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DIRECTORATE OF
INTELLIGENCE

Intelligence Memorandum

China: Experiment in Education

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CHINA

EXPERIMENT
in
EDUCATION

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CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY
Directorate of Intelligence
20 June 1972

INTELLIGENCE MEMORANDUM

Mao Tse-tung has long held the belief that China's educational system fostered a politically unreliable elite not responsive to the needs of the working masses. In 1966 he moved decisively to change the system, in effect closing all institutions of higher learning for a period of four years. The closings, coming as they did at the start of the Cultural Revolution, occurred in response to immediate political needs. But they were justified in terms of the need to overhaul completely China's educational establishment. The system has been in a state of flux ever since.

There are many elements in the Maoist prescription for education, but essentially the aim is to develop a system that produces graduates with a correct blend of political orientation and competence in a production-related field. To this end, the regime enunciated a plan to lower admission requirements drastically, to reduce the time spent in college, and to devise a curriculum emphasizing practical subjects closely attuned to China's immediate production needs. Many of these goals had been established earlier, but official and Red Guard propaganda during the Cultural Revolution claimed that they had been thwarted by a rigid and unresponsive educational bureaucracy generally out of sympathy with Mao's aims.

The reopening of Tsinghua University in 1970—after four years of debate—began the implementation of the Maoist reforms. Before even a year had elapsed, however, signs began to emerge in the official media that the reform system was experiencing serious difficulties. The press hinted that Peking was having second thoughts about the viability of the new system.

Following a lengthy but unheralded conference on national education last summer, the regime began gradually but unmistakably to retreat from the more extreme proposals. These modifications and the heavy enrollment of seemingly better qualified students this spring suggest that the quality of education in China is on its way toward being upgraded. Such a partial return to past practices carries with it the prospect of eventually reviving the tensions that helped to stimulate the Cultural Revolution.

Note: This memorandum was prepared by the Office of Current Intelligence and coordinated with the Office of Scientific Intelligence.

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The Revolution 1966-68

1. In June 1966, Peking announced an unusual decision to revise the examination system for universities and senior middle schools and to postpone 1966 school enrollment for six months in order to work out a plan that would "transform the education system completely." Officially, the decision concerned only universities and senior middle schools (roughly equivalent to senior high school), but it was applied to primary and junior middle schools as well. This move was clearly related to the broader political struggles then convulsing the country—indeed, questions of educational reform played only a minor role. But the linking of the educational question to the wider political upheaval in effect brought higher education to a complete halt, not for six months but for four years.

2. Within a month all schools throughout China had closed, freeing some 800,000 university students and about 14 million middle-school students to take part in the mass political campaigns of the Cultural Revolution. During the hectic summer of 1966, the students—relieved of classroom



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responsibilities and encouraged by the regime to rebel against established authority—launched an all-out attack on what they knew best, the educational system. Schools in the university district northwest of Peking, notably Tsinghua and Peking universities, set the example for the rest of the country. Mass student organizations, known as “Red Guards,” were formed and began publishing their own wall posters and newspapers. Many students indulged in personal vendettas, subjecting individual professors to intense criticism and humiliating struggle sessions for having given poor grades. Such personal grievances quickly escalated into calls to reorient higher education away from strictly academic pursuits toward the mastering of practical skills related to production needs. Medical students complained, for example, that they were over-trained in medical school because in practice they would never encounter the exotic diseases they had studied or have access to the relatively sophisticated equipment available in some medical schools.

3. In a wall poster debate over educational reform, students criticized aspects of the educational system that were holdovers from traditional Chinese education. They objected to studying history, which they saw as the record of a feudal past having no relevance to a revolutionary society. They attacked the method of learning lessons by rote, saying it left them no opportunity for questions, or even discussion. They severely criticized the authoritarian rule of the teacher, who allowed students to speak only when spoken to, invited no discussion, and tolerated no disagreement. In addition to freedom in the classroom, they demanded the freedom to choose their own course of study in lieu of assignments by the state to particular disciplines. These demands no doubt expressed genuine student discontent, particularly on the part of elements who were brought into the educational machinery in the previous few years in response to Maoist prescriptions and found it hard going. There is little doubt, however, that student grievances were manipulated for political advantage by radical elements in China's leadership.

