

### Education in China Today

Since 1949 when the Communist regime assumed control in China, education has played a very important role in consolidating Communist rule and establishing a Communist society. Education, indoctrination and propaganda are forms of persuasion that the Communists feel are more effective in the long run than coercion or force. The Chinese government is spending a great deal of time, money, and effort on the education of its citizens.

Kindergarten is the beginning of a very carefully planned curriculum which has two main goals. The first is to give as much factual information as possible to each person and the second is to give ideological direction.

The moral education concentrates on the love for the mother land, love and respect for private property, love of the Party, love for Chairman Mao, and love for proletarian internationalism. Other aspects are respect for parents, honesty, courage, patriotism, and helpfulness.

The factual information places emphasis on personal and household hygiene. Visual aids in the form of charts and posters show the child how to brush his teeth as well as wash his hands and feet. Actual Chinese living conditions are depicted. For example, the charts show water being drawn from the well in a bucket and used from the basin.

Suprisingly to me, the children do not wear uniforms, but are colorfully dressed and reflect a wealth of parental love.

Full time primary (elementary) education normally begins at age seven and continues for six years. The schools in the cities have been able to provide a universal education for most of the children, but in rural areas only about 80% of the children are reached. The stress is placed on love of work, duty to the state and moral guidance. As in the American schools, the responsibility is to turn out well-informed young people who can go on to high school, but unlike American elementary schools, they are already trained workers.

At the elementary school age the children may join the Young Pioneers, a branch of the Communist Party. Their badge of distinction is a red kerchief. About ninety per cent of the young people join this organization, the other ten per cent do not want to join, don't qualify, or their parents are against it.

A student can be expelled from the Pioneers which also means expulsion from school, but only for a very good reason. This problem, however, does not have to be related to school activities. Mr. Portisch assumed from a description he was given that the school for labor and education to which the child was sent would be similar to our reformatory.

The relationship between school and home is very close. Each pupil has a notebook in which teachers' comments on studies and behavior are entered. Each week the parents must sign the notebook which is also used to record grades at the end of the term.

In this system, no one fails and actually no grades are repeated. The theory behind this is that any human being can learn if the material is presented properly. It is the teacher's responsibility to accomplish this, by tutoring

the student after school for as long as necessary. What happens to the slow learner or those who don't want to learn? The Communist reasoning is that something is wrong and analysis is needed. Clinical cases are sent to special schools, for others, parent-teacher conferences are held and a solution found.

An example of the curriculum for the 6th grade: Chinese reading and writing, arithmetic, natural sciences, agriculture physical education, singing and dancing, mastery of 3,500 Chinese characters, and the Latin alphabet.

When asked if the elementary students practiced criticism or self-criticism, a teacher replied, "We do not want our children confronted with such a high level of reasoning at such an early age. They lack the necessary maturity."

Long range goals provide for universal primary and secondary education to be condensed into ten years but reaching a level equal in quality to the present (1966) first year university standard.

The full time secondary or high school education is divided into three groups. (1) Middle School, (2) the Normal School, for training of primary school teachers and, (3) Professional schools for specialized training. Mr Ross Terrill states in 800,000,000, The Real China, that in 1971, "the schooling years have been cut to ten and the new order is egalitarian to a striking degree." Pupils are chosen on a basis of proximity to the school, rather than merit as tested by exam. Thus China is making Middle School education almost universal.

In the Middle School the ideological training is increased to two lessons per week. It concentrates on

obedience to the Party, love for the Party, and Chairman Mao.

A brief history of the development of society, including development of democracy is studied under the following headings: slave holding societies, fuedal era, capitālist colonialism, imperialism which is transformed through revolution into socialism and in turn into communism. Needless to say, this time division is quite different from those found in our history books.

Eventually all of Chairman Mao's works are read, discussed and Memorized.

This explosion at the Middle School level creates a tremendous problem at the university level. After two or three years without classes many universities began in 1970 with a small hand-picked enrollment. In many cases, teachers outnumbered students. These hot-house students are a new breed - none had come directly from Middle School, but only after two or three years at farm or factory. At one university the average age of new students was twenty four. These students are often politically sound, bright, and physically fit, but not necessarily graduates of a Middle School.

The above situation was a result of the Cultural Revolution in China which left the Maoists, drastic experimenters, in charge and set China on the path to a truly socialistic education system. Courses are shorter, reducing the time spent at university to two or three years.

Problems are great: the need for more Middle School teachers at a time when college enrollment had been reduced. Enrollment at colleges needs to be stepped up. Middle School graduates and the new student types in the same classes.

Coaching for non-graduates. Increased burden on factories and communes which must receive students and guide their practical work. Will troublesome students' groups appear.?

Professor P8u's summary, "It's all experimental. We're trying to make universities more in touch with our country, its needs. We're trying to make it socialistic-the door open to anyone, and doing work that will serve workers, peasants and soldiers. When you're on a new road you just don't know what's around the corner.

An interesting bit of information, supplied by Hugo Portisch in Red China Today, explained the position of the teachers, professors, intellectual and poets in the Communist society. These specialists were wooed by the Party, presented to the people as sages who should be honored, were provided better housing, were given government posts, and were sent special invitations to events of consequence. At the same time, they were openly and covertly suspected of clinging to old ideas and harboring counter-revolutionary ideas. Any indiscretions were cause for reprimand at meetings introduced by the Communists for criticism and self criticism. These are two methods used in reeducating and awakening people. Open acknowledgement of faults (self criticism) and criticism by colleagues, Party comrades, close friends and even relatives are important means of enforcing morality.

Just a brief statement must be made on the part-work, part-study program which was established (1) to provide continued education for those who failed to get into full time school; (2) to provide education for peasants and workers; (3) to help a poor country by providing more workers for the production line.

No matter what our political beliefs may be, I suggest

that we give this Communist regime the credit for teaching its people, those masses, to read, write, and count.