in young people a more zealous determination to be good "heirs to communism."

Peiping is convinced that one reason today's youth fails to appreciate socialism more fully is that it does not know how bad conditions used to be. Therefore, older people all over China have been urged to recall how the "reactionary ruling class" had once "brutally oppressed" them, and to repeat these atrocity stories to their children.

The regime has been employing all possible forms of communication--newspapers, movies, songfests, plays, and "study sessions"--to get its ideological message across. Major responsibility for seeing that indoctrination is effective and thorough has been given to the Young Communist League, a mass organization that has been unusually active in 1963. Nearly every province has held a League Congress this year and preparations are under way for a nationwide League Congress, which would provide another forum for publicizing the themes of the youth campaign.

Using highly repetitious and jargonized propaganda, the campaign has stressed the need for youth to learn about the miseries of precommunist society, love Mao Tse-tung and

study his writings, carry out a "class struggle," resist "bourgeois" and "revisionist" influences, prepare for a long period of hardship, strive to be "red" as well as "expert," and emulate a folk-hero named Lei Feng.

One of the most prominent elements in the campaign has been this glorification of the "ordinary soldier Lei Feng." All youths are told to learn from and emulate him, although precisely how they should go about emulating him is unclear. Lei Feng, who died in an accident on 15 August 1962, does not resemble Aleksei Stakhanov, the Soviet coal miner of the 1930s who was eulogized for overfulfilling production targets. The Chinese propaganda emphasizes that Lei Feng did not create or produce anything important, but that he is honored solely for his abstract ideological virtues. This sanctimonious figure spent his evenings studying Mao's writings and his days off selflessly performing services for others, such as washing the clothes of the men in his unit and scrubbing the floor of a railroad car before settling down for a journey. "Some people call me an idiot," Lei Feng wrote in his highly publicized diary, because "I want to do good deeds for the state and people.... The revolution needs idiots like me."

Peiping admits that Lei Feng was aided in achieving his state of purity by a sterling family background that not every

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youth could match. His father was buried alive by the Japanese. His mother was raped by a landlord and later committed suicide. He himself was stabbed by a landlord at the age of seven. His brother died fighting in the People's Liberation Army.

The Lei Feng movement offers an easy target for Soviet propagandists trying to ridicule the Chinese road to communism. Komsomolskaya Pravda on 15 September sneered at Lei Feng for declaring that the height of happiness is to be a "rust-free cog of Chairman Mao Tse-tung." "How alien and disgusting this philosophy is," said the Soviet paper. It went on to repeat some of the more absurd stories told of Lei Feng, such as an incident in which he found an old toothbrush in a heap of refuse, trimmed it, and "it became like new in his hands."

Peiping has made no effort to hide from youth the fact that the future is bleak. Indeed, a major propaganda objective has been to persuade young people to reconcile themselves to a Lei Feng - like existence in which they will do routine, uninteresting work and practice an extreme form of frugality. The propaganda repeatedly warns that building communism will entail great hardships for many decades. Those who hope for a peaceful and settled life are told they must "overcome this unsound state of mind."

Youth Response

All indications are that the intensive indoctrination efforts of recent months have failed to have much impact on the 125 million Chinese between the ages of 16 and 25. By and large, young people seem to have become immune to ideological appeals unaccompanied by material signs of progress. The few successes of the past year--the victory over the Indians on the Tibetan border and the slight improvement in food supplies--apparently have done little to overcome the apathy, disillusionment, and pessimism which have characterized Chinese youth since the collapse of the "leap forward" in 1960.

Cartoon in 6 July Peiping Kuang-ming Jih-pao



Intellectual to sanitary worker carrying a nightsoil container:

"Can't you stand the stench either?"

Nightsoil carrier: "What I can't stand is your ideological stench!"

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Peiping itself increasingly recognizes that many youths have little enthusiasm for communism. In the past year the party has repeatedly railed against young intellectuals, workers, and peasants who have either been corrupted by "bourgeois" thinking or who showed, during a period of relaxation in 1962, a willingness to "take the capitalist road" at every opportunity. The propaganda has also complained that some youths see little point in talking about the misery of the past or about "class struggle" now that everything has been socialized and that others say they have already learned enough from Lei Feng and are tired of studying his example.

Feng's spirit of obedience to the party.

The degree of youth disaffection varies among groups. There is still a small minority that believes it is doing something important and is therefore fairly well motivated. This includes the 2 million conscripts in the army, who are generally treated as an elite group; the 100,000-odd new students accepted by universities this fall after careful political screening; the relatively few young workers who have been able to obtain promising industrial jobs; and activists in the Young Communist League who believe they have a future in the party apparatus.

The Lei Feng movement in particular actually appears to have been counterproductive.

[redacted] story about a drama group that went to the Shanghai Gasworks to stage a play about the life of Lei Feng. Workers were assembled, the lights went down, and the play began. When the lights went on again, the hall was empty, the audience in sheer boredom having crept out and gone home.

[redacted] young teenagers also seem to be quite receptive to propaganda, but they lose their enthusiasm when they leave school and are unable to get good jobs.

[redacted] doubted that Lei Feng actually existed. He believed that most intellectuals, also skeptical of Lei Feng's existence, were therefore unmoved by exhortations to emulate Lei

[redacted] nationalistic themes have far more appeal than ideological themes to young people. It is possible for the regime to whip up considerable support for its challenge to the USSR and its actions on the Indian-Tibetan border. On domestic ideological matters, however, the regime is no longer able to elicit blindly enthusiastic support.

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On the other hand, apathy and resignation among the young, while affecting the amount of support being given to regime programs, have not yet reached a point where they constitute a serious security threat. Nevertheless, isolated examples of dissidence are often reported.

25X1 Young idlers [redacted] have begun to grumble openly and to hope for a new war to overthrow the regime. There are occasional reports of students [redacted] who were caught trying to write anti-Communist slogans on walls or blackboards. This summer,

25X1 [redacted] a group of students from Peking University who had decided to side with the USSR in the Sino-Soviet dispute were captured trying to escape to Outer Mongolia.

The Outlook

So long as it is unwilling to compromise its harsh communist ideals, the regime has few alternative approaches to youth

problems. It is convinced by the problems created during the last period of relaxation in 1961 and early 1962 that young people will take advantage of freedom to turn to a more individualistic, if not capitalistic, way of life.

The indoctrination campaigns therefore probably will be continued in spite of their evident ineffectiveness. They may be modified to offer more appeal to groups, like scientific students, whose support is essential to Peiping, but the regime is probably prepared to keep the rest in line by reinforcing its exhortations with increasingly coercive measures.

There is as yet little reason to doubt the regime's ability to control young people. There is also little doubt that disaffection will decline only when young people come to feel that they are again playing an important role in making China a strong, prosperous country.

([redacted])

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