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**Knowledge Capital in Socialist China:
The Political Interplay of Intellectuals, Cadres, and the Party-State,
1950-1959**

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Dedication

For Sarah, who was there from the beginning to the end of my graduate school experience

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Abstract

Knowledge Capital in Socialist China: The Political Interplay of Intellectuals, Cadres, and the Party-State, 1950-1959

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The University of Texas at Austin, 2021

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Previous literature on the relationship between the post-1949 Chinese state and Chinese intellectuals has emphasized its oppositional characters; specifically, the measures taken and extent to which the party-state placed intellectuals and their beliefs under surveillance and scrutiny. My dissertation takes a different approach, highlighting areas of cooperation and accommodation between the state and the intellectual class. The state, for example, took active steps to find employment for out-of-work intellectuals at the start of the 1950s and ensured that political study requirements were not particularly disruptive, and even less punitive. To the extent that there was disharmony in the relationship, it usually arose from low-ranking cadres, many of whom were not formally educated and took a more skeptical view of intellectuals than did the upper echelons of the party-state. This work also surveys the steps intellectuals took to advance their interests, through letter-writing and petitions to government officials to advocate for themselves and their colleagues. As such, intellectual agency during the 1950s is the analytical centerpiece of

this dissertation. I argue that many of the gains won by intellectuals possessed staying power, in contrast to previous scholarship which has focused on the disappearance of free speech rights during the Anti-Rightist Campaign of 1957. This work shows, instead, that early communist statebuilding was a collaborative process in which intellectuals helped actively set the tenor of their relationship with the new government. The logic of educational expansion, however, produced a new generation of intellectuals toward the end of the decade more radical than the one that came before, setting the stage for intergenerational conflict between intellectuals of various ages during the following decade.

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INTRODUCTION

The 1957 spring semester was coming to a close at South China Normal University, meaning that sweltering summer temperatures in the city of Guangzhou were on the horizon. Intellectuals at the university, however, were feeling the heat in multiple ways. The government of the People's Republic of China (PRC) had recently been tolerant of intellectuals expressing critical views of the state, although by mid-year this fleeting moment of liberality was drawing down. Professors at South China Normal, like their colleagues both in and outside of academia across the country, found themselves under considerable scrutiny from Communist Party (CCP) officials and cadres. At one meeting on June 1, CCP cadres gathered a small contingent of professors to describe the working situation at the university. While others used the meeting as an opportunity to air grievances with campus conditions—for example, one professor decried the unequal teaching load expected of professors without administrative roles, meaning they could not devote as much time to research as department heads; another complained of large class sizes and unmotivated students—one professor offered a more theoretical perspective. Xie Shuwu saw the decade thus far as a sort of negotiation between intellectuals and the state over the rules and regulations of the new society (in Mandarin, this idea can be expressed more concisely with the idiom *yuefa sanzhang*—literally, “agreeing on three laws”). He hoped that such cooperation might continue, with the ruling party soliciting the opinions and advice of the intellectual class.¹

The case of Xie Shuwu is instructive in a variety of ways. First, the institution he taught at symbolized a number of dramatic changes that had taken place since the CCP came to power at the end of 1949. South China Normal University had originally been founded as an offshoot of

¹ This material was drawn from *huanan shifan xueyuan jixu zuotan neibu maodun: jiaoshoumen tichu xuduo piping he jianyi*, June 1, 1957, Chinese Anti-Rightist Campaign Database, 1957, edited by Song Yongyi, Universities Service Centre for China Studies, 2013, available at <http://ccrd.usc.cuhk.edu.hk.ezproxy.lib.utexas.edu/Default.aspx> [hereafter ARC].

Xiangqin University in Guangzhou, with a curriculum that focused on training future educators. A broad package of education reforms enacted by the CCP in the early 1950s, however, reorganized the teachers' college into a large university. South China Normal began drawing from an expanded body of students across the Chinese south. A litany of new schools—regional normal universities, or “people’s revolutionary universities” that explicitly focused on the offspring of peasants and workers—defined the new era. As the education system expanded, professors and university staff came into far more contact with state agents than ever before.

Second, and more importantly, Xie Shuwu’s conceptualization of “hashing out the laws” with the Communist Party is highly representative of the political process as it actually played out between the state and the intellectuals. The notion that Chinese scholars should advise government officials was far from revolutionary. Indeed, harnessing intellectual expertise was a hallmark of Chinese politics extending centuries back throughout the dynastic era. Chinese intellectuals had long been politicized; prestigious private academies acted as siphons into the imperial bureaucracy, which remained largely in place throughout hundreds of years and endured even in the face of political upheaval. Chinese intellectuals before the twentieth century are therefore best seen as scholar-officials (*shidaifu*) or literati (*wenren*).² Although the academies that churned out scholar-bureaucrats were nominally meritocratic, it is impossible to ignore the linkages between socioeconomic status and educational attainment. Invariably, a significant number of Chinese intellectuals came from the wealthiest families—a trend that continued into the modern era. As landed gentry moved from the countryside to the cities in increasing

² Timothy Cheek, *The Intellectual in Modern Chinese History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015), 6, 33. Indeed, the modern Chinese word for “intellectual”—*zhishifenzi*—did not arise until at least the 1920s, when the writer Lu Xun began using the term *zhishi jieji* to refer to the “knowledge class.” By 1949, however, the term *zhishifenzi* had become commonplace to refer to anyone with formal education, including medical professionals, engineers, technicians, researchers, academics, and artisans. The CCP used the term *zhishifenzi* ubiquitously after assuming power.

numbers, their children had the opportunity to attend the best schools in the empire and become competitive applicants to the academies.³ To be sure, there were options for lower-status individuals to make their way up through the academic system. But by-and-large, a class of scholar-officials was able to successfully reproduce itself.

As such, the status of intellectuals became something of a dilemma for the Communist Party as it came to power. Intellectuals, especially revolutionary youth, had become increasingly supportive of the CCP, and in some cases even gave their lives in service of the revolution. But the mere existence of the intellectuals was emblematic of a system of unequal status that the party sought to rectify. Even then, however, the CCP could only go so far; the regime's immediate goals were focused on survival (with respect to the growing international crisis in the Korean Peninsula) and spurring industrial production. Intellectuals were critical to both. In addition, the party-state sought to create new opportunities for peasant and working-class communities to gain access to education, which would require an unprecedented expansion of the education system—and therefore more teachers. Even if intellectuals reminded CCP officials of the system they sought to upend, the pragmatic realities of governing meant that intellectuals were necessary, just as they had been to previous dynastic governments. But in order to exert control over the education system, the party-state relied on legions of low-ranking cadres, who were often workers or peasants themselves and who had little formal education. Even if the government could generally ignore the generational inequalities that produced the intellectual class, cadres often could not.

The formal mechanisms of the state were not fully in place until the middle of the decade, but once new organs of bureaucratic governance like the *danwei* (work unit) had been

³ See, for example, William T. Rowe, *Hankow: Commerce and Society in a Chinese City, 1796-1889* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1984), 19-20.

established, intellectuals both inside and outside of academia found themselves with more avenues to voice their opinions on their living and working conditions.⁴ By the end of 1955, intellectuals began tentatively putting pressure on party officials to improve their livelihoods. Intellectuals' complaints included poor housing, low wages, long working hours, and a lack of professional opportunities. Although the 1956 period of liberalization is typically thought of as the "Hundred Flowers Campaign," a movement allowing intellectuals the freedom to criticize the state, I instead suggest that questions of free speech and expression were relatively tangential to intellectuals' broader concerns. The majority of intellectuals were concerned with practical matters in their day-to-day lives, and it was these concerns that took center stage in the reformist efforts of 1956. The CCP's central leadership made good-faith efforts to address intellectuals' list of concerns. Even in this heyday of pro-intellectual policies, however, inequalities persisted. For example, while intellectuals employed as engineers in critical economic sectors (such as heavy industry) saw huge improvements to their daily living conditions, others (such as artists) saw only promises of future improvements.

These pro-intellectual reforms proved unsustainable. Cadres had been growing increasingly resentful of what they saw as intellectual privilege during the decade. Considering the socioeconomic background of the cadres, as well as the Communist Party's mandate to correct a millennia-old system of generational inequality, their frustration is understandable.⁵

⁴ For a more thorough investigation of the *danwei*, see Xiaobo Lü and Elizabeth J. Perry's edited volume *Danwei: The Changing Chinese Workplace in Historical and Comparative Perspective* (Armonk: M. E. Sharpe, 1997) and David Bray, *Social Space and Governance in Urban China: The Danwei System from Origins to Reform* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2005).

⁵ Scholars have advanced several different views of the cadres and their role in the modern Chinese political system. See Franz Schurmann, *Ideology and Organization in Communist China*, second edition (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1968); Andrew G. Walder, *Communist Neo-Traditionalism: Work and Authority in Chinese Industry* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1986); Maurice Meisner, *The Deng Xiaoping Era: An Inquiry into the Fate of Chinese Socialism, 1978-1994* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1996); and Ching Kwan Lee, "From Organized Dependence to Disorganized Despotism: Changing Labor Regimes in China's Factories," *China Quarterly* 157 (1999): 44-71. Suffice to say, I am less interested in advancing my own theory regarding the political

During 1952, when the Communist Party moved to assert control over the vast majority of the nation's schools, top party officials often had to rein in overzealous cadres who sought to punish intellectuals severely or even remove them from their posts. Cadres bided the middle years of the decade in quiet resentment, but their frustrations emerged once again during the 1956 reforms. Cadres shifted from passive resentment to active resistance. In some cases, they simply refused to distribute the wage increases that the party center or their municipal government had approved; in others, they held up intellectual applications to join the Communist Party rather than passing them on to a review board. The CCP was therefore in an awkward position, and responded accordingly with a crackdown against "rightists" in mid-1957. But the campaign was far from the sweeping backlash the cadres wanted; only a small fraction of the nation's intellectuals were targeted as rightists, and even then only a fraction of the fraction actually received any punishment.

Even still, the Anti-Rightist backlash transformed the previously cooperative relationship between the state and the intellectuals, meaning that the CCP jettisoned previous injunctions for thought rectification (which emphasized intellectual self-study) in favor of having intellectuals participate in hard labor, either in the countryside or in urban factories, to gain a "working-class consciousness." Meanwhile, the state expanded its efforts to enroll working-class individuals in remedial education programs, even waiving admission requirements and lowering standards at China's top universities in order to bring in more laborers and peasants. Coupled with the party's attention to cultivating revolutionary zeal among the youth, these changes contributed to a sharp divide within the scholarly community between older intellectuals and the new generation.

Moving forward, intellectuals increasingly began to view other intellectuals with suspicion. The

role of the cadres as opposed to drawing attention to the cadres' sense of collective grievance against the intellectual class.

kind of collective solidarity among intellectuals that had led to the gains of 1956 could not be replicated by the 1960s.

My narrative has emerged from extensive research both in and outside of China. The majority of my fieldwork was completed in Shanghai, a natural choice due to the city's large population of intellectuals. The Shanghai Municipal Government was often at the cutting edge of passing policies designed to benefit the intellectual class, and as such kept extensive records on their views (for example, opinion surveys, letters written to the city, or minutes on political meetings involving intellectuals). In addition, *People's Daily*, the Communist Party's state newspaper, has provided a record of a number of editorials written by intellectuals. Although certainly censored, it is my belief that the paper can still provide a window into what intellectuals may have been thinking during the period, assuming that they doctored their writings to be acceptable to the regime. In recent years, however, the Chinese government has increasingly restricted access to state archives, proving problematic for research topics that may be deemed politically sensitive. Luckily, extensive digitized archives, in the form of the Database of the Chinese Political Campaigns of the 1950s, maintained by the Fairbank Center at Harvard University, as well as the Chinese Anti-Rightist Campaign Database, have proved incredibly useful for my project. Documents from these databases include many intellectual "confessions," apologetic documents regarding the writers' reflections on their "ideological errors" that they were required to write especially during 1952 and sometimes afterward.

Although some scholars have tended to read all documents written by intellectuals as having been produced under duress, I take the opposite view. When an intellectual writes that they were genuinely affected by the experiences in the 1950-1951 Land Reform Campaign and the plight of the peasantry, for example, I take them at their word—indeed, previous generations

of Chinese intellectuals came to similar conclusions organically (as I show in Chapter 1). Moreover, intellectuals were simply too large a population for the CCP to effectively control, especially at the outset of the decade. Plenty of intellectuals got out of writing confessions at all, but were never punished. Those that did usually had their documents filed away in a government archive, collecting dust.

In tracing out the flow of intellectuals' lives as well as intellectual policies during the 1950s, I argue that intellectuals actually possessed a good degree of political agency during the decade. Moreover, intellectuals were generally supportive of the CCP (if perhaps more so at the beginning than at the end of the decade), and as such were not "brainwashed" by the party's efforts at thought remolding. I see the reforms of 1956 as the consequence of pressure from below as opposed to shifting attitudes at the top of the political hierarchy. When the government shifted course in 1957 and launched the Anti-Rightist Campaign, I again argue that this change was driven in large part by the necessity of accommodating cadre frustration. The crackdown was a logical outcome of the contradictions at play in the 1950s—of a regime whose base was largely composed of underprivileged communities but that simultaneously sought to leverage intellectual power to transform China's industrial capabilities. Even in the final months of the decade, when cooperation between intellectuals and the state began to subside, it did so only partially. The government was still responsive to the opinions and needs of the intellectual class; the problem, going forward, was that the intellectual class had been fractured between competing factions. The political drama of the 1960s, culminating in the Cultural Revolution, grew out of the changed class characteristics of the intellectuals.

Charting the Historiography of Chinese Intellectuals and Education

The status of Chinese intellectuals under the PRC state has long captivated Western scholars. The first major studies of intellectuals in Maoist China were published in 1960, barely a decade after the new government had come to power. These formative texts portrayed the relationship between intellectuals and the party-state as essentially oppositional: the state employed a set of draconian policies to bring intellectuals to heel, whereas intellectuals primarily resisted (both passively and actively) state encroachment on education.⁶ The tendency to view intellectuals as naturally opposed to the state reflects the general mood of the Cold War era, during which Western scholars as a whole tended to take a dim view of state socialist countries. Theodore Chen in particular tends to express skepticism that intellectuals in the 1950s were being genuine at all when writing positive articles about the CCP.⁷ Other scholars, such as Merle Goldman, took a different approach. Goldman examines the intellectuals who had been attacked as “rightists” at various points during the 1950s, and notes that many of these scholars were political leftists in fact. As such, Goldman concludes that the labels used by the party—leftist, centrist, or rightist—referred to an intellectual’s support for the CCP rather than any kind of consistent ideology.⁸ Although I agree with Goldman’s conclusion, the aim of the present work is to move beyond the framework advocated by scholars in the 1960s, which viewed intellectuals as fundamentally opposed to the state. In contrast, I suggest that the vast majority of intellectuals were at least somewhat supportive of the party-state, and utilized their cooperative relationship with the government to advance their interests.

⁶ The two most significant studies of Chinese intellectuals during the 1950s are Theodore H. E. Chen, *Thought Reform of the Chinese Intellectuals* (Hong Kong, Hong Kong University Press, 1960) and Roderick MacFarquhar, *The Hundred Flowers Campaign and the Chinese Intellectuals* (New York: Frederick A. Praeger, 1960). Also see Fu-sheng Mu, *The Wilting of the Hundred Flowers: The Chinese Intelligentsia under Mao* (New York: Frederick A. Praeger, 1963).

⁷ See, for example, Chen’s discussion of intellectuals’ participation in the Land Reform Campaign in *Thought Reform of the Chinese Intellectuals*, 21-24.

⁸ See Merle Goldman, *Literary Dissent in Communist China* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1967).