4. Summing up the students' proposals, the regime issued a “discussion draft” on a revised education system. The draft, as revealed in the Red Guard press, called for abolishing the stiff entrance examination and enrolling students on the basis of recommendation by their school. The draft suggested that academic performance be determined by group discussion rather than by grades and examination; that all schools adopt the half-work half-study system, in which students spend half their time in manual labor; that urban universities move to the villages and military farms, particularly in the frontier provinces, with arts faculties being the first to go; and that academic titles, distinctions between major and minor universities—including the appellation “first” and “second” class university—and special privileges

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granted to more important universities be abolished. The draft recommended that middle-school students, while they were in school, spend one year working on farms, in factories, or in the armed forces.

5. These recommendations reflected Mao's own dissatisfaction with the educational system. He saw distinctions based on academic performance as artificial and irrelevant. In his view, China needed technicians who could relate to the needs of the working masses, contribute to production, and improve on existing techniques; China did not need scholars who sought knowledge for its own sake and could not transform their knowledge into resources for production. Mao maintained that such scholars not only were a luxury China could ill afford, but also were politically unreliable. Scholars, he said, regarded themselves as an elite, removed from the everyday problems of the vast majority of Chinese people and contemptuous of the uneducated working masses. By extension, this meant the scholars were contemptuous of the one-time peasant who was the leader of China.

6. Mao's goal was an educational system that would ingrain in its graduates a high degree of political consciousness, concern for the well-being of the masses and a genuine desire to serve them as well as competence in a production-related field. He felt that students, after 10 years of schooling, were overeducated for the tasks they would be called on to perform in China's still-developing economy. The reforms proposed during the Cultural Revolution grew out of Mao's attempt to find a short-cut to the creation of large numbers of intellectuals who were both red and expert and could answer China's immediate production needs.

7. Many of these concepts had been put forward before, only to be scuttled by those within the party and the bureaucracy who favored a more rational approach to curing China's educational ills. Frustrated with the delays and setbacks at the top, Mao sought to overturn the educational structure from below. The scope of the reform measures and, more importantly, the manner in which they were imposed attest to Mao's deep suspicions about intellectuals and to his willingness to initiate large-scale social projects to achieve his goals. The ability of Mao and his supporters to move decisively in the educational realm was, of course, greatly expedited by the simultaneous smashing of the Communist party apparatus that had steadfastly resisted the earlier attempts at reform.

8. This opposition had been rooted in a genuine distrust of the efficacy of the measures prescribed by Mao and the radical ideologues who echoed him and elaborated his ideas. The party bureaucrats in charge of China's

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educational system were convinced that short-cuts were not really feasible for China; if the country was to pull itself up by its bootstraps, the only method open was to emulate more advanced societies in training the most promising of China's youth in the skills and techniques necessary to such achievement. This, in turn, implied an emphasis on specialization, on language, and on technical skills. In short, education had to be elitist, and rewards should go to those most capable of learning; in practice, this meant students with privileged and cultured backgrounds. The great mass of students from peasant and worker backgrounds fell by the wayside. This created resentment, in part because precisely those peasant virtues that official propaganda extolled proved to be of no value in the educational environment.

9. In fact, the Cultural Revolution in its early stages divided the student body along the faultline of privilege; the peasant students, brought into the university system in the mid-1960s, partly as window dressing to reduce Maoist pressures on the educational bureaucracy, were pitted against the more gifted students from more privileged background, who, naturally, were the favorites of their teachers. As the Cultural Revolution progressed, this dividing line tended to break down. By late 1967 and 1968 factionalization on China's campuses (where some students continued to live) had reached epic proportions, and "principled" clashes had degenerated into mindless fighting among largely inchoate groups of students.

The Damper Applied, 1968-69

10. In mid-1968, in the midst of nationwide chaos and confusion, the regime decided to dampen the fires. The impact was felt immediately on the nation's campuses. Worker propaganda teams entered universities throughout the country. Their first order of business was to restore order. Backed up by contingents from the armed forces, the worker teams carried out their task with thoroughness. The Red Guard groups were disbanded, and the more fractious students were sent packing to the hinterlands for "labor reform."

11. The propaganda teams were given a longer

It is still necessary to have universities; here I refer mainly to colleges of science and engineering. However, it is essential to shorten the length of schooling, revolutionize education, put proletarian politics in command, and take the road of the Shanghai Machine Tools Plant in training technicians from among the workers. Students should be selected from among workers and peasants with practical experience, and they should return to production after a few years' study.

