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JPRS:4185

17 November 1960

ACTUAL CONDITIONS OF THE GREAT LEAP FORWARD
IN EDUCATION IN COMMUNIST CHINA

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JPRS: 4185

CSO: 1135-S

ACTUAL CONDITIONS OF THE GREAT LEAP FORWARD
IN EDUCATION IN COMMUNIST CHINA

[The following is a translation of an article written by Kotake Fumio in the Japanese-language Toho Hangekkan (Eastern Semimonthly), Tokyo, No 18, 16 September, pp 40-45.]

In "Ten Great Years," published in Communist China to celebrate the tenth anniversary of the revolution, Mr. Yang Hsiu-feng, head of the Ministry of Education, wrote an article entitled "The Great Change and Development of our Educational System." Here, he proudly summarized the development of Chinese education for the last ten years and showed the great growth of students in 1958 as compared to 1957, as follows:

	1958	Compared to 1957
Senior student (University and college)	660,000	50% more
Secondary student (Senior High, Junior High, Special High School, Agricultural High)	11,990,000	50% more
Junior student (Senior and Junior Grammar School)	86,400,000	40% more
Kindergarten student (Kindergarten)	31,000,000	31 times greater
Spare time student (Spare time School)	30,000,000	over 3 times greater
Illiterate students (Teaching School for Reading)	60,000,000	9 times greater

Of these, agricultural schools were established on a nationwide basis since 1958. These are mainly for graduates of grammar school before they enter middle school. (This system will be explained below.) Spare time schools were established in 1951 when the entire educational system was changed; these are workers and peasants accelerated elementary school (2-3 years system), and workers and peasants accelerated middle school (3-4 years system). These schools are for laborers and farmers of any age who have never had an education but are now able to be educated in their spare time. When they finish grammar school, they go on to spare time accelerated middle school.

Regular primary school is a 2-year system in the higher class and a 4-year system in the beginning class. Naturally, in the beginning class there are more students than in the higher class. Of course, you cannot believe these numbers as they are above (e.g., they published the same article "Ten Great Years" in English. Here, they lowered the number of secondary schools by 2,000,000 students for a total of 9,995,000. And the blind ^[illiterate] students' total was lowered by 20,000,000 for a total of 40,000,000.) But these ten years have clearly been marked by a great increase in the number of students. That is, even if these figures have been purposely increased for China, these developments in education are unbelievable and are unprecedented in that country.

However, the real virtue of education is not reflected in the number of students. One must investigate this carefully to determine what is actually transpiring; there are several problems behind these big changes in education which I would like to discuss.

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II.

The advancement of education in 1958 coincided with a new production policy initiated in the spring of that year. This new productive effort was designed to produce more food and consumer goods, which the previous 5-year plan had neglected, in a drive to increase heavy industry; light industry and farming, therefore, were not stressed. Because Red China is not mechanized it must depend upon the use of masses of people in its industrialization. This meant that a large number of school age persons were recruited into the labor force, and their education was ignored. In August, 1958, the state showed that they were aware of this problem and created people's communes to utilize farmers' wives and daughters for productive labor. At this time strenuous educational reforms begin to take place. In September, 1958, "The Instructions on Educational Work" were announced to indicate the concern over education. This announcement stressed that "education must serve the political advancement of the proletariat and be bound to productive labor."

There is no need to remark that politics are primary for the Communist Party--education is only an accessory of politics. This idea has been stressed in Red Chinese publications, too, that education's first objective is to make the people politically loyal to Communism. (See No. 1, 4th Issue 1950, Hsin Hua Yueh Pao, article by Lu Ting I) Thus, education is political education. However, political education has a very wide compass. Not only does it mean special political

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classes in each school to inculcate teachers and students with Communism and political lectures, but it also means that the entire school must cooperate for the success of government and party policies such as anti-American propaganda, helping Korea, and mobilizing pressure against any counter-revolutionaries, etc.

To effect this kind of political education party members are sent to primary and secondary school and to universities all over the country. And if a person opposes government policy, he is exposed as a counter-revolutionary, subjected to brain-washing and returned to manual labor.

The first part of "The Instructions on Educational Work" was clear about these political points and in effect severely limited the scope of education. It endeavored to suppress any activity which might be hostile to Communism. The remainder of "The Instructions" tied together education and productive labor to the advancement of industrialization. This idea, however, is not new and had been discussed in Red China a long time ago.

During the five year plan, China needed the cooperation of the intellectuals, but at the same time the Party was very suspicious of all schools, especially the universities and specialized colleges. This was especially so because most professors and students were from the bourgeoisie class, and for this reason they were initially subjected to political indoctrination by the Party and removed to

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ther part of the labor force.