Due to the nature of conducting historical research in China (or, rather, the general lack of the ability to do so during the 1960s and 1970s), scholarship did not return to the question of the Chinese intellectuals until the 1980s, at which point new paradigms emerged. Edited volumes by historians like Merle Goldman, Carol Hamrin, and Timothy Cheek have shown that Chinese intellectuals defined their identity both by their relationship with the state, as well as (contradictorily) their moral duty to criticize the state.⁹ In addition, other scholars began to consider that intellectuals' support for the CCP may have been organic, rather than forced; for example, Wen-hsin Yeh has examined the plight of young students in Shanghai during the Republican Period, where rising costs of school tuition, living expenses, and a lack of stable job opportunities may have contributed to radicalization among young intellectuals in the lead-up to the CCP takeover.¹⁰ Scholarship in the 1980s and early 1990s tended to either look past the 1950s (in the case of Hamrin, Cheek, and Goldman's work) or before (in the case of Yeh's). Although I do not have significant disagreements with any of these texts, I seek to return to the question of how intellectuals engaged the state during the formative 1950-1959 years while moving beyond a narrow oppositional framework as advanced by earlier scholarship.

Other works produced around this time focused their attention not just on intellectuals themselves, but on the wider education system. Theodore Chen's pioneering work in the early 1980s suggests that post-1949 Chinese education had two strands: an academic and revolutionary side, which were sometimes in conflict. During politically tense periods, such as the late 1950s or the Cultural Revolution, revolutionary education won out over academic education.¹¹ Other

⁹ See Carol Lee Hamrin and Timothy Cheek, editors, *China's Establishment Intellectuals* (Armonk: M. E. Sharpe, 1986) and Goldman, Cheek, and Hamrin, editors, *China's Intellectuals and the State: In Search of a New Relationship* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1987).

¹⁰ See Wen-hsin Yeh, *The Alienated Academy: Culture and Politics in Republican China, 1917-1937* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1990).

¹¹ See Chen, *Chinese Education since 1949: Academic and Revolutionary Models* (New York: Pergamon Press, 1981).

works have generally borrowed from Chen’s two-strands model, although scholars have taken the analysis in different directions. Ruth Hayhoe and Suzanne Pepper, for example, have shown how the CCP structured education along Soviet lines. Over the course of the 1950s, however, the inadequacy of the Soviet model became increasingly glaring, leading to attempts at “sinifying” Chinese education in the late 1950s and into the next decade.¹² Although these works tend to focus on urban areas, other scholars instead look at the inadequacies in rural education during the 1950s, which were generally ignored by the state until the late 1960s.¹³ All of these works give incredibly detailed perspectives on the extraordinary growth of formal education under the CCP. The scale of the education expansion in the 1950s thus leads into an important point regarding my own work: accelerating rates of enrollment meant that the demand for new teachers was always high during the decade, which meant in turn that the state was reliant on intellectuals to achieve its wider vision for the new society. These works on the education system thus provide another frame of reference for challenging the oppositional framework from the 1960s.

Scholarship in recent decades has returned to the intellectuals themselves, employing new methods of sociology and social history to understand intellectuals as a social class in their own right. Timothy Cheek had produced a landmark volume on intellectuals throughout the course of China’s twentieth century, focusing on their class characteristics as well as the ideologies and debates that defined intellectual discourse.¹⁴ Although groundbreaking in shifting the focus to intellectuals themselves, Cheek’s recent works still relies on the narratives first advanced by scholars in the 1960s—that intellectuals were by-and-large suppressed by the CCP state,

¹² See Ruth Hayhoe, *China’s Universities, 1895-1995: A Century of Cultural Conflict* (New York: Garland Publishing, 1996) and Suzanne Pepper, *Radicalism and Education Reform in 20th-Century China: The Search for an Ideal Development Model* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1996).

¹³ See Dongping Han, *The Unknown Cultural Revolution: Educational Reforms and Their Impact on China’s Rural Development* (New York: Garland Publishing, 2000).

¹⁴ Cheek, *The Intellectual in Modern Chinese History*.

excepting a brief period of tolerance for free expression in 1956 and early 1957, followed by an even larger suppression after the Anti-Rightist crackdown. Although I borrow from Cheek's methodology by centering intellectuals in this work, I disagree with his portrayal of the 1950s. Various works from the scholar Eddy U have been influential in the process of writing this dissertation. U argues that previous scholarship has been focused on high-profile intellectuals. In reality, the concept of "intellectual" under the PRC state expanded to encompass millions of people, many of whom were not as prestigious as those who had been targeted during the Anti-Rightist Campaign.¹⁵ Whereas Eddy U's work has focused on how "intellectual" became a social marker during the 1950s, I instead examine the ways in which intellectuals engaged with the PRC as a unified class. However, I share his conclusions about the importance of "ordinary" intellectuals. Lastly, Joel Andreas has examined intellectuals and cadres as, respectively, classes of cultural elites and political elites, which converged over the course of the 1950s and early 1960s.¹⁶ Although I tend to focus on instances of opposition between intellectuals and cadres, this study links up nicely with Andreas' work by concluding with an examination of efforts to "educate the working class" while "proletarianizing [*laodonghua*] the intellectuals."

Even as the field has evolved over the past decades, little work has been done to challenge the basic narrative of intellectuals' political engagement with the state during the 1950s. It is my objective to do so with the study at hand. Although I acknowledge that some degree of antipathy for the Communist Party existed among the intellectual community, I instead

¹⁵ See various articles by Eddy U, such as "The Hiring of Rejects: Teacher Recruitment and Crises of Socialism in the Early PRC Years," *Modern China* 30, no. 1 (January 2004): 46-80; "The Making of Chinese Intellectuals: Representations and Organization in the Thought Reform Campaign," *The China Quarterly* 192 (December 2007): 971-989; "The Making of *Zhishifenzi*: The Critical Impact of the Registration of Unemployed Intellectuals in the Early PRC," *The China Quarterly* 173 (March 2003): 100-121; and "Reification of the Chinese Intellectual: On the Origins of the CCP Concept of *Zhishifenzi*," *Modern China* 35, no. 6 (November 2009): 604-631.

¹⁶ Joel Andreas, *Rise of the Red Engineers: The Cultural Revolution and the Origins of China's New Class* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2009).

suggest that intellectuals were broadly supportive, or at worst neutral, toward the new government. For its part, the state sought to cultivate intellectual support through policies designed to explicitly aid the intellectual class, thus rewarding their loyalty. I also wish to break away from previous portrayals of the 1950s as defined, largely, by a series of “rectification campaigns” designed to corral the intellectuals under the aegis of the party-state.¹⁷ Although the 1950s-as-cycle-of-campaigns periodization scheme is certainly not without merit, I contend that the model misses an underlying logic behind the progression of intellectuals’ political engagement. I instead conceptualize the relationship between intellectuals, cadres, and the state as a sort of negotiative process, whereby each side possessed a good deal of agency. As such, my work lines up with the project of applying political “group theory” to a Chinese context.¹⁸ To the extent that the state moved to curtail intellectual privilege during the latter half of the decade, I see these moves as an inevitable response to budding resentment among the cadres, not as part of a larger political cycle.

Perspectives on Intellectuals under Communism

Most Marxist organizations have grappled with the question of intellectuals’ class identity. Intellectuals fit awkwardly into the typical socioeconomic classification scheme of

¹⁷ For one of the best accounts of CCP political history and the cycles of rectification campaigns, see Frederick C. Teiwes, *Politics and Purges in China: Rectification and the Decline of Party Norms, 1950-1965*, second edition (Armonk: M. E. Sharpe, 1993). Teiwes’ larger point—on which I agree with him—is that the CCP was actually relatively unified behind Mao Zedong until the onset of the Cultural Revolution.

¹⁸ This scholarly project first originated with David S. G. Goodman’s edited volume *Groups and Politics in the People’s Republic of China* (Armonk: M. E. Sharpe, 1984). The volume contains two chapters related to intellectuals—Gordon White’s “Distributive Politics and Educational Development: Teachers as a Political Interest Group,” and James Cotton’s “Intellectuals as a Group in the Chinese Political Process. In general, both White and Cotton confine their analysis to the post-Mao years, and do not challenge pre-existing studies of intellectuals under Mao. For a general view of group theory, see G. David Garson, *Group Theories of Politics* (London: SAGE Publications, 1978). For an early attempt at applying group theory in a communist political context, see Harold Gordon Skilling and Franklyn Griffiths, *Interest Groups in Soviet Politics* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1971).

Marxism; it is undeniable that, across a variety of cultures, having a bourgeois background was conducive to educational attainment, thus inextricably linking the bourgeoisie and intellectuals. Marxist theorists have thus struggled with how to understand intellectuals' role in society, as well as their revolutionary potential. Theorists have debated whether intellectuals are fundamentally progressive or retrogressive, how intellectual theory can be put into action, and how intellectuals might best be utilized by the socialist state.¹⁹ In cases where Marxist political organizations were successful in gaining political power, as in China, the victors struggled with adapting these theories to the practical realities of everyday governance. As successful Marxist organizations moved to establish new nation-states, they naturally evolved along technocratic lines in the pursuit of rational redistributionist policies.²⁰ Intellectuals were vital to socialist-bloc bureaucracies, and as such played important roles through the communist world. The realities and demands of political power thus sidelined the theoretical debate on intellectuals' class status, while opening up new pathways for intellectuals to navigate socialist political systems. It is worth briefly examining various examples of intellectuals under communist states in order to place China's history in a wider context.

The experiences of intellectuals in the Soviet Union were quite unlike those of Chinese intellectuals three decades later. Even amid slight economic liberalization under the New Economic Policy of the 1920s, a large number of Russian intellectuals were deported by the Soviet government—primarily from big cities like Petrograd (later Leningrad, modern-day St. Petersburg) or Moscow, either to exile in the Russian far east or elsewhere in Europe.

¹⁹ Suman Gupta's *Marxism, History, and Intellectuals: Toward a Reconceptualized Transformative Socialism* (Cranbury: Associated University Presses, 2000) gives a good overview of the debate regarding intellectuals among Marxist theorists.

²⁰ George Konrád and Ivan Szelényi discuss the natural evolution of revolutionary socialist movements into technocratic party-states, as well as how intellectuals have engaged with these new regimes, historically, in *The Intellectuals on the Road to Class Power*, translated by Andrew Arato and Richard E. Allen (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1979).

Intellectuals suspected of disloyalty were frequently arrested, intimidated by Soviet secret police, or even executed.²¹ In general, the Soviet government moved aggressively to corral the intelligentsia by establishing control over writers' groups and the school system. Intellectuals attempted to band together in order to resist state encroachment, sometimes via mass strikes, but resistance was largely ineffective and often led to reprisals from security forces.²² In more recent years, scholarship of Soviet history has begun moving in a different direction, quite similar to the ideas that spawned this present work. Scholars like Kendall Bailes and Vladislav Zubok have suggested that intellectuals who survived the purges were able to exercise some degree of agency, and enjoyed special privileges meted out by the Soviet government designed to reward their loyalty. Particularly among the "technical" intelligentsia—engineers, technicians, and scientists—efforts to negotiate with the state as a class proved successful.²³ Overall, however, the intellectual-state dynamic in the Soviet Union evolved in a highly different manner than in the People's Republic of China, where intellectuals were quite politically potent at the outset. In addition, the repressive techniques applied by the Soviets against the intelligentsia were not matched in scope by the Chinese Communist government.

Much of East and Central Europe fell under Soviet dominance in the aftermath of World War II and the occupation by the Red Army. Intellectuals in these countries had gone through a wide array of social changes over the course of the nineteenth century, coming to oppose the practice of East European serfdom and embracing liberalism. In order to best combat what they

²¹ Lesley Chamberlain covers the repression of Soviet intellectuals in *Lenin's Private War: The Voyage of the Philosophy Steamer and the Exile of the Intelligentsia* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 2006).

²² Stuart Finkel describes both the Soviet government's policies toward the intelligentsia, as well as resistance from below, in *On the Ideological Front: The Russian Intelligentsia and the Making of the Soviet Public Sphere* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2007).

²³ See Kendall E. Bailes, *Technology and Society under Lenin and Stalin: Origins of the Soviet Technical Intelligentsia, 1917-1941* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2015) and Vladislav Zubok, *Zhivago's Children: The Last Russian Intelligentsia* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2009).

perceived as social “backwardness,” East European intellectuals sought to enter newly-formed bureaucracies by the end of the century, making the region highly conducive to the imposition of rationalized, hierarchical Marxism from above.²⁴ Beyond that, however, it is difficult to generalize about the political engagement of East European intellectuals. Differences between states were significant; for example, East Germany tolerated virtually no dissent from its intellectual class, whereas Poland was less repressive. Romania relied on an enormous amount of cultural control and propaganda to cajole its intellectuals, while Hungary instead offered the promise of material benefits in exchange for supporting the regime.²⁵ Due to East European intellectuals’ history of service in state bureaucracies, many were able to adapt to life under technocratic communist regimes fairly well. Indeed, intellectual bureaucrats were essential for the distribution of propaganda and the creation of new nationalist narratives to support socialist governance.²⁶ More recent scholarship, however, has instead focused on the growth of dissident culture among East and Central European intellectuals, particularly among writers. Over the course of the 1960s and the 1970s, intellectuals in countries like East Germany, Poland, Czechoslovakia, and Hungary all began to challenge Soviet hegemony in the region.²⁷ In Czechoslovakia (the modern-day Czech Republic), the post-Soviet government was headed by Václav Havel, himself a dissident intellectual, until 2003. The diversity of political situations in East and Central Europe under communism shows that it is impossible to draw out a single

²⁴ For a background on the historical trajectory of the intellectual class in East Europe, see Konrád and Szelényi, *The Intellectuals on the Road to Class Power*, especially 85-142.

²⁵ These differences are explored in András Bozóki’s edited volume, *Intellectuals and Politics in Central Europe* (New York: Central European University Press, 1999).

²⁶ See, for example, Katherine Verdery, *National Ideology under Socialism: Identity and Cultural Politics in Ceaușescu’s Romania* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991). Nicolae Ceaușescu rejected the use of material incentives to encourage loyalty to his government as mirroring capitalism too much. See pages 100-101.

²⁷ For a discussion of East German intellectuals, see Thomas W. Goldstein’s *Writing in Red: The East German Writers Union and the Role of Literary Intellectuals* (Rochester: Camden House, 2017); for a comparative survey of Polish, Czech, and Hungarian intellectuals, see Barbara J. Falk, *The Dilemmas of Dissidence in East-Central Europe: Citizen Intellectuals and Philosopher Kings* (New York: Central European University Press, 2003).

generalization of intellectual political engagement in the region; as such, the region serves as a microcosm of the larger communist world order.

Intellectuals in Cuba followed a relatively similar revolutionary trajectory as their Chinese counterparts. Widespread frustration with the authoritarian Fulgencio Batista regime led to an embrace of the Cuban communist movement by intellectuals, who continued to offer their support for the new government after Batista's defeat. Like Chinese intellectuals, Cuban scholars connected with each other through magazines such as *Lunes de Revolución* or *Pensamiento Crítico*, similar to newspapers like *Guangming Daily* in China. Cuban intellectuals also enjoyed a decade of relative freedom during the 1960s. They developed new school curricula independently from the state in an effort to better articulate Marxist theory and values to students. However, there were few efforts to dramatically expand Cuba's pool of highly-prestigious scholars, contrasting with China's drives to promote mass education; in general, Cuban intellectual activity was centered around the prestigious University of Havana. Although Cuba experienced what intellectuals called the "grey years" of 1971-1976, where the state began taking a heavy hand in censoring intellectuals and stifling free expression in academia, the generally close and cooperative relationship between Cuban intellectuals and the state continued afterward. In the modern era, Cuban intellectuals have been active voices in calling for political and cultural reforms, and have developed new theories on political socialism in the twenty-first century.²⁸ Although the Cuban experience mirrors the intellectual-state cooperation we see in the People's Republic of China, two distinct differences emerge: (1) the lack of a significant

²⁸ The information in this section was drawn from Kepa Artaraz, "Constructing Identities in a Contested Setting: Cuba's Intellectual Elite during and after the Revolution," *Oral History* 45, no. 2 (2017): 50-59 and Rafael Hernández, "Intellectuals, Civil Society, and Political Power in Cuba," translated by Jackie Cannon, *Social Research* 84, no. 2 (2017): 407-428. In general, surveys of the Cuban intelligentsia after 1959 are somewhat uncommon in the literature. Also see Antoni Kapcia, *Cuba: Island of Dreams* (Oxford: Berg, 2000) for an account of revolutionary culture in Cuba.

program to dramatically expand the intellectual class, which ultimately transformed the class characteristics of Chinese scholars, and (2) a high degree of political continuity in Cuba, in contrast to the fundamental abandonment of Maoism in China after 1976.