Mao Tse-tung, July 1968

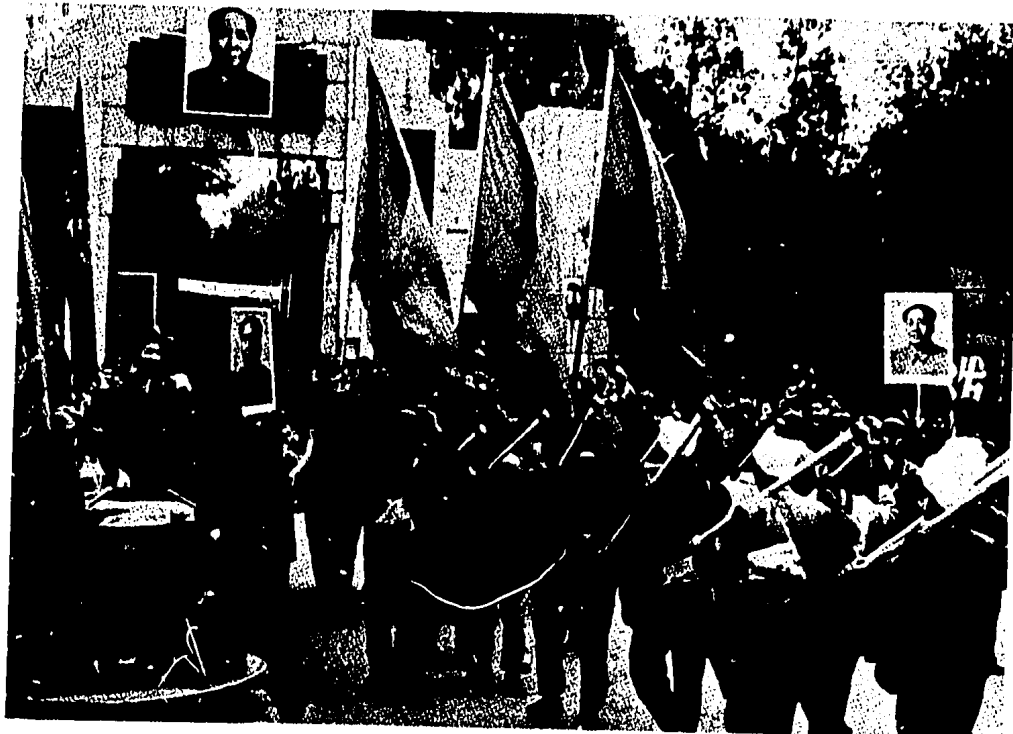
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term mission as well. Their tasks were described in general terms in the flood of propaganda that accompanied the issuance of Mao's July 1968 directive on university education, which signaled the regime's intent to begin the long, arduous process of renewing higher education in China. The teams, in conjunction with the armed forces, were to assume the administration of the universities, revise the curriculum, direct the compilation of new teaching materials, and assemble a faculty and a student body. These, obviously, were tasks the teams were not equipped to handle. In fact, little headway was made, and the teams confined themselves to conducting political thought sessions for the few teachers and students who remained in the universities. In the meantime, much discussion and considerable disagreement took place over how to implement the injunctions vaguely outlined in Mao's latest directive.

12. Full-scale resumption of classes was delayed further by yet another Mao directive, issued in December 1968, ordering all students and virtually all other unemployed urban dwellers to proceed to the countryside where they were to undergo re-education indefinitely. This directive, in effect,



The reopening college door: Worker-peasant-soldier students enter Tsinghua University.

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removed from the cities the very same school-age youth who would make the most likely candidates for a reassembled student body. They were soon joined by teachers and other professional personnel who were thought to need more manual labor to divest them of their elitist pretensions. With most teachers and students in the countryside, the work of reforming the universities prior to the resumption of classes obviously was set back.

The Universities Reopen, 1970-71

13. In July 1970, two years after the first worker propaganda team had entered Tsinghua, the party theoretical journal *Red Flag* devoted an entire issue to the problem of how to run universities of science and engineering. The propaganda team at Tsinghua contributed the major article, which contained the news that the university had reopened and was prepared to enroll a limited number of students. Since then Tsinghua has served as a pace-setter for universities throughout China.

14. The *Red Flag* article revealed that Tsinghua had been engaged in "experimental" class work for about a year. The faculty, greatly reduced from the days before the Cultural Revolution, consisted of some members of the original teaching staff plus a number of workers, peasants, and soldiers hired as both full- and part-time teachers. The teacher shortage, which would plague reopened universities over the next two years, was not yet a problem at Tsinghua, where the student body was down from 12,000 to approximately 2,800.



Linking theory with practice: Tsinghua University students assemble trucks at the school-run motor vehicle plant.