It is clear that the Party believed that highly educated persons
lored liberalism and capitalism. This belief appeared in a paper
An Tsu Wen, Vice Minister, Organization Department of the
tral Committee of the Communist Party in 1957 immediately after
ruggle with the right-wing (December 5, 1957, Jen Min Yueh Pao).

author indicated that the educated class tended to stress
following:

1. Individualism, anarchism, and absolute equality.
2. Avoiding manual labor and contemptuous of farmers and industrial workers.
3. Emphasized their individual name, personal profit and seek only pleasure and personal position.
4. Free and happy-go-lucky, ask for democracy and never concentrate on it or discipline themselves. Admire capitalistic governments and dislike socialism.
5. Ignore political life and activities.

Thus, requiring professors and students to work in the factories
field began around 1955. Also, in the struggle against the
it-wing elements, many intellectuals were dismissed from their
tions. This was done in an effort to unite education with labor,
is, to train laboring intellectuals.

The attempt to combine education with productive work resulted
ules which required labor in every school. In other words,

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schools became units for productive labor as well as institutions of learning. Accordingly, senior students were periodically required to work in factories and farms. Also, most schools have factories, and students and teachers were forced to work there. This labor program affected not only senior schools, but secondary students and higher grades of primary schools as well.

The required work created much dissatisfaction among university and specialized college students. They argued that there is not enough time to study if, in addition to required classes in politics, they had to work as laborers. The anger of professors and students gave rise to slogans: "Knowledge comes before Reds," "Down with Quality," "Wasting outstanding intellectuals," etc.

In effect, this program meant that the Party was demanding that intellectuals become proletarian Communists. The slogans above expressed the feeling that one could become a laboring Communist at anytime. The necessary thing is to become learned before one learns Red theory. Thus, the students argued that to combine labor and education is not to recognize that specialized research is of an entirely different character than manual labor.

Red China, however, believes that this attitude is capitalistic and counter-revolutionary. The government argues that even the intellectual must be communized, and that this should precede specialized learning. At the same time, the government has recognized that the labor program and political indoctrination is

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reducing the quality of students and is a misuse of outstanding intellectual talent. This must have been considered by the authorities since they changed the school to the 1-3-8 system or 1-1, 5-4, 5 system. The first is based on one year-1 month vacation, 3 months labor, 8 months study. The second is based on 1 week; 1 day vacation, labor 1½ days, study 4½ days. (December 28, 1958, Shanghai Wen Hui Pao.)

III.

The organization of the people's communes was to eliminate food shortages and the inadequate supply of consumer goods by utilizing women and young girls as laborers to offset the stress on heavy industry. To understand how a farming country like China would not have enough food, one must realize that most rural workers were recruited into factories and mines. Coevally, there is the problem of severe droughts and/or floods.

The people's communes are considered self-sustaining units by the government. This means that several types of light industry are being built within these communes to supply persons with consumer products. That is, on the government's part, because these limits are self-sustaining, there is no need for the government to finance production of consumer goods. Hence, the central government encourages the building of factories within each unit to increase their self-sustaining character and ability.

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If there is opposition to this by persons who argue that such a self-sustaining program is not possible within these units, the government puts pressure on the area's chief, indicating that anything is possible. That is, to oppose this is to be against dialectic materialism.

It is clear, however, that this does involve a labor problem. Even if factories were built, they would require skilled labor to operate them. For this reason, short course schools were established. However, these were schools in name only; students were middle-aged farmers and wives who learned skills in their spare time.

Special skills schools which were affiliated with nationalized factories, had more quality than the above people's commune schools. The latter usually occupied an ordinary house and merely had a sign put up that said "school." Some schools did not have a building, and study was conducted in the fields. Teachers were at times skilled laborers, and party members went to areas also to give political classes.

Schools to teach farming skills were also established and here the teacher was usually an old farmer. These are called "Specialized Red School" and those on a bigger scale are called "Specialized Red University." It is difficult to get the correct figure, but it is believed that there are 800-odd "Specialized Red Universities." (Tsu Kuo No. 394 by I Wo Sheng, "Ten Year Progress in Red Chinese Education.") Among the most interesting of these "Specialized Red

Universities" are "Onion University," "Sweet Potato University."

Additionally, there is a "Rice Field One Million Kilogram University" which indicates the university's goal of producing this amount of rice.

There is a great deal of doubt then in figures which show that in 1958 there was a 50% increase in number of University students. One does not know whether the figures include this type of student or not.

Another kind of school established was the farm middle school. This occurred when the people's communes were established. It was for students who had completed grammar school but could not continue in secondary schools. The specialized Red schools were for middle-aged men. The farm middle school are for young boys. Here they learn farming, dairying, chicken ranching, fishing, fruit farming, machine repair, wood-work, etc.

Though one might say education is advanced in China, there are many persons who do not go to secondary school. About 10% of those who finish grammar school receive a secondary school education. The farm middle school, therefore, aims to give quick vocational training for the remaining 90%. These schools are not always compulsory but at the end of 1958 there were 110,000 established.

Naturally, the people's communes have limited finances so these schools many times exist in name only. In fact, part of the educational expenses are paid by the school. For example, schools

are given land and animals which are cared for so that they become self-sustaining. Thus, these schools are really half-study, half-labor systems; they study one day and work the next day, or study in the morning and work in the afternoon.