In neighboring North Korea, intellectual production received a welcome boost from the occupying Soviet Union at the end of World War II. The Soviet military actively supported endogenous artists, writers, and other producers of culture after the war, leading to a flourishing cultural scene north of the 38th parallel. Although the total number of intellectuals in the US-occupied South was greater than those living in the North, intellectual migration between the two Koreas actually went in favor of the North during the immediate postwar period. The North Korean government also moved to expand the education system dramatically, and instituted new guidelines making it easier for poor, rural North Koreans to attend school.²⁹ If anything, North Korea's anti-illiteracy drive was accomplished faster than in China; in some rural North Korean counties, over 92% of illiterate peasants gained the ability to read and write within three years of the end of the Japanese occupation. Aiding the campaign were the People's Committees, organs of local governance that doubled as community recreation centers, which organized free classes for illiterate peasants.³⁰ Although North Korea's approach to mobilizing intellectuals was quite comparable to China's, North Korea did not have the long history of intellectual political engagement as in China. The long-surviving Korean Joseon Dynasty had been dominated by powerful lineages known as *yangban*, rather than by scholar-bureaucrats as in various Chinese dynasties. As such, North Korean intellectuals did not have the historical legacies or class cohesion to draw on that their Chinese counterparts did. The North Korean government

²⁹ See Charles K. Armstrong, *The North Korean Revolution, 1945-1950* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2003), 166-190.

³⁰ Suzy Kim, *Everyday Life in the North Korean Revolution, 1945-1950* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2013), 98-104.

ultimately was able to exercise a much greater degree of oversight over its education system than in China, where intellectuals were able to push for political engagement on terms more amenable to them.³¹

It is therefore impossible to describe a singular model of intellectual political engagement in the communist bloc. Although communist governments in the Soviet Union, East Europe, Cuba, North Korea, and China all emerged from a Marxist theoretical nexus, each had to chart its own course in discovering what role intellectuals would play in the new society. Intellectuals in these societies too had different strategies of political engagement, although a general willingness to cooperate with the state pervades all these case studies. Ultimately, the peculiarities of history played a more deterministic role on the outcomes of intellectual-state relations than theoretical Marxism. In both China and North Korea, for example, a shared legacy of the scholar-bureaucrat led these governments to aggressively expand the intellectuals' ranks and eliminate the distinctions between the intellectual and proletarian classes. Even then, Chinese intellectuals were ultimately able to influence PRC politics to a greater degree than their North Korean counterparts, who had not enjoyed quite the same degree of political influence as in Chinese history. As such, China represents a unique case study among communist states for a survey of the intellectual-state relationship—one where intellectuals had the greatest degree of agency to effect political change.

Totalitarian Politics from Below

The twentieth century saw the rise of new forms of autocratic states whose political legitimacy involved a belief that only heroic, all-out efforts from a governing body could reshape

³¹ For a discussion of North Korean education, see Hyung-chan Kim and Dong-kyu Kim, *Human Remolding in North Korea: A Social History of Education* (Lanham: University Press of America, 2005).

society in order to bring about needed change. Of course, authoritarian regimes themselves were far from new; what was different was a fervent belief in the necessity of total mobilization, accomplished by the state (usually dominated by a single political party), in the interests of transformation. Although the usage of the term “totalitarianism” to refer to a variety of such states, from Italy to Nazi Germany to the Soviet Union, dates back to the early decades of the 1900s, serious academic attention to the phenomenon of political totalitarianism did not begin until after World War II, with the publication of Hannah Arendt’s pioneering work *The Origins of Totalitarianism*. Arendt drew attention to the structural similarities between totalitarian regimes, focusing primarily on the Soviet Union and Nazi Germany: a reliance on secret police to enforce order, the assumption of total political and social power by a single party, and an intense effort at promoting the regime’s values through mass mobilization and extensive propaganda.³² Arendt’s work, coming out just as the United States was shifting its focus from winning a world war against fascism to containing the spread of communism, helped establish an academic justification for shifting American foreign policy objectives. Her work invited structural comparisons between fascism, Nazism, and communism while ignoring ideological differences. To the extent that other scholars have criticized Arendt, they tended to focus on her neglect of ideology. Les Adler and Thomas Paterson, for example, suggested that communist regimes were examples of humanism gone awry, whereas fascist regimes rejected humanism from the outset.³³

As the Cold War deepened, however, the study of political totalitarianism increasingly became intertwined with the study of communist states. Studies such as those by John Armstrong

³² Hannah Arendt, *The Origins of Totalitarianism* (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, 1951).

³³ Les K. Adler and Thomas G. Paterson, “Red Fascism: The Merger of Nazi Germany and Soviet Russia in the American Image of Totalitarianism, 1930s-1950s,” *The American Historical Review* 75, no. 4 (April 1970): 1046-1064.

showed how Arendt's theories played out in the context of Stalinist Russia.³⁴ By the 1960s, new evidence had emerged regarding the bloody nature of Stalin's rise to power, the purges against the Soviet intelligentsia and other party members, the use of terror, and the presence of Soviet gulags. Unlike fascism, which had seemingly collapsed with the defeat and surrender of the Axis Powers at the end of World War II, communist totalitarianism seemed to possess stronger staying power and accordingly spawned more academic attention. By the 1980s, Arendt's thesis of a basically comparable fascist and communist totalitarianism had been eclipsed. Jeane Kirkpatrick, appointed by Ronald Reagan as US Ambassador to the United Nations, wrote a study of totalitarianism commissioned by the conservative think tank American Enterprise Institute, in which she argued that the US should ally with right-wing authoritarian governments and oppose left-wing authoritarian governments. Her rationale was that right-wing authoritarianism might gradually give way to democracy, whereas left-wing authoritarianism had no track record of doing so.³⁵ Kirkpatrick's take on totalitarianism coincided nicely with institutional shifts in US foreign policy and the rise of Reagan's "evil empire" rhetoric in reference to the Soviet Union. Communist totalitarianism was no longer simply structurally comparable to Nazism, as Arendt had alleged in the 1950s; it was the single greatest obstacle to the spread of democracy.

However, events at the end of the decade again affected scholarship. With the independence movements in East Europe, the collapse of the Soviet Union, and a set of

³⁴ John A. Armstrong, *The Politics of Totalitarianism: The Communist Party of the Soviet Union from 1934 to the Present* (New York: Random House, 1961).

³⁵ Jeane J. Kirkpatrick, *Dictatorships and Double Standards: Rationalism and Reason in Politics* (New York: American Enterprise Institute, 1982). Kirkpatrick suggests that we should be patient with right-wing authoritarian governments, noting that the road to liberal democracy in the West took centuries (see pages 31-32), although she neglects to mention that the oldest left-wing dictatorship (the Soviet Union, at the time of her writing) had only been established a little over six decades before her book was published. In addition, Kirkpatrick's book seems to gloss over the problem of right-wing totalitarianism in the form of Nazism, or fascist Italian and Japanese governments.

marketization reforms in China after Mao's death, left-wing totalitarianism seemed to be in retreat. During the 1990s, scholars like Abbott Gleason began to write histories that localized totalitarianism as a twentieth-century phenomenon. Gleason's history of totalitarianism and the Cold War generally affirmed Arendt's take and retreated from Kirkpatrick's focus only on left-wing totalitarianism, while expanding on Arendt's thesis by including new research on Chinese "totalitarianism."³⁶ By treating totalitarianism as a historical problem, however, Gleason's work suggests that the phenomenon had largely disappeared by the turn of the millennium. Scholars since have begun re-evaluating previous scholarship on totalitarianism, questioning whether any political entity could achieve "total" control. Slavoj Žižek has, for example, argued that totalitarianism as has been understood in the literature is largely a myth. Instead, Žižek notes that even liberal capitalist societies encourage some degree of "total" embrace of the reigning ideology.³⁷ Žižek's work thus revives the concept of totalitarianism while criticizing its application only to a certain set of authoritarian governments.

The present study does not seek to advance its own theory of totalitarianism, but the implications of my findings do shed light on the debate. Scholars like Gleason and Kirkpatrick have generally portrayed China, particular during the Maoist period, as a form of totalitarianism. To the extent that "totalitarianism" implies total, uncontested political control by the state, however, I take issue with the term. To be sure, Maoist China represents a period of intense, energized authoritarianism, where the state spread copious amounts of propaganda and asserted unprecedented oversight of the education system. But Chinese intellectuals were not necessarily opposed to these changes; some radical students, and even some older scholars, were supportive

³⁶ Abbott Gleason, *Totalitarianism: The Inner History of the Cold War* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995).

³⁷ See Slavoj Žižek, *Did Somebody Say Totalitarianism? Five Interventions in the (Mis)use of a Notion* (New York: Verso, 2001).

of the party takeover of education. Considering the sheer number of schools the state attempted to take control of, it is doubtful that the Communist Party's efforts would have been successful without cooperation from the intellectuals. Moreover, intellectuals cannot best be described as passive recipients of state "brainwashing" attempts. Rather, they navigated the new political environment relatively successfully, even securing new privileges over the course of the decade. The findings of this study suggest that applying the totalitarian label to 1950s China tends to distort our understanding thereof rather than advance it.

Structure of this Dissertation

The focus of my work is on charting the evolution of intellectual, cadre, and state politicking in China during the 1950s, especially regarding the status of intellectuals in the new status. As such, this dissertation is organized chronologically. Chapter 1 serves as a background on the role of intellectuals in Chinese politics, beginning with the Qing Dynasty in the eighteenth century. I discuss how intellectuals had long formed a close partnership with successive Chinese governments, using their energies and influence to promote the regime to the masses while enjoying favorable positions in the imperial and municipal bureaucracies. The chapter shows how intellectuals were affected by educational reforms toward the end of the dynasty, which afforded them with new opportunities to study abroad or in Westernized schools while also stripping away the traditional academy-to-bureaucracy career pipeline. Intellectuals after the fall of the Qing Dynasty were adrift, and sought to establish a new identity for themselves as public scholars, often publishing radical political critiques in new media or leading organizing efforts. Scholars as a whole experienced a severe loss of job security, however, which—when coupled

with intellectuals' embrace of political radicalism—explains the affinity of intellectuals for the Communist Party.

Chapter 2 focuses on the 1950-1951 period and shows how fragile the early Communist government really was. Plagued by manpower shortages and a severe lack of governing experience, the party-state did not have the capability to exert full top-down control over the intellectual class. Luckily, it did not have to; intellectuals remained broadly sympathetic to the CCP statebuilding project and assisted in carrying out early political campaigns such as Land Reform. Although intellectual opinion was split over the Korean War, a number of patriotic students offered a strong endorsement for China's intervention and even enlisted in the military. The CCP survived these early years in no small part due to the critical support of the intellectuals, and it rewarded them accordingly with work assignment programs focused on intellectuals. In the schools, students and professors began to embrace a form of spontaneous ideological refashioning in advance of formal thought reform efforts from above.

Chapter 3 then shows how the formal Thought Reform Campaign of 1952 achieved success by building on these efforts already underway. Intellectuals were required to produce "confessions" (although not all did), wherein they reflected on the socioeconomic advantages they experienced as well as their reactions to new political texts they read. These confessions show that many intellectuals reflected sincerely on their unequal advantages. Meanwhile, the state launched an ambitious drive to bring the vast majority of the school system under government control, thus placing cadres in charge of school administrations. The takeover of education relied on cooperation with pro-CCP student groups and faculty. Although successful in cementing the state's position, the education takeover produced tensions when cadres showed a strong willingness to punish intellectuals for the ideological errors they had "confessed" to. The

state, which saw the confessions as part of its rehabilitative approach to justice, had to spend a good deal of time reining in the zealous cadres during the second half of the year.

The tripartite relationship between intellectuals, cadres, and the state takes center stage in Chapter 4, which shows how both intellectuals and cadres were able to influence politics from below in opposite directions. Whereas intellectuals pushed for reforms to their working and living conditions, cadres pushed back against most of these reforms and used their newfound administrative powers to keep intellectuals down. In addition, cadres voiced concerns that intellectuals had been let off too easy by the Thought Reform Campaign. Contrasting pressure from both intellectuals and cadres forced the party to adopt a middle-of-the-road approach. The party promoted a brief study movement focusing on historical materialism (and rejecting bourgeois idealism) in early 1955, expecting both intellectuals and cadres to participate as equals. Ultimately, however, the state failed at bridging the gap between intellectuals and cadres.

Chapter 5 shows how the state came to side with the intellectuals, initially. The broad efforts to improve intellectuals' standards of living take center stage in this chapter. Intellectuals saw a huge range of livelihood improvements, including but not limited to exclusive transit options, wage increases, reductions in the length of the work week as well as time spent in political meetings, and housing improvements. Meanwhile, the CCP advanced a new vision of the role of expertise in a socialist future, whereby intellectuals could drive further production increases and social advancement through practical research. As such, the state invested in new libraries and museums, imported vast quantities of books and scientific instruments from abroad, and diverted state funds into research subsidies. At the same time, the CCP opened its doors to intellectuals through plans to dramatically increase the rate at which intellectuals would be

accepted into the party. Cadres did not take any of these changes lying down, however, and put up roadblocks to reform where possible.

Chapter 6 assesses the scale of the anti-intellectual backlash in 1957. A year on from the start of the reform efforts, many intellectuals had become disillusioned by the pace of reforms. As such, many intellectuals continued pressuring the party for more action to improve their situations. The CCP was already caught between intellectuals and cadres, however, and recalculated at least in part due to pressure from the rank-and-file. Even then, however, national officials tried to keep the scope of the resulting Anti-Rightist Campaign limited. Although frequent thought rectification work continued, only a small minority of intellectuals were actually targeted as “rightists.” Some intellectuals were actually able to solidify the gains of 1956 in spite of the Anti-Rightist backlash; although some reforms were scaled back, housing improvements remained constant, as well as state investment in research and academic materials. In addition, the CCP continued its efforts to increase party membership among the intellectual community.

Even if the Anti-Rightist Campaign was ultimately limited in scope, however, it did sour the close relationship between the intellectuals and the state heading into the end of the decade. The CCP embarked on a radical new attempt at encouraging intellectuals to develop a working-class consciousness: having them participate in physical labor, either in a nearby factory or through being “sent down” to the countryside, the topic of Chapter 7. The state simultaneously invested in remedial education programs designed to turn workers and peasants into intellectuals. The CCP expanded the number of “spare-time schools,” and in some cases transitioned them into formal degree programs. Meanwhile, a younger generation of intellectuals had come of age during the 1950s that had relatively little memory of China’s pre-communist past. State efforts to

ensure that students found good jobs, as well as using recent graduates to fill teaching positions at newly-opened schools and universities, meant that young intellectuals had a wealth of career opportunities available to them. For the CCP, generational change had become a more desirable alternative to thought rectification as a means of producing revolutionary intellectuals. Among intellectuals, however, generational change contributed to a cultural rift between age groups, thus fracturing the intellectual solidarity that had been crucial to the gains of the 1950s.

CHAPTER 1: INTELLECTUALS AND THE CCP

Intellectuals were a staple of modern Chinese history, acting as symbols of the state's authority and legitimacy.³⁸ The use of scholar-bureaucrats as the backbone of bureaucratic governance engendered a resilient political system in late Medieval and early modern China, which survived two alien invasions and three dynastic overhauls.³⁹ But this same political structure was not fated to survive the upheavals and tumult of the late Qing period, when intellectuals increasingly took an interest in political activism. Shedding their identity as literati-bureaucrats, a generation of Chinese intellectuals became public scholars and even political activists. After the May Fourth Movement and the resulting "Chinese Enlightenment," Chinese with a formal education began to join and even create new political movements with the goal of saving China.⁴⁰ One such organization was the Chinese Communist Party (CCP), founded in July 1921 by disgruntled, educated youths like Chen Duxiu, Zhou Enlai, Deng Xiaoping, Liu Shaoqi, and Mao Zedong.⁴¹

The affinity between the CCP and intellectuals did not last. The Communists suffered great repression by the Guomindang (GMD) after helping them seize power. After retreating to

³⁸ Even in the wider regional context, Chinese intellectuals were unique; the rise of scholar-bureaucrats in China led to a divergence in governance patterns between medieval China and neighboring Korea, for example. Whereas both empires' administrations had hitherto been dominated by powerful lineage clans, the system of generational privilege in Tang China eroded over the course of the dynasty while continuing in Goryeo Korea. Rebellions in the provinces provoked the Tang state to increase avenues for social mobility by attaching greater importance to performance on the civil service examinations. Men of talent found themselves with easier paths to rise through the ranks by China's early modern period than elsewhere in the East Asian region. See John B. Duncan, *The Origins of the Chosŏn Dynasty* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2000), 52-54.