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15. The admissions requirements established at Tsinghua attempted to strike a balance between Mao's desire for more children from worker and peasant families and the university's efforts to maintain at least some of the high standards that had made it China's foremost engineering school. Emphasis was placed on enrolling politically correct workers, peasants and soldiers, with three or more years of practical work experience, who were about 20 years of age and had at least a junior middle-school education. Age and educational requirements were waived for workers and peasants with abundant practical experience. Tsinghua said it would enroll some young intellectuals who had been sent to the countryside two years earlier. At this point, the Tsinghua curriculum was a hodge-podge of politics, standard course work, vocational training, and manual labor. To enable students to put into practice what they had learned in the classroom—a basic tenet of Mao's thoughts on education—Tsinghua set up its own factories and established working relationships with other factories. There is some evidence to suggest that the less qualified students—primarily over-age workers and peasants admitted without regard to prior academic training—were confined to vocational training courses where they concentrated on improving technical skills. Nevertheless, [redacted] more than a few poorly qualified students were allowed in regular academic classes.

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16. The question of reopening liberal arts universities was postponed. One reason was that the regime, trying to boost the economy, gave the training of technicians a clear priority over people trained in literature and arts. Moreover, the question of liberal arts students raised sensitive political issues because it was among them that political heresy first surfaced. Another factor contributing to the delay was probably the question of how to link liberal arts education with productive work. In theory, at least, school-run factories provide an opportunity for practical application of scientific knowledge, keep students in close touch with workers and peasants, and permit some contribution to production. But there are no factories for the humanities. The regime grasped this nettle in June 1971 by announcing that liberal arts students were to take the whole country as their classroom. In order to compare past misery under the Kuomintang regime with present happiness under the socialist system, history students were organized into "field units" to interview village elders. Literature and arts students were urged to create works portraying the revolutionary enthusiasm of the workers, peasants and soldiers by drawing from everyday experiences, while being careful to cast these deeds in the appropriate heroic images.

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Young intellectuals working in the countryside.



17. As more universities of science and technology began to reopen on an experimental basis, it became clear that the Tsingtao model was not being implemented uniformly in each locality. Significantly, some universities lowered the practical work requirement from three to two years. This put young people, who had been rusticated for two years following Mao's directive, among the main candidates for the crucial first enrollment. Moreover, as a reflection of the political situation of the time when "support-the-left" personnel from the armed services exercised virtually unquestioned control over a variety of civilian enterprises, a disproportionate number of soldiers were enrolled in the universities. They were selected by the military control committees which held the real power in the universities. In this revised system the main features of Mao's reform program nevertheless were retained. Many schools established branches in the countryside where teachers and students—despite their seemingly strong working-class credentials—were obliged to immerse themselves in manual labor. Courses contained a heavy dose of politics, drawn chiefly from the thoughts of Mao. Worker-peasant-soldier teachers gave lectures along with university professors. Worker-peasant-soldier students, convinced that their proletarian backgrounds made them ideologically pure and determined to shatter the old myth that the teacher was the absolute authority, freely interrupted the

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professors to lecture them about their political shortcomings. Classroom time was divided among academic training, political study, manual labor, and military training. Although some genuine academic training was conducted for the first time in four years, its effectiveness was undermined by a host of difficulties.

Problems Under the Revised System 1970-71

18. Mao's political philosophy stresses the innate superiority of the working class and the belief that sufficient political indoctrination will convince people to subordinate their own interests to the needs of the state. This formula, however, did not deal directly with the practical problems inherent in putting it into practice. In fact, the propaganda teams, inexperienced in college administration and uncomfortable in their new posts, performed poorly. Mainland media, taking the teams to task, revealed that many of them freely admitted their own ignorance and shied away from reorganizing the universities. Others, ignoring instructions that they solicit the views of experienced educators, promoted educational reform as they saw fit. The result was chaos in the universities and little progress toward the full-scale resumption of higher education.

19. The students posed a different problem. Those with limited schooling were disheartened when they found themselves unable to cope with college-level material. In fact, *Red Flag* tried to boost the morale of worker-peasant-soldier students who were "unable to understand the teachers' lectures" by laying the blame on unsympathetic professors. Academically qualified students, on the other hand, saw little point in studying since they were destined to spend their lives doing manual labor regardless of their university education. Mao had said they were to resume working after a few years of study, and in most cases this meant a return to their original work units—somewhat better trained perhaps, but with small hope of progressing much beyond their present stations. The more radical among the students regarded a resumption of educational activity as a sellout to the very academic authorities they had attacked in the past and a compromise of Maoist ideals. Serious-minded students were frustrated by the heavily politicized course content, the reduction of classroom time in favor of military training and manual labor, and the poor quality of many of their classmates and teachers. The revised system offered students of every stripe scant reason to study, and in fact they studied very little.