These schools are attended for three years. The subjects taught are politics, Chinese, mathematics, physics, and special skills. The school principal is a Party member who teaches politics. Moreover there are no regular teachers and those who do teach are non-professional. Thus, it is necessary to call for secondary school teachers on a temporary basis, or send non-professional teachers to attend lectures. These schools, therefore, are different spare-time schools for workers and farmers and from ordinary secondary schools but are typical within China's educational system.

According to Lu Ting I's discussion of the farm middle school, he says that when farming becomes mechanized, these schools will gradually become regular junior high schools. This illustrates China's effort to realize the ideal of combining labor and education.

The 1958 figures for secondary school students, then, includes the farm middle school students who number 2,000,000. Also, they said there were 110,000 farm middle schools. This means that there were only 20 students in each school. Later, they said that 30,000,000 students did not go to secondary school and that 1/5 of this number (6,000,000) went to farm middle schools. These figures as we can see do not make sense and indicates that the real number of farm middle

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school students must be 2,000,000.

The increase in the number of kindergarten students is only a result of using women as laborers; this did not involve any choice by the government but was a necessity. This tremendous increase, however, meant that there would be poor facilities and supervision and many of the teachers are very old women who cannot do manual labor. It is clear then, that these kindergartens cannot be compared to those in big cities or those affiliated with national factories; the latter were the kindergartens shown to foreign observers.

That spare time students increased does represent an advance by Red China but these figures, too, are subject to doubt. Originally, spare time schools were established in 1951 when the educational system was revised. Initially, this was quite successful and in 1952, 26,700,000 students were reported. Of these there were 2,700,000 workers and 24,000,000 farmers. In 1953, the total figure was 1,930,000 and in 1957 it increased to 9,640,000 which is 1/3 of the total in 1952. Finally, in 1958 spare time students are reported to be 30,000,000 which they say is due to the great advances in education. However, one can say that it is quite strenuous for middle-age persons to work all day and then go to school at night. Probably, this figure includes persons who only attend class a few times because the Party forces them to. One can guess that this is so, because we know that when the people's communes were

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formed, the commune members' working hours were increased. And further they asked the Central Committee and the cadres of the people's commune to let farmers have six to eight hours of sleep so they could attend classes.

The 1959 report shows that spare time students were reduced by $\frac{1}{2}$ to about 16,000,000. Also, it is reported that persons who attended classes to learn to read increased by nine times. However, we feel that these figures are also subject to doubt.

IV.

This concludes my brief discussion on the great advancement of education in Red China. One must have serious doubts about it.

If we put aside Communism's emphasis on political education, we must realize there is some logic in trying to combine labor and education. However, it is clear that universities are losing their main purpose of centers of learning, and that the secondary and grammar schools are being used to provide short training for manual labor. A good example of this is the farm middle school.

Additionally in 1950 they made another revolutionary change. According to a report by a representative of Peking Teachers University, Ma Chien Min, at a national literary and teaching conference, the following points were made:

- 1) The present 6-3-3 system is too long. The starting age for school, 7 years, is too old for introduction to secondary education.

- 2) The subjects taught in secondary and grammar school are unnecessary for socialism.
- 3) Subjects do not agree with reality of production. Arrangement of subjects make it difficult to judge which are most needed and which are not.
- 4) For these reasons, secondary and grammar schools must be changed.

He said to make the 6-3-3, 12-year system into a straight 9-year system. During these 9 years, students should work at labor for 1734 hours. (June 11, 1960, Jan Min Yueh Pao)

It is obvious this proposed reform was not initiated by Peking Teachers University but was forced by the Communist Party. In the same report the Propaganda Minister, Lu Ting 1, said the basic program of education should be shortened adequately, study hours need to be shortened, and labor hours lengthened. This statement was a result of a study conducted since February, 1960, in education.

The nine system makes the former secondary and grammar schools four-step system (senior middle, junior middle, senior primary, junior primary) into one system. This results in fewer school years and low scholastic ability. However, in this way many people will receive a secondary level education.

The situation today, however, is such that many people cannot attend even four years of junior primary school. In Red China, the total number of students is increasing every year and reportedly

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reached 80% recently. However, if this is correct, there are still 20% of the population not affected. The number of pupils decrease after junior primary school, and many less go to secondary school. It is for this reason the government is trying to introduce secondary school with fewer required years. However, these problems will exist even if there is a straight 9-year system.

Additionally, the stress on political education is primary, and there are no abstract subjects; everything is tied to the practical and to labor. According to this report the educational reform is necessary, but this requires the resolution of certain problems first. For example, teachers must be educated and competent and must change their views on education to coincide with Communism. Also, there are some persons who doubt the advisability of this reform; the government must destroy this doubt. We can see that even if there are doubts and problems, Red China must proceed with these reforms and will proceed. By doing this, every school in China will change their original purpose into the kind seen in the typical farmer's school.

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-14-

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