³⁹ For a discussion of how the Qing conquerors seamlessly adopted the literati-dominated bureaucracy of Ming China, see Ping-ti Ho, "The Significance of the Ch'ing Period in Chinese History," *The Journal of Asian Studies* 26, no. 2 (February, 1967): 191-192

⁴⁰ Huaiyin Li, *Reinventing Modern China: Imagination and Authenticity in Chinese Historical Writing* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2013), 6.

⁴¹ For information on the foundation of the Chinese Communist Party and the social background of its early leaders, see Maurice Meisner, *Li Ta-chao and the Origins of Chinese Marxism* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1967), Lee Feigon, *Chen Duxiu: Founder of the Chinese Communist Party* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1983), and Arif Dirlik, *The Origins of Chinese Communism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989). For an examination of the role played by the Soviet Communist International (Comintern) in the CCP's founding, see Robert North, *Moscow and Chinese Communists* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1963).

the Chinese northwest, the social character of the Communist Party base quickly changed from radical, educated youths to peasant populists. After a decade of war and bloodshed between the CCP and the Guomindang, with a brief truce allowing them to fight the invading Japanese Empire together, the Communists gained the upper hand. CCP forces swept back into the same urban areas along China's eastern seaboard that had birthed the Communist Party back in the 1920s. However, both party and intellectuals had changed greatly since their separation. Their reunion spawned the political drama and negotiative process at the heart of this work. This chapter contextualizes the relationship between the Communist Party and the intellectual class, examining intellectuals' beliefs and class identity changed over the course of China's pre-1949 history.

A Background on Intellectuals in Modern Chinese History

During China's modern period, literati and their families inhabited different spaces and obeyed divergent social norms. Whereas peasant families lived in small, multigenerational households in rural areas, literati tended to inhabit China's urban centers in the lower Yangzi Delta. They lived in walled compounds with immediate family members and obeyed a strict policy of gender separation inapplicable to a farming context. The wives and daughters of literati were generally confined to the inner chambers of these compounds, where they practiced textile work and cooking. The practice of footbinding extended mostly to these women from elite families; it would have made little sense for female village laborers to compromise their physical mobility as such.⁴² As the flow of literati to China's cities and urban expansion increased during

⁴² Although literati elites were overwhelmingly male, avenues existed for some women to participate in intellectual circles. However, socioeconomic status prohibited many women from doing so; by-and-large, it was elite women who had the life circumstances that allowed them to receive an education and learn how to write. Although it was not yet a widespread practice at the start of the seventeenth century, some literati families began giving their

the early and mid-Qing years, the social gap between literati families and peasant families widened.

A number of challenges, both foreign and domestic, shook the Qing state in the nineteenth century. After the Taiping rebellion, where both the rebel leader Hong Xiuquan and one of its primary antagonists, Zeng Guofan, were degree-holders, scholar-bureaucrats played a major role in the revitalization of the Qing state.⁴³ They set about re-staffing state bureaus hollowed out by rebellion and war, and constructed new bureaus like the *zongli yamen*.⁴⁴ Additionally, these reformist, educated officials constructed new libraries, invested more public funds in provincial academies, and promoted learning in the peripheries of the empire, such as in the heartlands of the Miao or Hakka peoples.⁴⁵ New literati engaged with Western learning and missionaries, and played a significant role in establishing new naval academies and shipyards, constructing modern warships, training a new generation of engineers, and translating Western scientific manuals.⁴⁶

After a devastating military defeat in the Sino Japanese War (1894-1895), a new group of literati took charge in Beijing. For scholars such as Liang Qichao and Kang Youwei, the political objective was no longer the restoration of civil administration, but the transformation of Chinese political and social institutions: provincial assemblies, Western-style schools, and a modernized

daughters the same classical education male offspring received. Literate women, confined to their family's compound, made use of their education and free time to engage in cultural production, such as writing poetry. A publishing industry specifically for women's poetry flourished by 1700, so much so that concerned literati began emphasizing Confucian gender roles in the eighteenth century to clamp down on these semi-illicit publications. See Barbara Molony, Janet Theiss, and Hyaeweol Choi, *Gender in Modern East Asia: An Integrated History* (Boulder: Westview Press, 2016), 92-94, 97-101.

⁴³ Philip A. Kuhn, *Rebellion and Its Enemies in Late Imperial China, 1796-1864* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1970), 135-136.

⁴⁴ Mary C. Wright, *The Last Stand of Chinese Conservatism: The T'ung-Chih Restoration, 1862-1874* (New York: Atheneum, 1969), 68-70. Also see Stephen R. Halsey, *Quest for Power: European Imperialism and the Making of Chinese Statecraft* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2015).

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 129-133.

⁴⁶ Benjamin A. Elman, *On Their Own Terms: Science in China, 1550-1900* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2005), 355-360.

military. Although both Kang and Liang ultimately went into exile, Empress Dowager Cixi ultimately embraced many of these reforms under the label of the Qing “New Policies” (*xinzheng*). By requiring provinces and villages to fund local public schools, the reforms engendered an unprecedented access to formal education, especially for rural children.⁴⁷ Young women were some of the foremost beneficiaries of the new schools, as access to education became universal for both boys and girls. The numbers are quite staggering: from 1908 to 1913, the number of female students in China grew from 20,557 to 141,130.⁴⁸ Additionally, some parents enrolled their daughters in private, girls-only schools.⁴⁹ These changes culminated in the abolishment of the civil service exams in 1905. With one of the last vestiges of the old literati order wiped away, educated Chinese increasingly functioned as public scholars. Many turned to journalism work, spurred on by the advent of Chinese “print capitalism.”⁵⁰

Both in China and abroad (usually at Japanese schools), a new generation of students was coming of age in the early twentieth century. A student-organized boycott of American goods in Changsha heralded a new era of scholarly activism, usually led by educated youths.⁵¹ Women were an important party of the growing radical mood among intellectuals; the scholar Zhen Heyin, for example, argued that attacking the economic work that contributed to female subjugation—low-paid factory work and prostitution, most significantly—was the only hope for real equality. Additionally, the revolutionary Qiu Jin founded a military training school for

⁴⁷ Li, *Village Governance in North China*, 163.

⁴⁸ Molony et. al., *Gender in Modern East Asia*, 168.

⁴⁹ Li, *Village Governance in North China*, 182-184. The curriculum at some private, girls-only schools inculcated political radicalism among enrollees. At one such school in Shanghai, for example, classes were taught on the French Revolution and bomb-making. See Molony et. al., *Gender in Modern East Asia*, 168.

⁵⁰ Christopher A. Reed covers the rise of private-owned newspapers and publishing presses in his book *Gutenberg in Shanghai: Chinese Print Capitalism, 1876-1937* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2004).

⁵¹ Esherick, *Reform and Revolution in China*, 52-58.

women.⁵² After the overthrow of the Qing Dynasty, China saw intellectual activism in the form of the New Culture Movement, which encompassed both major cities, with the publication of the magazine *New Youth* by Beijing University dean Chen Duxiu, as well as inland areas. For example, school administrators at Zhonghua University in Wuhan began to publish the Brilliant China School Journal (*guanghua xuebao*). Both publications began in 1915.⁵³

Protests over the Japanese seizure of the Shandong Peninsula, ratified by the Treaty of Versailles at the end of World War I, spawned the May Fourth Movement.⁵⁴ In the wake of May Fourth, political philosophies among Chinese intellectuals gradually coalesced around liberal and radical strands, exemplified, respectively, by Li Dazhao and Hu Shi.⁵⁵ The latter began to explore Marxist-Leninist thought, culminating in the official founding of the Chinese Communist Party in 1921 at a meeting in a Shanghai lake house, attended by intellectuals such as Li himself, Chen Duxiu, and Mao Zedong. The CCP became a vehicle for intellectual activism in its early years, encouraging educated members to travel to working-class areas, educate workers and peasants, and engage in labor organizing.⁵⁶ Additionally, the CCP established a Women's Bureau within its structure to focus specifically on appeals to female intellectuals. However, the party leadership remained exclusively male, and women were often denied when they tried to push for a higher position in the CCP's hierarchy.⁵⁷

⁵² Molony et. al., 170-171. Also see Gail Hershatter, *Women and China's Revolutions* (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2018).

⁵³ Shakhar Rahav, *The Rise of Political Intellectuals in Modern China: May Fourth Societies and the Roots of Mass-Party Politics* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2015), 38-41.

⁵⁴ For a background on the May Fourth Movement, see Tse-tsung Chow, *The May Fourth Movement: Intellectual Revolution in Modern China* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1960) or Wen-hsin Yeh, *Provincial Passages: Culture, Space, and the Origins of Chinese Communism* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996). For coverage of the concurrent Korean March First Movement, see Jun Uchida, *Brokers of Empire: Japanese Settler Colonialism in Korea, 1876-1945* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2011), 143-145.

⁵⁵ Cheek, *The Intellectual in Modern Chinese History*, 84-85.

⁵⁶ See, for example, Elizabeth J. Perry, *Anyuan: Mining China's Revolutionary Tradition* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2012), 48-57.

⁵⁷ Molony et. al., 213-215.

The CCP was not the only political party to utilize intellectuals. By the 1920s, the Guomintang (established by Sun Yat-sen, an intellectual who played a prominent role in the overthrow of the Qing) had established a foothold in southern China. The GMD put intellectuals to work, often in publishing magazine articles in support of the party's agenda. Many magazine writers employed by the GMD were also CCP members.⁵⁸ This alliance of convenience did not last, however. After Sun's death in 1925, the Guomintang fell under the leadership of Chiang Kai-shek, a military general with far less tolerant views of the Communists than his predecessor. The Communists were forced to retreat into the Chinese hinterland, where they eventually settled in Yan'an. Far away from China's urban centers where intellectuals congregated, the CCP's relationship with the intellectual community had been broadly severed by the 1930s. With the political alternatives to the GMD narrowing, some prominent intellectuals vigorously defended the policies of the Nanjing government.⁵⁹

However, Japanese aggression proved to be an existential challenge both to the Guomintang state as well as intellectual support for Chiang. Although some intellectuals continued to defend the GMD, and others still collaborated with the Japanese, a sizable contingent of intellectuals chose resistance. Literati living in the occupied littoral zone, for example, formed anti-Japanese organizations and sought to establish covert links to the CCP.⁶⁰ However, the social character of the Communist Party had undergone a dramatic change over the previous half-decade. Locked in the rural hinterland away from the cities, major universities, and publishing presses, the CCP had transformed into a peasant party. Additionally, World War II

⁵⁸ John Fitzgerald, *Awakening China: Politics, Culture, and Class in the Nationalist Revolution* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1996), 185-195.

⁵⁹ Notable examples include Jiang Tingfu or Chen Gonglu. See Li, *Reinventing Modern China*, 40-53.

⁶⁰ Wen-hsin Yeh, *Shanghai Splendor: Economic Sentiments and the Making of Modern China, 1843-1949* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2007), 201-204.

provided a major recruiting opportunity for the CCP, as cadres entered the villages to promote education and organize military resistance against the invaders.⁶¹

Intellectuals and the Communist Takeover, 1945-1949

As the civil war between the Guomintang and the Communist Party began anew after World War II and the Japanese defeat, intellectuals tried to take center stage in the conflict. Intellectuals of a liberal, democratic bent formed the Chinese Democratic League (CDL) in 1941 under the direction of a noted liberal intellectual, Liang Shuming, in an attempt to bring the Communists and the Guomintang to a compromise and usher in a new era of parliamentary democratic politics.⁶² Over time, other famous liberals like Hu Shi, Wu Han, or Luo Longji joined the League. Although the CDL held a decent amount of sway, especially in China's coastal cities, the worsening political situation made a third way untenable without a military force backing the party. Moreover, Chiang Kai-shek forcibly disbanded the CDL in 1947.⁶³ Only a year into the last stage of the civil war, intellectuals were unable to form a rival political party on their own, and the Guomintang was involved in actively suppressing or assassinating intellectuals seen as disloyal to the regime. Only one option was left.

⁶¹ Although scholars commonly accept the rural character of the Chinese Communist Party after the 1940s, there is significant debate over how peasants became strong supporters of Mao and the party. Chalmers A. Johnson argues that peasants were primarily motivated by a burgeoning sense of nationalism in the face of Japanese war crimes in *Peasant Nationalism and Communist Power: The Emergence of Revolutionary China, 1937-1942* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1962). Lucien Bianco counters that the CCP's social and economic policies produced a "pull" factor much like the "push" factor of the Japanese invasion in *Origins of the Chinese Revolution, 1915-1949* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1967). Yung-fa Chen argues that peasants had a voice in wartime China by leveraging their connections with the Communist Party to negotiate for better working conditions with local gentry in *Making Revolution: The Communist Movement in Eastern and Central China, 1937-1945* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1986). Ralph A. Thaxton, Jr. argues that peasants in many ways led the way in resisting both the Japanese as well as exploitative conditions with their landlords and gentry, with the CCP claiming credit for spontaneous peasant activism after the fact in *Salt of the Earth: The Political Origins of Peasant Protest and Communist Revolution in China* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997). Also see Mark Selden, *China in Revolution: The Yanan Way Revisited* (New York: Routledge, 1995).

⁶² Cheek, *The Intellectual in Modern Chinese History*, 122.

⁶³ *Ibid.*, 118-119.

Leading intellectuals—even liberals—reversed their position on neutrality in 1947 and 1948. The Guomintang had assassinated two prominent liberals—Wen Yiduo and Li Gongpu—in 1946, and the state began making mass arrests of intellectuals living in GMD-controlled China by 1948. That year, a prominent CDL member Wu Han narrowly escaped capture by state security forces in Beijing and fled to the Communist-controlled city of Shijiazhuang in Hebei Province. There, he was placed in charge of the CCP’s United Front Bureau, which focused on making alliances with the now-defunct Democratic League, as well as other minor democratic parties that represented liberal intellectuals. The United Front attempted to make common cause with non-communist scholars and urged them to offer their skills in support of the CCP’s war effort.⁶⁴ The United Front was successful in bringing support from other intellectual-dense minor parties, such as the Jiusan Society or the Association for Promoting Democracy.

The military situation had also changed by late 1947. The Communists had secured former Manchuria and much of north China, and had begun planning offensives into GMD base areas. The first domino to fall was the great plains region along the Yellow River, comprising poor, rural areas like Hebei Province and northern Anhui. The military wing of the CCP—the People’s Liberation Army (PLA)—swept through the plains and forced the Guomintang into an increasingly perilous position along the coasts and southern China.⁶⁵ These victories changed the political calculus of the Communist leadership; from here on out, the practical realities of governing received just as much attention as military strategy and revolutionary ideology. The party turned toward solidifying its gains among the intellectuals in the second half of 1947. Aided in part by the Guomintang’s bloody suppression of intellectuals, the CCP memorialized

⁶⁴ Ibid., 136-137.