20. There can be little doubt that the reform program as carried out in the school year of 1970-71 seriously undermined the morale of the teachers.

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[Redacted] Regular teachers also objected to interference by the propaganda teams with teaching methods, balked at having to teach unqualified students, and resented the presence of worker-peasant-soldier teachers who wasted valuable classroom time with their political lectures. Realizing that they were evaluated on the basis of political reliability rather than the quality of their instruction, teachers were afraid to concentrate on academic course content lest they come under renewed attacks for promoting a "bourgeois" educational system. But they were equally afraid to give political lectures that might contain "mistakes."

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[Redacted]

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21. As more students enrolled in universities, the regime confronted a critical shortage of qualified professors. Some had died; a few had even committed suicide during the stress and turmoil of the Cultural Revolution. Some, after four years of inactivity, were in poor health or simply too old to resume teaching. There were no new teachers to replace them because normal schools had been closed for four years along with the others. Given the unsettled classroom conditions, many teachers who had been assigned to work in factories chose to remain rather than return to their original posts.

[Redacted]

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The shortage extended to secondary and primary schools as well. Many rusticated youths were pressed into service as primary or middle-school teachers—frequently to teach subjects they themselves had never studied—and barely managed to keep one lesson ahead of their students. This had an adverse effect on the quality of education at the lower levels.

22. The various programs instituted to link higher education with production were also beset with difficulties. These were candidly revealed in *Red Flag*, which carried the minutes of a forum conducted in Shanghai in mid-1970 for representatives of a number of Shanghai universities and one Shanghai factory. Peking republished the article in its foreign language press only last month, suggesting that the problems discussed then are still valid. According to the minutes, factories that had been told to run "universities" for their workers were frequently unwilling to set up the schools and were reluctant to release their better workers from production tasks to attend

[Redacted]

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classes. A representative of the Shanghai Machine Tools Plant, whose school was a model for other factories to follow, complained that it was hard for factories to compile teaching materials. He commented on the poor quality of the worker-students; "When students are low in their level of education and old in age, there are contradictions between teaching and learning." Similarly, the link between schools and outside factories was undermined when factories refused to cooperate with the schools and denied their requests for raw materials. A representative from the Huatung College of Chemical Engineering complained, for example, that the Shanghai Chemical Industry Bureau answered requests for raw materials with a "sorry, no" and that pharmaceutical companies showed no interest. School-run factories were unable to produce quality items, probably because the schools, with no help from the state, were forced to scrounge for whatever materials they could find to use in their factories. Wuhan University, for example, produced 22 products "needed by the state," only nine of which met "advanced standards." School-run factories had been tried once before—during the Great Leap Forward of the late 1950s—only to be abolished later as a waste of resources. In fact, factories run by the universities often were used mainly as a means of re-educating distrusted teachers and students through manual labor.

A university operating a factory is like a wild bull forcing its way into a temple.

Shanghai Forum on reforming universities of science and engineering.

Reforming the Reforms, 1971-72

23. By the spring of 1971, after almost a year of experimentation, the turmoil in the universities aroused concern that the radical prescriptions would not enable the universities to produce graduates capable of meeting China's long-term technological needs. Peking convened a national conference on education in March that ran into September. Details of the conference were never published, but it probably re-examined the reform program with the aim of clarifying China's educational goals and setting national standards for their implementation. Recent provincial radiobroadcasts reveal that the provinces have been directed to promote seven-year universal education in urban areas (five years of primary school, two years of junior middle school) and five-year universal education in rural areas.

the number of higher educational institutes has been set at 309. it represents only a slight reduction from the

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pre - Cultural Revolution level of almost 400 and results from the merger of some universities and the abolition of others. It also indicates that, for academic planning purposes, Peking is making a clear distinction between genuine academic institutes and the vast number of factory-run "universities" that receive such abundant attention in the propaganda media.

24. An article published in *Red Flag* as the conference was drawing to a close in September provided clear evidence that the discussants had reached a basic consensus on the need to soften some of the more radical reform measures and to reorient higher education toward academic pursuits. It is probably no accident that this decision came at a time when the campaign against ultraleftists was reaching a climax. The article wasted no time in



In the classroom, mathematics and Mao thought.

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striking out against problems hampering the resumption of meaningful education. Students were told not to interrupt lectures to point out political errors. Propaganda teams were told in mild but unequivocal terms to defer to the judgment of teachers on academic matters and to refrain from arguing with them. Later, in a further limitation of their role, the size of the teams was reduced—only 30 of the original 100 team members remain in Shanghai's Tungchi University—and those remaining were told to submit to the leadership of the school party committees. In a sharp reversal of policy, *Red Flag* put its authoritative stamp on the practice of grouping students by academic ability and explicitly endorsed the use of "supplemental training" to raise the academic level of the less qualified worker-peasant-soldier students.