⁶⁵ See Odd Arne Westad, *Decisive Encounters: The Chinese Civil War, 1946-1950* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2003), 168-170.

slain intellectual activists like the aforementioned Wen Yiduo and Li Gongpu, in addition to Zuo Taofen and Tao Xingzhi, in the party magazine *Masses* on July 13, 1947. Although none of the four were active CCP members, the Communists still claimed them as martyrs for the cause.⁶⁶

The Communist Party generally relied on party magazines to communicate with intellectuals during the final years of the civil war. Although the party had greatly transformed during its years of exile in northwest China, a contingent of committed revolutionary intellectuals remained. The intellectual feminist Ding Ling had joined the party in Yan'an in the 1940s, where she was placed in charge of the women's branch. In addition, she served as the chief editor of *Liberation Daily*, a party newspaper that grew out of the Yan'an years. Some CCP-affiliated intellectuals, such as Wang Shiwei, urged caution in dealing with other scholars. Wang wrote articles criticizing the famous writer Lu Xun, who lived an extravagant lifestyle on the urbanized coast far removed from the hardships of life in rural Yan'an.⁶⁷ In late August of 1947, the party published an article in the magazine *World* that laid out the CCP's vision for intellectuals under a revolutionary government. The party envisioned three objectives for intellectuals: (1) spurring production through the introduction of new scientific techniques, (2) promoting CCP ideology to the masses, and (3) raising the cultural level of the Chinese people.⁶⁸ The CCP had at last carved out a new, defined role for intellectuals, building off of the legacy of literati-bureaucrats in the imperial age. The diverse ways in which intellectuals had sought to engage in public life since the end of the Qing Dynasty could now coalesce around a set of goals.

⁶⁶ *Xin zhongguo zhishifenzi de dianxing: jinian Zou Taofen, Tao Xingzhi, Wen Yiduo, Li Gongpu siwei xiansheng/"qunzhong"*, July 13, 1947, D2-0-703-11, Revolutionary History Periodicals, Shanghai Municipal Archives, Huangpu, Shanghai, China [hereafter SMA].

⁶⁷ Cheek, *The Intellectual in Modern Chinese History*, 141-142.

⁶⁸ *Zhan hou sulian zhishifenzi de renwu: "zhishifenzi zai sulian" zhi wu/"shidai"*, August 23, 1947, D2-0-1132-20, Revolutionary History Periodicals, SMA.

Communist victories on the battlefield were turning more and more of China red by the day. As such, the party had the opportunity to begin implementing their desired policies. Intellectuals who joined the CCP's ranks (or the various aligned parties under the United Front umbrella) were able to have some effect on setting policy and advising the Communist government. Hu Shi, for example, wrote an article on September 15, 1947 that described the stimulation of agricultural production as the most pressing issue facing China. In addition, Hu showed a general openness to the land reform policies proposed by the Communists, and called on intellectuals as a whole to learn how to better communicate with the peasantry and focus on improving access to education in rural areas.⁶⁹ The Communists published the document "Outline on Agrarian Law" (*tudifa dagang*) in October, partly through consultation with intellectuals who had come from a rural background. These advising intellectuals moreover wrote articles defending the CCP's program of land redistribution.⁷⁰ Intellectuals began to take a leading role in conducting early land reform efforts, drawing on previous experiences of political organizing. Trusted figures like Deng Tuo moreover had some ability to push the CCP in a more moderate direction. Based on his work in the Shaan-Gan-Ning border region (the general geographic area between Shaanxi, Gansu, and Ningxia Provinces), Deng wrote articles in *Jinchaji Daily* calling for cadres to rein in excessive redistribution and violence against landlords, and in particular to halt the antagonization of the "middle peasant" class. Party documents from early 1948 seem to suggest that the leadership had taken Deng's advice sincerely. Land redistribution efforts from 1948 on were moderate in scope in comparison to

⁶⁹ *Hu Shi zhi de zhijue; zhishifenzi he nongmin xieshou jieguo zenyang ne?/"guo xun"*, September 15, 1947, D2-0-416-15, Revolutionary History Periodicals, SMA.

⁷⁰ *Tudi nongmin zhishifenzi; Wuhan de rexin; fensui pu lite jianyi; yingfou du guwen; guanyu yingfou du guwen de wenti/"qunzhong"*, October 30, 1947, D2-0-716-22, Revolutionary History Periodicals, SMA.

leftist excesses of 1947.⁷¹ Lastly, proposals from intellectual organizations like the China Society for Economic Research were circulated within the CCP ranks.⁷²

In addition to land reform, the Communist Party was also responsible for transforming education in territories captured from the Guomindang. Non-communist teachers posed a problem to the CCP, who viewed them as tainted on account of their education having come from the Guomindang school system. There was considerable anxiety on the part of the leadership that these teachers might transmit their problematic ideology to a new generation of scholars. Nevertheless, the CCP was more of a military than a government at this point; it did not have the resources to commit to taking control of every school in captured territory. As such, it generally left schools to themselves during the early and middle years of the civil war. Party cadres were instructed to conduct *chihui*: informal meetings with local teachers where food was provided.⁷³ In other cases, party-affiliated intellectuals were tasked with conducting “training classes” (*gong xun ban*) for anyone interested in CCP base areas. These classes were not hugely popular; class sizes rarely exceeded 30 individuals. However, the classes offered a good degree of social mobility to enrollees, who could often find jobs in the CCP state apparatus. In one class, 25 out of 30 enrolled students were able to find work in the local government.⁷⁴

For committed revolutionaries, the convergence of the CCP and the intellectual class proved somewhat awkward. Through their cultural influence, intellectuals had brought a sizable number of rich peasants and landlords into tentative support for the Communists. Plenty of

⁷¹ Cheek, *Propaganda and Culture in Mao's China: Deng Tuo and the Intelligentsia* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), 130.

⁷² *Zongjie guanyu “ziyouzhuyi” de lunzheng; you “ziyouzhuyizhe” zhuandao “zhishifenzi”; shi shei zai danchan xinjing; juli furen beibu; cong ma sha li ke tan qi; shushi sanbu/“dushu yu chuban”*, April 15, 1948, D2-0-77-1, Revolutionary History Periodicals, SMA.

⁷³ *Zhuanbian zhong de shoufuqu zhishifenzi/“yalujiang”*, October 1, 1947, D2-0-1202-2, Revolutionary History Periodicals, SMA.

⁷⁴ *Cong gong xun ban de jiaoyu gongzuo zhong dui qingnian zhishifenzi jiaoyu lingdao de yijian/“jun da daobao”*, May 14, 1949, D2-0-365-10, Revolutionary History Periodicals, SMA.

longtime CCP members feared that the expansion of the party would allow new members— particular those from a bourgeois class background—to transform the revolutionary character of the movement. Moreover, many CCP members still felt that they had been betrayed by China’s intellectuals after the Guomindang had forced them inland in the 1930s, given that so few intellectuals made the trip from their coastal city of residence to Yan’an. This “betrayal” was called a “grievous harm” (*zhongda sunhai*) by some cadres.⁷⁵ By the end of 1948, party documents had begun to take seriously the idea of conducting a Yan’an-style rectification campaign among its new converts in order to ensure the continued health of the revolution. Intellectuals without proper ideological credentials would have to be “scrubbed clean” (*xishua*).⁷⁶ The first step in the CCP’s new program for intellectuals was a systematized classification system. Although the Chinese term for “intellectual,” *zhishifenzi*, was already in use, the CCP adopted the term as a formal system of classification for anyone with formal schooling, including “cultural workers” like artists, performers, and journalists.⁷⁷

Intellectuals, as a distinct class of people, were always somewhat out of place in the Marxist class scheme. Although scholars themselves earned wealth through intellectual labor— writing or teaching, primarily—the linkage between the intellectuals of today and the wealthy landlords of yesterday was well-recognized by the CCP.⁷⁸ As such, the party introduced its own classification system for different types of intellectuals. Feudal intellectuals, according to party documents, were those who had leveraged generational wealth to attain positions of power,

⁷⁵ *Zongjie guanyu “ziyouzhuyi” de lunzheng; you “ziyouzhuyizhe” zhuandao “zhishifenzi”; shi shei zai danchan xinjing; juli furen beibu; cong ma sha li ke tan qi; shushi sanbu/“dushu yu chuban”*, April 15, 1948, D2-0-77-1, Revolutionary History Periodicals, SMA.

⁷⁶ *Zhongyang guanyu dizhu, funong, zhishifenzi ruwu hou gaibian chengfen de zhishi/“jianshe”*, December 25, 1948, D2-0-665-11, Revolutionary History Periodicals, SMA.

⁷⁷ *Lüe tan zhishifenzi wenti/“yalujiang”*, November 25, 1948, D2-0-1207-16, Revolutionary History Periodicals, SMA.

⁷⁸ *Zhishifenzi zai kaoyan zhong/“shi yu wen”*, April 16, 1948, D2-0-987-4, Revolutionary History Periodicals, SMA.

either in the imperial or Guomindang governments. Capitalist intellectuals were those who had instead benefited from economic and social transformations in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries; they were the class of intellectuals with the most cosmopolitan worldviews, usually acquired while studying abroad. “Petty-bourgeois intellectuals” were those who had leveraged wealth from mercantile activities for an education. Working-class intellectuals referred to a small, but growing number of children of peasants or industrial laborers who benefited from an expansion of educational access across China. “New democratic” intellectuals were those like Yun Daiying, who had participated enthusiastically in activist politics despite their class background. Lastly, revolutionary progressives were intellectuals trained either in the Soviet Union or educated directly by the CCP.⁷⁹

Rectification followed classification. During July 1948, schools and universities in the northeast (old Manchuria, which was the epicenter of CCP power by this point) began taking preliminary steps toward a wider rectification campaign. The faculty employed at these schools and colleges were directed to write self-assessments of their class background, work style, and ideological beliefs—a precursor to the “confessions” written by intellectuals in the 1950s. Moreover, the local party administration placed a moratorium on schools hiring new teachers or professors from a landlord or rich peasant background. Each school had to submit a small list of faculty for participation in agricultural or industrial labor, in order to forge a better connection between intellectuals and the working class.⁸⁰ By 1949, the CCP had begun introducing censorship policies in full across their territory. Books, magazines, and journals were either

⁷⁹ *Lun zhishifenzi de leixing/“shidai”*, March 20, 1948, D2-0-1157-9, Revolutionary History Periodicals, SMA.

⁸⁰ *Zhonggong dongbei zhongyang ju guanyu zhishifenzi de jueding*, July 15, 1948, Database of the Chinese Political Campaigns of the 1950s: From Land Reform to the State-Private Partnership, 1949-1956, edited by Song Yongyi, Fairbank Center for Chinese Studies at Harvard University, 2014, available at <http://ccrd.usc.cuhk.edu.hk.ezproxy.lib.utexas.edu/Default.aspx> [hereafter LR-SPP].

placed under party control or were disbanded entirely, replaced instead by literature produced by the party itself. Popular novels like the story *Coal* were taken out of circulation at libraries and bookstores, under the rationale that exposure to “harmful” materials could have a profoundly negative effect on the next generation of Chinese intellectuals.⁸¹ Party-affiliated journalism was centralized around a new party newspaper, *People’s Daily* (*renmin ribao*), which was first published in mid-1948 but moved to Beijing in March 1949, where it greatly expanded its publishing activities. By late 1949, after the Communists had effectively won the civil war and established the People’s Republic of China (PRC), articles in *People’s Daily* were dealing directly with the question of thought reform. One *People’s Daily* editorial proposed yet another classification for intellectuals undergoing thought reform: (1) “sick” intellectuals who were greatly infected with bourgeois ideology, and who required the greatest attention from the authorities, (2) intellectuals who seemed to change suspiciously quickly (*yanjing yisha, lao muji bian ya*; literally, “in the blink of an eye, changing from hens into ducks”), and therefore required further scrutiny from the CCP, (3) those who understood that thought reform would be a long, arduous process that could not be completed in “one easy step” (*yi cu er jiu*), and (4) enthusiastic, zealous intellectuals who made real attempts at transforming their beliefs and behavior in accordance with the times.⁸² At the outset of the PRC era, intellectuals and the CCP were not necessarily opposed, although the relationship showed plenty of signs of fissures.

Conclusion

⁸¹ *Qingnian zhishifenzi cong tongshu de wenyi duwu li xuexi shenme?/“zhishi”*, March 15, 1949, D2-0-1217-28, Revolutionary History Periodicals, SMA.

⁸² Zhang Fan, *Sixiang gaizao de ji zhong cuowu xiangfa*, December 7, 1949, *Renmin ribao*, at *Renmin ribao dianzipian*, available at <http://utpd.twinbridge.com.ezproxy.lib.utexas.edu/> [hereafter RR].

Intellectuals living in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries generally had stable career paths, although that did not mean that the overall situation for Chinese scholars was unchanging. Although the wider political context changed dramatically in the first half of the nineteenth century, between cataclysmic rebellions across China, exploding population numbers, and foreign invasion, it took time for the imperial education system to catch up. A generation of reformers in the mid-century saw the restoration of the civil service as their goal, not transformation. The number of intellectuals steadily increased over the latter half of the nineteenth century, culminating in a series of changes at the turn of the century. More and more Chinese intellectuals were going abroad and coming into contact with new, sometimes radical political ideologies. In the early 1900s, the Qing state abolished the civil service exam. From then on, the long-lasting academy-to-bureaucracy pipeline was closed off as a career path for intellectuals.

Chinese scholars—especially the increasing number of those with strong beliefs in liberalism or radicalism—played a formidable role in the overthrow of the Qing Dynasty. Intellectuals as a whole, however, found the transition to the Republican Era somewhat awkward. Regular employment was difficult to find, with many forced to rely on unstable jobs like journalism or freelance writing to make ends meet. On the whole, intellectuals in the Republican Era experienced one of the largest declines in standards of living among any social group. Although the number of intellectuals had never been bigger, the pool of stable, knowledge-based jobs (such as teaching at a school or university) had not grown accordingly. One intellectual said bitterly that the only effect of his education was to cause his life to hit “rock bottom” (*saodi*).⁸³ Especially as market forces transformed China’s biggest cities, some

⁸³ *Zhishifenzi de panghuang* / “*shi yu wen*”, March 26, 1948, D2-0-986-5, Revolutionary History Periodicals, SMA.

intellectuals formed the basis of a white-collar workforce. Others, both along the coasts and in the hinterland, participated in political organizing. In their view, activism was the logical extension of their mandate in the absence of stable employment in the state bureaucracy. The Chinese Communist Party grew out of and built on the tradition of intellectual activism. After the Guomindang took power in late 1926—and the Communists were nearly wiped out over the course of the next few years—some intellectuals took jobs with the new government. But few were thrilled with the Guomindang, and negative feelings intensified after the Japanese attacked.

In the aftermath of World War II, intellectuals seized on the moment to try and negotiate a settled peace between the Communists and the Guomindang state—one that would simultaneously encourage liberal democratic norms like popular elections. These negotiations proved futile, however, and intellectuals were forced to choose between the CCP and the Guomindang. While Mao and his colleagues were making overtures to intellectuals, Chiang Kai-shek was ordering the execution or imprisonment of intellectuals deemed disloyal. The CCP capitalized on the moment by lionizing these “martyrs” in memorials in party journals and magazines. Over time, more intellectuals—even liberals like Hu Shi—saw the CCP as their natural ally. Minor democratic parties that represented intellectuals joined with the Communists under the United Front Bureau. The Communist Party, however, had changed dramatically in its years spent in the Chinese hinterland. The party now was far more beholden to poor peasants rather than radical intellectuals, and adjusted its perceptions of the intellectual class accordingly. The party could no longer ignore the relationship between family wealth and educational attainment—indeed, the existence of intellectuals was a testament to the profound material inequalities the Communists sought to redress. Nonetheless, the party generally preferred transformation through “thought rectification” rather than outright suppression. After the military

victory of the Communists, intellectuals were forced to choose between staying in the new PRC state or fleeing to Taiwan with the remnants of the Guomindang.⁸⁴ For the majority of intellectuals who stayed on the mainland, the next decade spawned a vigorous negotiation with the Communist party-state over issues ranging from war, to freedom of expression, to professional treatment.

⁸⁴ For Chinese intellectuals who emigrated to Taiwan, see Zhidong Hao, *Whither Taiwan and Mainland China: National Identity, the State, and Intellectuals* (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2010).