25. The regime has since offered a number of concessions in an attempt to deal with the shortage of teachers. It has encouraged teachers to concentrate on academic course content, to teach basic theory, and to engage in professional research. Teachers have been recalled from manual labor in the factories or on the farms and reinstated in the classroom. Peking University closed its branch in Kiangsi Province and brought the teachers back to Peking. Tsinghua claimed recently that 90 percent of its teaching staff were members of the original faculty. In a similar vein, regime propaganda recently has tended to play down the political shortcomings of intellectuals and to emphasize instead the value of their knowledge and the need to raise teaching standards. The shifting emphasis is clearly having an impact in the classroom.

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Apparently, rote reliance on Mao's thought is no longer accepted by teachers trying to promote academic proficiency.

26. There are a growing number of signs that the reduction in the length of university schooling (from four or six years to two or three) may be only a temporary measure, at least in the major universities such as Peking and Tsinghua. The radical program recommended two years for teacher-training and liberal arts and three years for science, engineering and foreign languages. Some medical schools have expanded their courses to five years, and even more for specialized training. A Peking University professor has said the two to three year provision is temporary, and some radiobroadcasts have made the same point.

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27. During the Cultural Revolution there seemed to be unanimity about the necessity to do away with the dreaded examination system, but even on this question authorities are apparently falling back on old ways. Many primary and middle schools are again using examinations to evaluate academic performance, and Tsinghua admitted to giving "necessary examinations" to ensure "strict standards for the students." Although the exams are mainly of the open-book variety, they provide a tool that the instructor can use to group students by ability. In addition, there is some evidence that exams are being used in university enrollment drives. Presumably, these entrance tests will enable school authorities to gauge the applicant's academic level.

28. Student participation in manual labor may have been reduced. According to provincial broadcasts, middle schools are being directed to increase the time spent on academic pursuits from 60 percent to 75-80 percent of the total curriculum. Moreover, a recent Peking radiobroadcast claimed that Tsinghua University, the national model, was devoting but five

A designing class at Tsinghau: More time in the classroom. . .



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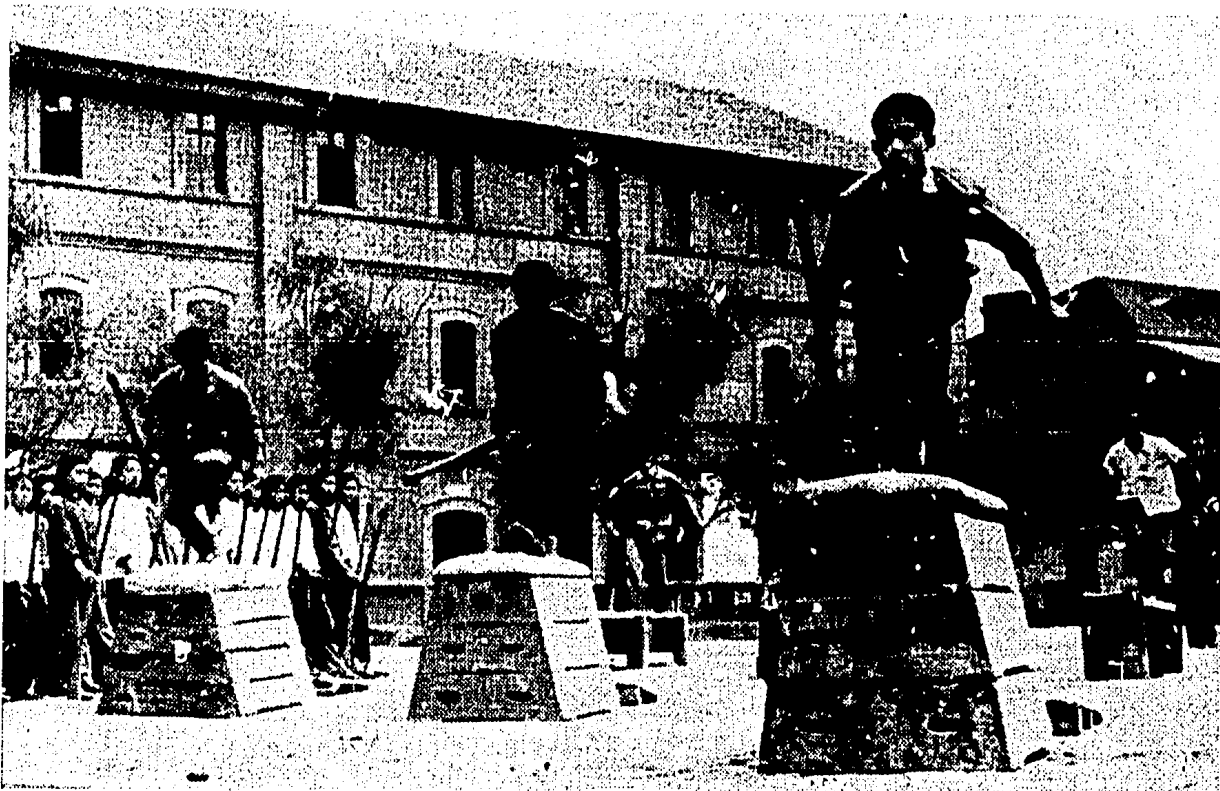
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percent of its teaching time to farm work and military training. The broadcast was apparently carried only on China's program to Taiwan, however, suggesting that there may not yet be full agreement on this sharp reduction in manual labor.