CHAPTER 2: BUTTRESSING THE FRAGILE STATE, 1950-1951

There was no doubt that the CCP had won a significant victory in the Fall of 1949. Their longtime rivals were forced to the neighboring island of Taiwan, whereas PLA battalions were quickly bringing the rest of the mainland—including old Qing territories in the far west—under Communist control. At the same time, the new state faced an enormous slate of problems, including previously unseen challenges such as the rapidly deteriorating security situation on the Korean Peninsula. Chinese society had been wracked by war for decades, and social divisions ran deep. The same problems that dogged both the Qing Dynasty and the Guomindang government continued to plague the Communists. Even if Mao had wanted to set up a totalitarian political system overnight, conditions would not allow it. Particularly in urban areas, of which most party cadres had little knowledge of or experience, the path to solidifying the new government's grasp on power was clear: it would have to work with established institutions and public figures, rather than attempting to exert sudden, sweeping controls over society.⁸⁵ In particular, the Communist Party paid close attention to younger intellectuals and students, who they thought might be swayed more easily to support the regime than their older counterparts.

The victory of the CCP also provided an opportunity for intellectuals to formulate a new approach to their lives and roles in the People's Republic.⁸⁶ The number of intellectuals living in China grew significantly in the early 1950s, due to three primary factors. First, the CCP's definition of "intellectual" and officialization of the term meant that those with even minimal school experience became conflated with advanced university professors. Second, the

⁸⁵ Kenneth G. Lieberthal covers the culture gap between peasant soldiers and cadres and China's urban megacities in *Revolution and Tradition in Tientsin, 1949-1952* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1980), particularly 30-31.

⁸⁶ Revolutions have often led to new informal "experiments" in new patterns of social life, from dress to cultural consumption to living arrangements. The Soviet Union saw similar "utopian visions" from below before the advent of Stalinist totalitarianism in the 1930s; China was hardly unique in this fashion. See Richard Stites, *Revolutionary Dreams: Utopian Vision and Experimental Life in the Russian Revolution* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991).

government made strides in expanding access to education in villages and among the smaller urban working class. Thirdly, there was a huge influx of Chinese scholars who had been living abroad for decades that returned to help build New China.⁸⁷ As such, intellectuals did not passively accept CCP state-building in the first two years of the People's Republic; instead, they were active participants, advising the political elite from above and transforming the education system from below. Well in advance of the formal beginning of the Thought Reform Campaign, intellectuals were discussing the importance of breaking down the barriers between themselves and the working classes. As such, the notion of ideological refashioning—central to the story of intellectuals and the party-state in the early PRC era—was the preoccupation of both intellectuals and government officials.

Despite the party-state's reservations about the intellectuals, the CCP was generally responsive to their needs and concerns during 1950 and 1951. Similarly, intellectuals offered key support for the CCP's governing agenda. The successes of Communist state-building in 1950 and 1951 included early attempts at introducing formal mechanisms of local and municipal governance, deepening the state's control of the education system, mobilizing the populace for China's intervention in the Korean War, and establishing a nationwide work-assignment program to provide relief for the unemployment crisis. In all of these areas, the party-state was forced to work alongside the intellectual community, who in turn had a generally favorable attitude toward these policies. Toward the end of 1951, intellectuals increasingly began to discuss the importance of thought rectification in a variety of contexts, such as school meetings or through editorials in state media. As the party-state turned toward a formal program of thought work at the end of 1951 and especially in 1952, it built off of the movement already underway among

⁸⁷ Cheek, *The Intellectual in Modern Chinese History*, 149.

intellectuals as opposed to introducing something new entirely. As such, Communist rule in the first two years of the PRC era was generally fragile and tenuous; support for the new regime among intellectuals was one of the factors that allowed for further state entrenchment over the course of the decade.

The Early Organs of Communist Governance and Intellectuals

At the beginning of 1950, Communist rule looked much more like a military occupation as opposed to a formal, developed system of government. CCP control over the urbanized eastern Chinese littoral zone was relatively new, and brought about a tense meeting of rural soldiers and cadres with urban professionals and intellectuals. The party's power base was strongest in northern cities like Beijing and Tianjin, which had been captured many months before the final victory in late 1949. Most other cities were directed to "follow the central government's correct line"—that is, policies developed in Beijing or Tianjin.⁸⁸ Outside of the northern cities, the military generally took the lead in early 1950 and framed educational policy (as well as the state's dealings with intellectuals) under the lens of national security. Over time, however, this changed; municipal government gradually took over, including a variety of local committees and offices tasked with overseeing the education system and the unemployment crisis. The Chinese government tried a variety of strategies aimed at increasing state supervision of the education system, which included both setting up rival public universities to challenge private academies as well as passing administrative regulations in pre-existing schools. Although

⁸⁸ *Shanghaishi dierju diyici gejie renmin daibiao huiyi kaimuci; shanghaishi xieshang weiyuanhui gongzuo baogao; guanyu shanghaishi jiuji shiye zhigong shiye zhishifenzi de baogao; Shanghai wenjiao gongzuo gaikuang yu jinhou gongzuo renwu; guanyu tiaozheng gongsi guanxi yu Shanghai gongshangye qingkuang; guanyu muqian Shanghai laozi guanxi de baogao; shanghaishi dierju diyici gejie renmin daibiao huiyi zhuankan*, November, 1950, L1-1-9-8, Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference Shanghai Municipal Committee, SMA.

the state clearly meant to set up monopoly control over a variety of public institutions, including both education and the media, these takeovers produced a number of job openings seized on by desperate, out-of-work intellectuals.

China was placed under a set of military regions soon after the Communist victory. Some of the earliest policies toward intellectuals from local government thus came from regional military offices. In Shanghai, for example, which part of the broader East China Military Region, battle-hardened officers examined the “problem” of intellectuals through a security lens. Before a formalized national policy could emerge from Beijing or Tianjin—the epicenter of CCP political power—local military offices had to piece together policies toward urban intellectuals on the fly. Most cities were placed under martial law after liberation (that is, takeover by the CCP), with military personnel put to work clearing debris and battle casualties from the streets. For many Chinese urbanites, their first contact with the Communist Party came from interactions with common soldiers—interactions that were not always positive or respectful. Previously, the PLA had experienced intense disciplinary issues in other Chinese cities, where soldiers spontaneously seized industrial machinery and distributed it evenly among factory workers (and themselves).⁸⁹ In early 1950, the military identified young intellectuals as key to securing the cities—or, in the language of the PLA, “defending the work of the military.” Army documents suggest that many in the officer corps saw winning over young intellectuals as one of the most pressing issues in the immediate aftermath of victory.⁹⁰

⁸⁹ Lieberthal, *Revolution and Tradition in Tientsin*, 30-32.

⁹⁰ *Huadong junqu disanye zhanjun qianxian weiyuanhui guanyu jiaoyu gaizao tuanjie shiyong qingnian zhishifenzi de zhishi*, 1950, A39-2-4-36, East China Rear Military Command Military Supplies and Political Bureau, Chinese Communist East China Military Supply Production and Administrative Office Committee, Shanghai Municipal Military Supply Industry Union, Chinese Communist Party Shanghai Municipal Military Supply Industry Committee, Youth League of the Shanghai Municipal Military Supply Industry Work Committee, SMA.

The PLA's suspicions of the cities—labelled in internal documents as “enemy territory” (*diren qu*)—gave urgency to the earliest programs designed at winning over young intellectuals. The military in Shanghai issued a set of directives calling for the teaching of Marxist historical materialism in the school system as a means of promoting the Communist Party's views among the students. In newspaper articles and public pronouncements, the military administration urged young intellectuals to “overcome the laziness of a liberal style of thinking” (*kefu qi sanman de ziyoushuyi de sixiang zuofeng*) by adopting new virtues of “discipline” (*jilu*) and “toughness” (*duanlian*). Not all policy was designed to cajole these young scholars however; plenty of incentives were offered in the form of favorable job assignments. The military government placed current students and recent graduates at the top of the queue for unemployment assistance, which may have included enrollment in a higher-level educational institution. Even after assignment to a new job position, however, young intellectuals had to undergo a three-month probationary period before they could receive a fixed wage from the state. In the interim, the military would conduct background checks to ensure that no young intellectuals were Guomindang spies (*tewufenzi*).⁹¹ The first foray of the new state into intellectual policymaking was colored by military necessity—documents couched pronouncements about young intellectuals in the language of national security, with phrases like “supporting the work of the military” or “combatting the education of the enemy” used frequently. Nevertheless, the PLA's policies toward intellectuals in these first critical months of 1950 foreshadowed the general trends of the decade: a mix of carrots and sticks, with a focus on the possibility of transformation instead of punishment. Moreover, the military's focus on young intellectuals foreshadowed the

⁹¹ Ibid.

growing usage of the Communist Youth League by the broader party-state to attract young scholars to the cause.⁹²

A number of problems—inflation, mass unemployment, and lingering damage from decades of warfare—forced the fledgling government to triage their urban agenda. Even while Communist cadres were dutifully carving up the countryside under the auspices of the Land Reform Campaign, the party exercised much more tepid control in urban China. In cities like Tianjin or Shanghai, inflation and public bankruptcy from the outgoing local Guomindang administrations had wrecked the lives of urbanites—including intellectuals. One of the earliest issues the CCP faced was a severe shortage of manpower to staff their newly-captured municipal bureaucracies. The most readily available pool of talent were GMD cadres, who were better suited temperamentally than CCP members to governing the cities. Although the party made note that former GMD administrators were expected to “study” (*xuexi*) the political ideology of the new regime, enforcement was practically nonexistent. What political study that occurred among former Guomindang cadres was done voluntarily, with city administrators informally reading Maoist and Marxist documents at their offices.⁹³ In the early PRC years, city administrators were composed primarily of individuals who had lived in a city their entire life (although not necessarily the same city in which they worked), and who had received a formal education from an urban educational institution. Although only a small percentage were women, there were increases in the number of female city administrators in the first few years of the Communist

⁹² James R. Townsend discusses the growth of the Youth League in “Revolutionizing Chinese Youth: A Study of *Chung-kuo Ch’ing-nien*,” in *Chinese Communist Politics in Action*, edited by A. Doak Barnett (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1969), 448. The Youth League had been around since the 1920s, although it was renamed into the New Democratic Youth League in December 1948. The activities of the Youth League expanded rapidly over the 1950s, eventually culminating in its renaming as and reorganization into the Communist Youth League in 1957. To avoid confusion, I refer to both simply as “the Youth League” hereafter.

⁹³ Lieberthal, *Revolution and Tradition in Tientsin*, 35-38.

period.⁹⁴ The CCP found itself turning away from its previous base of support—rural cadres—and forced into an alliance of convenience with educated urbanites.

As such, early CCP policies did little to heal the fractured relationship between urban and rural China at the beginning of 1950. As the Land Reform Campaign intensified, however, the state seized upon the opportunity to expose intellectuals to the realities of life in the countryside by organizing professors, students, and artists into work teams to provide assistance to their cadres working in the villages. Although agrarian adjustment had been carried out haphazardly by zealous PLA soldiers in captured villages, the central government took steps to systematize agrarian policy by mid-1950. Party leaders debated the proper objectives of the Land Reform Campaign; some wanted to disrupt or outright seize the holdings of the rich peasant and landowning classes, others simply wanted to spur rural production.⁹⁵ Either way, the CCP required a far bigger workforce than they had access to in order to conduct land surveys and categorize peasants into income-based classes. During the summer break, many university and school personnel, including both faculty and students, provided help in Land Reform work. For many intellectuals, these were no doubt formative experiences; many had probably spent little time outside of the cities, and had come from families that had lived in urban enclaves for generations.

Lei Haizong, a Qinghua professor, described his participation in the campaign as “the turning point of my life. It was only then that I understood the bitter class conflict and cruel oppression that poisoned the life of these seemingly peaceful and harmonious villages.” This was quite an about-face for Lei, who had previously written off the Communists as

⁹⁴ Ying-mao Kau, “The Urban Bureaucratic Elite in Communist China: A Case Study of Wuhan, 1949-65,” in *Chinese Communist Politics in Action*, 226-232.

⁹⁵ Charles P. Cell, *Revolution at Work: Mobilization Campaigns in China* (New York: Academic Press, 1977), 47-48.

“adventurist...hunger-stricken peasants.”⁹⁶ The writer Xiao Qian, similarly, wrote that “to participate in land reform is the most intensive type of study of revolutionary experience, because land reform is the most complete reflection of the struggle of revolutionary truth against feudalism.”⁹⁷ While it is certainly possible that Lei or Xiao may have been writing their experiences disingenuously—perhaps in an effort to ingratiate themselves with the new regime, or perhaps under duress from a supervising CCP cadre—it is likely that many intellectuals were genuinely affected by their experiences. As discussed in Chapter 1, intellectuals across China gradually became more supportive of the Communists and their revolutionary political agenda over the course of the 1940s, with even committed liberals like Hu Shi arguing in favor of CCP agrarian proposals. A likelier explanation of these accounts would be that urban-based intellectuals were genuinely affected by their experiences.

By the middle of 1950, moreover, the CCP had accomplished tentative successes in urban areas, further securing the support of the intellectuals. On the eve of liberation, the Communists had generally attempted to spur urban production by any means necessary to support the continuing war effort. After victory, however, wartime production figures coupled with severe new tax rates from the incoming Communist administrations led to rapid inflation in coastal urban areas like Tianjin. Intellectuals living in these cities found to their dismay that many consumer goods’ prices doubled in the timespan of a few months in early 1950, leading to public rationing of staples like wheat. In response, the national government centralized the nation’s finances in the spring of 1950. This move quickly turned rapid inflation into a sharp economic recession, however, and failed to alleviate the economic woes of intellectuals. The CCP

⁹⁶ Quoted in Theodore H. E. Chen, *Thought Reform of the Chinese Intellectuals* (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 1960), 23.

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, 24.

calculated that it was necessary to ally with the urban bourgeoisie—although financial assistance from the government usually came with the caveat that factories and businesses had to allow trade unions among their workers to form.⁹⁸ These reforms did much to stabilize the national economy, at least in the short time. By July 7, grain rationing had officially ended after the government reported a production increase of 3 million to 20 million tons of wheat from 1949 to mid-1950.⁹⁹ Although the standards of living for intellectuals improved significantly, these economic policy changes had the side effect of increasing state control of the economy. The trade unions that formed during and after mid-1950 were generally controlled by the Communist Party. The unions furthermore used consultative committees between labor and capital to exercise control over company policy—which, in effect, gave the CCP a pathway into direct management of urban corporations.¹⁰⁰ Nevertheless, the Communists had effectively brought an end to China’s urban crisis through responsive policymaking. With intellectuals experiencing progress at home and seeing firsthand the conditions of the countryside through participation in the Land Reform, they began to look more favorably on their new government.

It therefore made sense that the state turned toward establishing a foothold in China’s sprawling education system in the second half of 1950. Many schools had seen attendance drop sharply toward the end of the civil war, especially in the GMD base areas of south China. The reasons were numerous: Guomindang bankruptcy combined with the rising price of tuition made it unaffordable for students to return to school, the previous governments blacklists had effectively intimidated left-of-center teachers and students—sometimes even forcing them into

⁹⁸ Lieberthal, *Revolution and Tradition in Tientsin*, 80-82.

⁹⁹ Hutchinson, From Peking to Foreign Office, China: Fortnightly Political Summary, Period ending July 7, 1950, in *China: Political Reports, 1911-1960, Volume 9: 1949-1954*, edited by Robert L. Jarman (Cambridge: Archive Editions, 2001) [hereafter CPR9], 102.

¹⁰⁰ Lieberthal, *Revolution and Tradition in Tientsin*, 84.

hiding or exile, and the political fallout from the Land Reform Campaign had sent many intellectuals from a landlord family home to deal with the fallout.¹⁰¹ Much like with the broader urban crisis, the CCP was unable to accomplish a sweeping revolution in education in one fell swoop, and instead had to triage afflicted schools. The government focused on financial assistance to public schools and universities first in late July 1950, whereas private institutions were generally left alone. Much like with corporate reform, the state attached strings to financial assistance; schools had to expand hiring to include more working-class staff and faculty, and moreover had to organize some form of thought rectification activities.¹⁰² Although these early moves placed more of the education system under government control and expanded the reach of its thought reform efforts, an important precedent was established: any ideological remolding efforts in the early PRC years were generally made by school administrations themselves.

Having gotten past the worst of the economic crisis, the government turned toward institution-building in the second half of 1950. The party was keenly aware of the importance of media in determining national opinion; a media renaissance in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries had transformed the opinions of the intellectuals, and had at least some kind of influence on mass movements. Moreover, the CCP had already taken steps to clamp down on non-official media publishing and distribution in the late 1940s in captured territories. As such, the new state was well positioned to establish a new nationwide, party-controlled media enterprise. A national broadcasting institution was first established in later 1950, and provided a key outlet for intellectual job-seekers.¹⁰³ In Beijing, the party turned its attention to the mass publishing of the primary party newspaper, *People's Daily*. The state expanded the staff—

¹⁰¹ *Nuli kefu bufen jiaoshi shiye he xuesheng shixue de xianxiang*, July 28, 1950, LR-SPP.

¹⁰² *Ibid.*

¹⁰³ Telegram No. 56, From Peking to Foreign Office, September 28, 1950, CPR9, 111.

primarily intellectuals—and purview of the paper in 1950, although work conditions were harrowing. Many journalists reported having to essentially live in their office in downtown Beijing for the first several years of the PRC era. The editor-in-chief of the paper, Deng Tuo, did not formally move in with his wife until 1952 due to his workload.¹⁰⁴ Although in many ways *People's Daily* and the national broadcasting service are simply sources of propaganda, there was pushback from intellectuals and journalist staffers against party control. Deng Tuo, for example, railed against official dictums that *People's Daily* should replicate the layout and content of the Soviet party newspaper *Pravda*. Even though Deng's views ultimately did not win out, his vision led to significant increases in the popularity and reach of *People's Daily*, which grew its readership by a factor of five over the course of 1950.¹⁰⁵

For the Communist regime, “propaganda” (*xuanchuan*) was an all-encompassing term. 1950 saw a huge increase in resources devoted to propaganda production. The first year of the PRC era saw a good deal of sophistication of the Central Propaganda Department, which was divided between various sub-organizational bureaus: the Propaganda Bureau, the Theoretical Education Bureau, the Culture and Art Bureau, the Science Bureau, the Newspaper and Broadcasting Bureau, and the Cadre Administration Bureau.¹⁰⁶ By necessity, these agencies had to hire intellectuals (albeit those with impeccable ideological credentials), who had the literacy, educational history, and writing skills required to accomplish the party's ambitions.¹⁰⁷ Nonetheless, the actual reach of the Propaganda Department was still relatively limited in 1950.

¹⁰⁴ Cheek, *Propaganda and Culture in Mao's China*, 132.

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁶ Anne-Marie Brady, *Marketing Dictatorship: Propaganda and Thought Work in Contemporary China* (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2008), 36.

¹⁰⁷ The CCP deliberately used the appointment of famous intellectuals to official posts as a strategy of winning over skeptics to the new regime. Eddy U covers the experiences of intellectuals like Zhang Bojun or Xu Zhucheng in the state apparatus in his article “Dangerous Privilege: The United Front and the Rectification Campaign of the Early Mao Years,” *The China Journal* 68 (July 2012): 32-57.

State control of the education system had to be exerted indirectly, often through the publishing of new textbooks on history and the importance of Marxism-Leninism.¹⁰⁸ For the intellectuals employed in new media organizations or the sprawling Propaganda Department, the PRC era initially seemed to promise a return to the golden years of imperial China, where literati-bureaucrats exercised a significant degree of control over policy and held sway over most levers of official power. Much as Qing reforms in the early 1900s had de-linked intellectuals from bureaucracy, the Communist Party had tentatively rebuilt the connection.

The similarities between the height of Qing China and the early PRC period only extend so far, however. Whereas the Qing were generally content with working around mass illiteracy through traveling lecturers—the *xiangyue* system—the Communists realized that mass illiteracy imposed severe limits on the reach of the party-state’s media. As such, the government began efforts to expand and popularize education starting in late 1950. In Beijing, the state established Renmin University and announced a full takeover of the previously-private Fu Jen Catholic University in late October.¹⁰⁹ Renmin University was explicitly designed to attract students from a working class background and train them to become party cadres or government officials. The university enrolled a total of 3000 students in its fall semester—two-thirds of which came from a working class background, and over half having membership in the Youth League.¹¹⁰ The party also established a series of “People’s Universities” in each military region. In 1950, about 500,000 intellectuals—students and faculty—were affiliated with one of these universities. Classes practiced “democratic grading” from the group, and students were generally tasked with performing physical labor in nearby factories or villages alongside their studies.¹¹¹ Most of the

¹⁰⁸ Brady, *Marketing Dictatorship*, 37.

¹⁰⁹ Telegram No. 41, From Peking to Foreign Office, October 27, 1950, CPR9, 114.

¹¹⁰ Chen, *Thought Reform of the Chinese Intellectuals*, 19.

¹¹¹ *Ibid.*, 17-18.

new people's universities or revolutionary universities were organized around Soviet educational principles, much to the chagrin of older Chinese intellectuals.¹¹²

Although the state's wider unemployment assistance programs were in full swing by this point, the establishment of People's Universities provided a convenient way to provide employment for out-of-work intellectuals, as well those who were returning from lengthy forays abroad. The People's Universities were specifically directed to prioritize hiring unemployed intellectuals to staff the faculty (as opposed to hiring from pre-existing universities). However, there were several classes of intellectuals categorically denied from employment in the People's Universities: (1) counterrevolutionaries, (2) those coming from a landlord family, (3) anyone "expropriated of political rights" (*boduo zhenzhi quanli*), (4) anyone who had been found guilty of a crime post-1949, and (5) anyone who had failed to comply with previous work assignments (*tongyi fenpei*).¹¹³ The state also made moves to ensure that education was more accessible, even for adult workers. The state imposed price controls on tuition, which had risen steadily across China in the first half of the twentieth century. For those who could not enroll in a university, the party encouraged schools to provide short-term job training classes. Many of these classes were held at night in factories or villages.¹¹⁴ Although the growth of new public universities was impressive in 1950 and 1951, the state was generally unsuccessful in offering a truly competitive model to established and prestigious universities. In Shanghai, for example, major universities like Fudan, Tonji, or Jiaotong University maintained their dominance well into the 1950s.¹¹⁵ The

¹¹² Chen, *Chinese Education since 1949*, 39-41.

¹¹³ *Shanghaishi chuli shiye zhishifenzi weiyuanhui guanyu wu song gongzuo renyuan shouce yigong cankao de han*, December 6, 1951, B1-1-1121-36, Shanghai Municipal People's Government, SMA.

¹¹⁴ J. Hutchinson to Bevin, Conditions in China, March 27, 1951, CPR9, 258.

¹¹⁵ *Shanghaishi chuli shiye zhishifenzi weiyuanhui guanyu wu song gongzuo renyuan shouce yigong cankao de han*, December 6, 1951, B1-1-1121-36, Shanghai Municipal People's Government, SMA.

state had made impressive strides in education in 1950 and 1951, both in expanding access and winning over intellectuals, but plenty of obstacles remained.

On the whole, however, the party had successfully established control over the organs of governance by the end of 1950. Moreover, there were signs that the overall political situation in urban China was changing. In Shanghai, for example, the East China Military Command turned power over to the local education bureau in February 1951. One of the last actions of the military government was a set of instructions on providing unemployment assistance to intellectuals published on January 26, 1951. After that, local intellectuals' fates were in the hands of the civilian municipal government.¹¹⁶ By the end of 1951, day-to-day affairs were increasingly decentralized. The Shanghai Municipal Bureau of Education had briefly managed the work-assignment program for several months in mid-1951, but ultimately turned to district-level committees to do most of the work.¹¹⁷ The state integrated intellectuals into the workforce through increasingly decentralized political organs, which applied local circumstances in concert with national directives. Moreover, intellectuals enjoyed a steady stream of positive coverage of the new regime in new state-run media; for example, an exuberant editorial in *People's Daily* on December 9, 1951 written by a businessman named Zhu Jicheng, who praised the party's work in 1950 and 1951 with "stabilizing prices" (*wujia de wending*) and "ensuring the steady flow of goods" (*wuzi de chang liu*).¹¹⁸ The relationship between intellectuals and the state was not always friendly during the course of the decade, but early state-building efforts were generally successful at winning over the intellectual class.

¹¹⁶ *Chaozhuan* "guanyu chuli shiye zhishifenzi de buchong zhishi" de ling, February 9, 1951, B105-5-327-1, Shanghai Municipal Bureau of Education, SMA.

¹¹⁷ *Shanghaishi renmin zhengfu guanyu chouzu gequ chuli shiye zhishifenzi weiyuanhui ji dengjichu de zhishi*, November 10, 1951, B130-1-1-9, Shanghai Municipal Committee on Handling Unemployed Intellectuals, SMA.

¹¹⁸ Zhu Jisheng, *Gongshangjie poqie xuyao sixiang gaizao*, December 9, 1951, RR.

Beyond Mobilization: Intellectuals' Support for the Korean War

Scholars have articulated a wealth of reasons behind China's entry into the Korean War. Chen Jian, for example, has argued that a growing sense of anti-Americanism, particularly among CCP members, made some form of conflict between the two nations inevitable.¹¹⁹ Shu Guang Zhang, meanwhile, suggests that the personality of Mao Zedong himself—specifically, his “romantic” views on warfare and militarism—was instrumental in pushing China to enter the conflict.¹²⁰ Others have instead focused on the relationship and politicking between the three communist heads of state: Mao, Josef Stalin, and Kim Ilseong.¹²¹ What links these various approaches is a focus on the Chinese leadership. To be sure, Mao and his colleagues ultimately made the decision to enter the Korean War. It is far from clear if the intervention enjoyed mass support, especially at the outset of the conflict. Nevertheless, scholarship has generally looked past domestic support for the war effort.¹²² To the extent that scholarship has treated public opinion about the war, it has generally been to highlight the role of top-down mobilization efforts in the Resist America, Aid Korea Campaign.¹²³ Although it is certainly true that many intellectuals—especially those who had recently returned from abroad—held pro-American views, other intellectuals became increasingly supportive of the war effort over the course of 1950 and 1951. Young intellectuals even joined the military in a wave of patriotic enlistments. I suggest that far from only being “mobilized” by the party-state, intellectuals generated a good

¹¹⁹ See *China's Road to the Korean War: The Making of the Sino-American Confrontation* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994).

¹²⁰ See *Mao's Military Romanticism: China and the Korean War, 1950-1953* (Lawrence: University of Kansas Press, 1995).

¹²¹ See Sergei N. Goncharov, John W. Lewis, and Xue Litai, *Uncertain Partners: Stalin, Mao, and the Korean War*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1993.

¹²² Theodore Chen generally sees intellectuals as pro-American and thus skeptical of the conflict in *Thought Reform of the Chinese Intellectuals*.

¹²³ See Cell, *Revolution at Work*.

deal of grassroots enthusiasm for intervention in the Korean War, far more so than other socioeconomic groups.

The Communist Party had never enjoyed particularly warm relations with the United States, although anti-American belief was generally less prevalent until the waning years of the civil war, when the US made little secret of its preference for Jiang Jieshi and the Guomindang. The relationship between the CCP and the US deteriorated over the course of 1948 and 1949 as American diplomats' refusal to recognize the legitimacy of the Communist government (as well as the pressure they applied on their international allies to do the same) became a major sticking point. Even after the founding of the PRC, the United States maintained that Taiwan was the legitimate representative of the Chinese people, not the new regime in Beijing. As such, anti-Americanism rose to a fever pitch by 1950 within party circles.¹²⁴ On the other hand, intellectuals were not as quick to grow wary of the US. America had played a major role in the Chinese education system for decades, investing resources and people into building up China's university system. Many intellectuals had studied abroad or even lived in the US, sponsored by American scholarships.¹²⁵ However, intellectuals—especially students and recent graduates—grew critical of the American military's actions in Korea in 1950 in advance of China's intervention.

A survey of secondary school teachers in the city of Changde, in Hunan Province, found majority support for Chinese intervention in the conflict in August of 1950. At the same time, support for interventionism did not translate to wider anti-American sentiments among Changde teachers, at least at this time. Many still had broadly favorable views of the United States, even if they had become increasingly critical of the widespread American bombing campaign in North

¹²⁴ Chen, *China's Road to the Korean War*, 33-63.

¹²⁵ Chen, *Thought Reform of the Chinese Intellectuals*, 62-64.

Korea.¹²⁶ The specific focus of intellectuals on the indiscriminate American bombing of North Korean targets seems to have been influenced in part by state media, which devoted considerable attention to the killing of North Korean civilians by US airstrikes. Moreover, the PRC government claimed, without evidence, that American bombs had even fallen north of the Yalu River, thus presenting a threat to the lives of the Chinese citizenry.¹²⁷ Although the state's claims about the deaths of Chinese civilians appear to have been erroneous, it proved to be a powerful narrative with Chinese intellectuals, who generally stayed well-informed of current events through media consumption. Even beyond the fabricated bombing of Chinese targets, intellectuals had plenty of reasons to be critical of the American war strategy in Korea, which ended up dropping more bombs on North Korea than were dropped in the entirety of the Pacific theater during World War II.¹²⁸ The heavy coverage of American airstrikes demonstrates the Communist government's keen attention paid to winning over the support of the intellectuals, who were the primary consumers of print media such as the *People's Daily*. Moreover, the working classes tended to view possible intervention with skepticism; at planned demonstrations for the Resist America, Aid Korea Campaign in Chongqing, protesting workers interrupted the festivities with chants of "what about my empty belly?"¹²⁹ Moving forward, intellectuals would form a key bloc of support for the PRC's first war.

As the Fall of 1950 wore on, the government diverted much of its attention from agrarian reform to war mobilization. Inside Zhongnanhai, there were still raucous debates over whether China should actually intervene or not.¹³⁰ But outside of the halls of power, Chinese intervention

¹²⁶ *Changde zhongdeng xuexiao jiaozhiyuan dui shiju de sixiang fanying*, August 14, 1950, LR-SPP.

¹²⁷ Telegram No. 52, From Peking to Foreign Office, September 4, 1950, CPR9, 105.

¹²⁸ See Charles K. Armstrong, *Tyranny of the Weak: North Korea and the World, 1950-1992* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2013), 47.

¹²⁹ Telegram No. 52, From Peking to Foreign Office, September 4, 1950, CPR9, 107.

¹³⁰ See Zhang, *Mao's Military Romanticism*.

seemed all but certain. The public was making donations for arms procurements, workers were signing “production pact” pledges, and Christian churches were being forced to renounce any ties to the Western “imperialists.”¹³¹ Intellectuals who also identified as Christians invited plenty of suspicion from party cadres, although they became fervent supporters of intervention, at least in public. Christian universities and colleges became epicenters of some of the most energetic activism in support of the Resist America, Aid Korea Campaign.¹³² Some intellectuals—specifically, traveling operatic performers—played a major role in the mobilization of Chinese commoners. Artists staged plays in rural China for a peasant audience promoting the war effort.¹³³ In the cities, activist students might hang up official propaganda posters, share writings, or even produce their own propaganda writings and visual media to support the war.¹³⁴ The state continued to attempt to win over the intellectual class through appeals to the United Nations. In the final days before Chinese troops crossed the Yalu, Beijing made formal complaints to the UN that the United States Air Force had bombed a Chinese airstrip in Andong and had violated PRC airspace in the broader northeastern region, a move that resonated most heavily with an intellectual audience.¹³⁵ For the majority of Chinese not shipped off to the front lines, the first few months after intervention looked a lot like the ones right before. And although state-led mobilization efforts certainly played a leading role in promoting the war effort in public life, intellectuals’ early support for the war as well as active participation in spreading propaganda meant that they too owned the intervention.

¹³¹ Cell, *Revolution at Work*, 49-50.

¹³² Chen, *Thought Reform of the Chinese Intellectuals*, 28-29. Theodore Chen argues that Christian intellectuals were placed under severe duress, and therefore had to proclaim their support for the war effort far more loudly than their non-denominational colleagues. However, there is little evidence to suggest that these intellectuals were being disingenuous for their war support.

¹³³ Gary D. Rawnsley, “‘The Great Movement to Resist America and Assist Korea’: How Beijing Sold the Korean War,” *SAGE Publications* 2, no. 3 (2009): 304.

¹³⁴ Cell, *Revolution at Work*, 95-104.