Spring Enrollment, 1972

29. In the year after Tsinghua reopened, approximately 80 universities followed suit, enrolling students in numbers far below pre - Cultural Revolution levels. The recruitment drive this spring brought a dramatic upsurge in both the number of universities reopening and the number of students entering. The spring drive moved higher education from the purely experimental phase into the more difficult realm of implementation. Experimentation continues, however, as the drive has brought still further refinements of Mao's educational reform program.

.. Less time in military training.

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30. The thrust of the drive was to enroll more qualified students in the universities. Worker-peasant-soldier candidates must now be "outstanding," probably a reference to their previous academic performance as well as to their political outlook. They need have only two rather than three years of practical work experience; in some areas, students are recommended for university admission after one year or even just a few months of manual labor. At least one province appears to have relaxed this requirement still further to allow particularly able students to enter universities directly from middle school without first completing a labor assignment.

31. Two new criteria have been added: candidates must be in good health and unmarried. These qualifications tend to work against older workers and peasants, for whom the age and academic requirements remain otherwise flexible. Their admission continues to be a sensitive issue. A recent provincial broadcast attacked those who "make all kinds of excuses" in an attempt to "restrict and prevent" the enrollment of worker-peasant-soldier students.



A soldier and a worker in class at Tsinghua University.

32. The selection process in practice has differed from the stated procedure, which calls for application by the student, recommendation by the masses, approval by provincial authorities, and review by the university. Although a quota system has apparently been established for each province, one university specializing in telecommunications requested that the quota from one province be filled by recruiting only those currently engaged in telecommunications work, a reflection of the university's interest in enrolling students with an appropriate background. Instead of waiting for names of applicants to be sent to them, many universities have sent out recruiting teams to find suitable applicants and, in at least one case, have sought the approval of provincial authorities only after they had completed their talent hunt. A provincial radiobroadcast recently claimed that middle school graduates now doing manual labor may be recommended by their former middle school rather than by their production unit. Presumably, middle schools and university recruiting teams would use more rigid academic standards in selecting students.

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33. The regime has relaxed its earlier insistence on a good class background. Efforts are being made to enroll students from "non-laboring" families. This would open university doors to children of intellectuals, former landlords, and other such "bad elements"—the very groups most widely represented in universities before the Cultural Revolution. Indeed, at Peking University some ten percent of the student body is now openly classified as "intellectuals"; a year ago there was no such category. Prior to the outright recruitment of non-proletarian students, some officials had sidestepped the rules about enrolling mainly workers and peasants by reclassifying middle-school graduates as workers or peasants, regardless of their actual class background, once they were assigned to factories or farms.

34. Correct political orientation remains a requirement for enrollment, with party or Youth League membership an unstated but understood precondition. Of the 200 students enrolled in Peking Medical College in January 1971, 70 percent reportedly were party members and 25 percent belonged to the Youth League.



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35. Taken as a whole, these changes in university recruitment bring the situation back to the one that prevailed from 1963-1965—the period just before the Cultural Revolution when tensions were building in the educational field. At that time the educational bureaucrats were putting primary emphasis on "pure learning" while paying lip service to Maoist educational ideals and recruitment policies.

Restoring the Old

36. Given the fast pace at which universities have reopened since February—more than 200 are now in operation—it is reasonable to assume that those still closed will reopen within a year. The number of students enrolled suggests that the size of the student bodies will eventually reach pre-Cultural Revolution levels. Those admitted during the 1970-71 enrollment—now the equivalent of sophomores—have been joined by a freshman class apparently equal to, and in some cases larger than, the first class. Should this continue in subsequent enrollments, middle-school graduates, if they have done well in school and have performed their labor tasks diligently, will probably have about the same opportunity to go on to college as did their predecessors before the Cultural Revolution.

37. That means that most middle-school graduates will never attend a university. At Peking University, for example, it is said that for each student accepted, ten applied. Provincial media have recently shown some sensitivity


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about the morale problems of unsuccessful applicants, but these problems are in fact no greater now than they were before the Cultural Revolution. China still cannot productively employ unlimited numbers of university-trained specialists. More middle-school graduates than before, however, will have a chance for some kind of advanced training, either at or near their place of work in view of the increase in factory-run schools and short-term vocational training courses.

38. As for students who were in the universities at the outbreak of the Cultural Revolution, most—if not all—will never complete their university education. The age requirement—that candidates for enrollment be approximately 20 years old—is being strictly applied. One university recruiting team was chastised for selecting students who were over 25, the approximate age of many who were at university when the schools closed in 1966. Most of them have been declared graduates and are thus ineligible for admission to the reopened universities.

39. There are no signs as yet that the regime has begun to tackle the problem of resuming post-graduate education, and it is unlikely that much will be done in this area until the universities begin to graduate students again. Peking appears reluctant to face such problems until it has to. The compilation of undergraduate teaching material, for example, is still in progress even though classes resumed almost two years ago. Recent letters from the mainland, in fact, indicate that teachers—rather than the earlier prescribed combination of teachers, students, and propaganda team members—are playing the major role in the current revision of textbooks. Even with the resumption of post-graduate education, most graduates will return immediately to their original production units, in accordance with Mao's directive.

40. Despite the modifications of the radical reforms and the gradual reversion to the old standards, the Cultural Revolution left an indelible mark on Chinese higher education. Universities have had



Shanghai students serve production by making insecticide in the school laboratory.

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to compromise their earlier elitist notions by running a variety of programs to accommodate students of diverse abilities and needs. Medical schools, for example, offer a six-month training course for "barefoot doctors"—paramedics trained to treat simple ailments and administer first aid. There is probably more give-and-take in the classroom, with students no longer simply reciting lessons by rote, and teachers not prepared to reimpose their former strict control. Course content has been brought more closely in line with China's economic and technological needs, and students are less likely to be overeducated for available jobs.

41. The government organization now monitoring education is the Scientific and Educational Group, replacing the two defunct ministries of

Major Events in Chinese Higher Education

June 1966	Central Committee orders all schools closed pending reform of the education system
August 1966	Red Guards introduced at mass rally in Peking
March 1967	PLA directed to enter schools to restore order and prepare for resumption of classes
July 1968	Mao issues statement on reforming universities of science and engineering
July 1968	First Worker Propaganda Team enters Tsinghua University
December 1968	Publication of Mao's instruction on sending educated young people to rural areas
July 1970	Red Flag announces reopening of Tsinghua University
March 1971	National Education Conference convened in Peking
June 1971	Peking issues guidelines on reform of liberal arts universities
September 1971	Red Flag suggests some modifications of reform program
February 1972	Spring enrollment drive signals resumption of classes in most universities

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education and of higher education. As its name suggests, higher education will be closely coordinated with scientific priorities and will not be allowed to wander too far from production-related study. However, the liberal arts—attacked during the Cultural Revolution as useless—have managed to survive. In fact, with China's re-emergence on the diplomatic scene, there is a renewed emphasis on the study of foreign languages and related courses, beginning in primary school.

42. The return to old practices suggests that the points of view expressed by the educational czars of that time have in many respects triumphed despite the convulsions of the Cultural Revolution. It also suggests that much of the Peking leadership has been convinced that the more extreme educational measures have proved in practice to be unworkable. But the partial return to status quo ante probably means an eventual return of the tensions that provided some of the tinder for the conflagration of the Cultural Revolution. Those most capable of learning—in practice, those with privileged backgrounds—are again likely to receive pride of place in the classroom, thereby breeding resentment among the less gifted offspring of peasants and workers.

43. In the long run, what happens in the education field will be dictated by developments in the political arena. The current trend toward moderation in educational policy parallels similar trends in other facets of Chinese life. Educational policies will continue to move in this direction so long as the moderate elements in the Peking leadership retain the upper hand. If they do, the modifications of the educational reform program will gradually restore higher education to its pre - Cultural Revolution level.

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