¹³⁵ Telegram No. 41, From Peking to Foreign Office, October 27, 1950, CPR9, 113.

Intellectual opinions on the war, particular those of young intellectuals and their older colleagues, diverged after Chinese troops began fighting in earnest. At a meeting of intellectuals from all age groups in Nanjing during mid-November, there was generally a high degree of support for the war. Students, recent graduates, and young faculty expressed a wide variety of anti-American sentiments, whereas older professors and teachers still regarded the United States and Americans as fundamentally good. One older intellectual, for example, said that “there is no need to spend all day cursing America” (*hebi zhengtian ma meiguo*).¹³⁶ Only about a week later, however, student zeal in Resist America, Aid Korea protests in Beijing forced schools to shut down for two additional weeks plus the original week planned to hold the demonstrations. School and universities within traveling distance of the capital often closed too, or gave students excused absences for the purpose of attending the demonstrations in Beijing.¹³⁷ There were also geographic dimensions to whether intellectuals were more or less supportive of the war in Korea; students and faculty living in the northeast were mostly likely to have a favorable opinion of Chinese intervention, which may have been exacerbated by the state’s narrative of collateral damage north of the Yalu. Nationwide, intellectuals tended to be swayed by the party-state’s more academic justifications for the intervention, which cited the case of the Spanish Civil War as an example of military intervention that international law might justify. For others—perhaps in particular for intellectuals with some tie to Japan—the American general Douglas MacArthur’s role in prosecuting the war may have invoked ire. A number of intellectuals had a negative opinion of the American occupation of Japan (also headed by MacArthur), which was

¹³⁶ *Nanjing dazhuan xuexiao bu fen xuesheng dui Lu Ding yi tongzhi suo jiang “meiguo meiyou wenhua” de fanying*, November 14, 1950, LR-SPP.

¹³⁷ Hutchinson, Telegram No. 1888, From Peking to Foreign Office, November 23, 1950, CPR9, 142.

seen as imperialist.¹³⁸ Clearly, there was no such thing as a unified intellectual response to the Korean War. The issue exposed the same fault lines—age and geographic location—as other contemporary issues. Nonetheless, China entered 1951 with a nationwide cohort of intellectuals generally primed and willing to support the ongoing war effort.

Perhaps the costs for intellectuals simply were not as apparent as they were for peasants, workers, and military personnel, who did most of the front-line fighting during the three-year war. Although the Resist America, Aid Korea Campaign certainly disrupted life in the school and university system, villages were far more uprooted. PLA recruiters entered the villages, quotas in hand, to find volunteers for military service.¹³⁹ Although the military showed little desire to place intellectuals in the line of fire, recruiters did attempt to sign up young university students for logistical work in the PLA beginning in early 1951. Despite the fact that the military believed that intellectuals' know-how was key to ensuring the logistical success of the Korean option, officers were generally skeptical of intellectuals. Reports frequently referred to student enlistees as “urbanites” first and foremost (and indeed, it appears that the majority of enlistees grew up in a city), and noted problems integrating them with the rest of the rank-and-file, which mostly came from a rural orientation. The PLA experienced few difficulties finding willing intellectuals, however, with patriotic enlistments surging during the first few months of the war.¹⁴⁰ Official media intended for young intellectual consumption, such as the magazine

¹³⁸ Hutchinson, From Peking to Foreign Office, China: Monthly Summary, Period from October 25 to November 25, 1950, CPR9, 118. For a discussion of American actions in occupied Japan—and whether such actions might rightfully be seen as imperialist—see John W. Dower's classic account of the occupation, *Embracing Defeat: Japan in the Wake of World War II* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, Inc., 1999), particularly 203-224.

¹³⁹ Patrick C. Roe, *The Dragon Strikes: China and the Korean War, June-December 1950* (Novato: Presidio, 2000), 420.

¹⁴⁰ *Zhongguo renmin jiefangjun huadong junqu houdong zhengzhi bu guanyu jieshou qingnian xuesheng de zhishi*, January 7, 1951, A39-2-40-54, East China Rear Military Command Military Supplies and Political Bureau, Chinese Communist East China Military Supply Production and Administrative Office Committee, Shanghai Municipal Military Supply Industry Union, Chinese Communist Party Shanghai Municipal Military Supply Industry Committee, Youth League of the Shanghai Municipal Military Supply Industry Work Committee, SMA.

Zhongguo Qingnian, focused primarily on the importance of nationalism to the broader project of socialist state-building. For the first half of 1951, nearly 50% of articles in the magazine were either explicitly written about the Korean War or discussed the importance of patriotism more broadly. Pressing domestic issues like the Land Reform Campaign of the Suppress the Counterrevolutionaries Campaign received only cursory attention in the magazine.¹⁴¹ The general enthusiasm of young intellectuals for military service serves as an indicator of the popularity of the intervention among the educated youth. But although both young intellectuals and villagers alike signed up to go to Korea, their shared experiences ended there. Intellectual enlistees worked behind the scenes in logistics bases whereas villagers were thrown into the meat grinder of war.

The PLA leadership made several reforms over the course of the war to improve morale and increase solidarity among soldiers and logistical staff. A “political officer” was assigned to each unit, whose task was to conduct semi-frequent meetings to improve morale and inculcate loyalty to both the regime and the war effort. These ideological sessions were generally led by soldiers and military staff, however, who were encouraged to discuss their experiences in the face of Japanese and Guomindang atrocities. Political officers—many of whom had received formal education—were quick to note that the Guomindang military’s arsenal was either provided directly by the US, or paid for with American dollars.¹⁴² Political officers also took bi-weekly reports from squad leaders, although individual soldiers were allowed to bypass their squad leaders and report directly to their unit’s squad leader if they felt their squad leader was not accurately representing their concerns.¹⁴³ For enlisted intellectuals and literate soldiers, the

¹⁴¹ Townsend, “Revolutionizing Chinese Youth,” 450-451.

¹⁴² Zhang, *Mao’s Military Romanticism*, 191.

¹⁴³ Roe, *The Dragon Strikes*, 421.

military produced the *Volunteer Army Newspaper* (*zhiyuanjun bao*), which described the heroic deeds and great victories of the Chinese fighting force.¹⁴⁴ Enlisted intellectuals experienced their fair share of danger, moreover, even if they were not deployed to the front. Logistical bases still were under threat from American airstrikes; indeed, Mao Zedong's son Anying was killed by a US bomber while working in one such rear command hub.¹⁴⁵ Although these reforms alone could not erase the class divide between intellectuals and commoners in the army, the PLA was keenly aware of the gap and took steps to promote solidarity and integrate intellectuals into the ranks.

As the war went on, the military continued to expand its efforts at recruiting intellectuals, providing a variety of outlets for intellectuals to advance their careers and future prospects through military service. By April 1951, the East China Military Region alone had enlisted 2083 young intellectuals from cities like Shanghai and Nanjing, and the provinces of Fujian and Shandong. The region planned to enlist another 1600 in the immediate future.¹⁴⁶ Military service tended to attract young intellectuals with a general sense of discontent with their lives and pessimism about future prospects (*qiantu*). As such, the PLA guaranteed enrollment in a cadre training school (*ganxiao*) upon completion of a tour of duty, which could then fast-track these intellectuals to a career in the growing CCP bureaucracy.¹⁴⁷ While the military was beginning to develop an intellectual policy of its own abroad, young scholars at home were showing signs of

¹⁴⁴ Xiaobing Li, Allan R. Millett, and Bin Yu, editors, *Mao's Generals Remember Korea* (Lawrence: University of Kansas Press, 2001), 91.

¹⁴⁵ Zhang, *Mao's Military Romanticism*, 194.

¹⁴⁶ *Zhongguo renmin jiefangjun huadong junqu houdong zhengzhi bu guanyu jieshou qingnian xuesheng de gongzuo zongjie baogao*, April 1, 1951, A39-2-40-57, East China Rear Military Command Military Supplies and Political Bureau, Chinese Communist East China Military Supply Production and Administrative Office Committee, Shanghai Municipal Military Supply Industry Union, Chinese Communist Party Shanghai Municipal Military Supply Industry Committee, Youth League of the Shanghai Municipal Military Supply Industry Work Committee, SMA.

¹⁴⁷ *Ibid.*

internalizing the anti-American sentiments of the moment. During the May Day celebrations in Beijing, students gave speeches that criticized not just American aggression in Korea, but also the wider aims of American foreign policy. The militarization of Japan in response to the Korean War, for example, was denounced by students as “neo-colonial.”¹⁴⁸ During the middle months of 1951, the role of intellectuals in the war effort deepened, both at home and abroad. For intellectual youths, serving in logistical roles for the PLA was increasingly looking like a way out of a still-dismal economic situation.

China entered the second half of 1951 with broad-based public support for the war. Part of the Resist America, Aid Korea Campaign was soliciting donations from the Chinese people. By mid-July, the state had collected the equivalent of 2000 aircraft’s worth of donations.¹⁴⁹ Moreover, young intellectuals were flocking to the military training schools set up over the course of the past year. Previously, both workers and current students were allowed to apply for enrollment in the military training academies; however, the state announced plans during the summer to limit enrollments only to current students, considering the high number of applications.¹⁵⁰ Although the popularity of military service among intellectuals was no doubt attractive for patriotic and ideological reasons, there were pragmatic benefits as well. Although the military did not directly pay enlisted intellectuals (it was instead handled by the intellectuals’ individual *danwei*, or work unit), an internal report from late October showed that the PLA believed logistical officers were being under-compensated, and encouraged all affiliated *danwei* to increase salaries for enlisted intellectuals. At the same time, the PLA noted that *danwei* should pay attention to the “political histories” (*zhengzhi lishi*) of employees. Intellectuals who had

¹⁴⁸ Lamb, Telegram No. 936, From Peking to Foreign Office, May 11, 1951, CPR9, 223.

¹⁴⁹ Telegram No. 16, From Peking to Foreign Office, July 13, 1951, CPR9, 181-182.

¹⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 183.

demonstrated the most loyalty generally saw greater salary increases, naturally.¹⁵¹ The increase in pay for enlisted intellectuals may explain in part the surging popularity of enlistments and enrollment in military training academies back home.

During the first two years of the PRC era, intellectuals—particularly younger ones—became increasingly supportive of intervention in the Korean War, and eventually of the Chinese war effort. Although the state certainly invested plenty of resources in popularizing the war through the Resist America, Aid Korea Campaign, the success of mobilization depended on the actual support given from intellectuals to the war effort. At home, activists hung flyers and posters, wrote editorials and articles, performed dramas and operas, and in some cases even signed up for military service. Not all enlistments were purely driven by patriotic zeal; military service was clearly one way to increase one’s career prospects by guaranteeing entry into a cadre training school, and intellectuals were generally kept well away from the front lines (although that did not mean that a deep bombing run might still prove lethal to some). And of course, not all intellectuals were so eager to support the war. At a political meeting in December 1951 at Tianjin University, for example, a cohort of older professors expressed displeasure at the intervention. One argued that China was not strong enough to beat the US in the 1950s, and had “confronted America too early” (*kangmei tai zao*).¹⁵² Nonetheless, these frustrations appear to have been in the minority. For both practical and ideological reasons, the majority of intellectuals were willing to throw their weight behind the war effort.

¹⁵¹ *Zhongguo renmin jiefangjun huadong junqu disan yezhanjun houdong zhengzhi bu zhishu ganbu guanli chu guanyu chuli qingnian zhishifenzi gongji daiyu de zhishi*, October 31, 1951, A39-2-40-50, East China Rear Military Command Military Supplies and Political Bureau, Chinese Communist East China Military Supply Production and Administrative Office Committee, Shanghai Municipal Military Supply Industry Union, Chinese Communist Party Shanghai Municipal Military Supply Industry Committee, Youth League of the Shanghai Municipal Military Supply Industry Work Committee, SMA.

¹⁵² *Tianjinshi gaodeng xuexiao jiaoshi sixiang gaizao xuexi xianyu tingdun zhuangtai*, December 10, 1951, LR-SPP.

Solving the Intellectual Unemployment Crisis: The Work Assignment Program

Urban China faced an unemployment crisis of nearly epic proportions during the first two years of Communist rule, which engulfed tens and sometimes hundreds of thousands of individuals (sometimes between ten and twenty percent of various cities' populations). As such, practical necessity demanded that the state find unemployed workers jobs as quickly as possible, to benefit both them as well as the wider project of national reconstruction. Intellectuals in particular were seen as having crucial skillsets that might help alleviate low industrial production figures and technological capacity. As such, all levels of government—national, municipal, and even district-level committees—embarked on an ambitious work assignment program. This campaign has generally not received as much attention from Western scholarship, which has instead focused on the various ideological campaigns, such as Thought Reform, the Three-Anti, and the Five-Anti campaigns. The scholarship of Eddy U has, however, shed considerable light on the problem.¹⁵³ U has argued that the state's efforts to register unemployed intellectuals and subsequently find them employment institutionalized the nebulous category of *zhishifenzi* (“intellectual”) and revealed a significant gap in the life experiences of Communist cadres and intellectuals, thus increasing official suspicion of the intellectual class.¹⁵⁴ I see no issue with either argument; however, I take a slightly different analytical approach to the work assignment program. I focus instead on the role of the work assignment program within the larger project of socialist statebuilding, and the ways in which intellectual's endorsement of the project proved crucial to ensuring the stability of the regime.

¹⁵³ See Eddy U, “The Hiring of Rejects: Teacher Recruitment and Crises of Socialism in the Early PRC Years,” *Modern China* 30, no. 1 (January 2004): 46-80 and “The Making of *Zhishifenzi*: The Critical Impact of the Registration of Unemployed Intellectuals in the Early PRC,” *The China Quarterly* 173 (March 2003): 100-121.

¹⁵⁴ U, “The Making of *Zhishifenzi*,” 100-101.

The unemployment crisis was mostly not one of the new government's choosing, although a series of purges in late 1949 certainly did not help the matter. Official pronouncements made through public media and streetside posters blamed the bombing campaigns undertaken by the Guomindang regime (and paid for by the United States, these announcements emphasized) for destroying much of the urban infrastructure needed to provide employment for the masses.¹⁵⁵ Although these propaganda announcements were probably more correct than not to blame the civil war, they ignored the role of the CCP in exacerbating the unemployment crisis. In the heady months of late 1949, right after liberation, local cadres in urban areas had purged the schools of teachers suspected of severe reactionary political leanings, as well as those who were strongly disliked by students or who had engaged in immoral or criminal behavior. In Shanghai, for example, about 300 teachers were ultimately purged from the city's school system by the end of 1949. A handful of others left in protest.¹⁵⁶ Zealous cadres were even more extreme in their handling of public officials, who they viewed with abject suspicion. Although the national government stipulated that all but the most reactionary of political servants be allowed to keep their jobs, local cadres purged thousands from their jobs. In the cities of Shanghai, Nanjing, and Hangzhou, over 27,000 previous officeholders were fired in contravention of the official CCP line.¹⁵⁷ In 1950, however, the government rapidly recalculated when it realized the extent of the crisis. No longer could the state afford to purge those it found repugnant; instead, the survival of the new regime would depend on finding work for everyone—including those it had just fired.

¹⁵⁵ *Liu Zhangsheng guanyu shanghai shi jiuji shiye zhigong zhishifenzi de qingkuang baogao*, 1950, B129-1-10-83, Shanghai Municipal Unemployed Workers Emergency Committee, SMA.

¹⁵⁶ U, "The Hiring of Rejects," 51-52.

¹⁵⁷ U, "The Making of *Zhishifenzi*," 105.

The state's response to the unemployment crisis was haphazard at first throughout 1950, before maturing into a formalized bureaucratic process in 1951. In early 1950, the government sought to promote another mass campaign alongside the Land Reform, Suppress the Counterrevolutionaries, and Resist America, Aid Korea campaigns: the "Let's Donate a Day's Wages" Campaign (*juanxian yiri gongzi yundong*). The campaign actually proved to be quite successful; in Shanghai alone, the city government collected 8,366,051,624 RMB's worth of "day's wages" for distribution among the unemployed. Of course, the crisis enveloped more than just the intellectual class, and scholars would not have seen the majority of this 8 billion. Still, the success of the campaign demonstrates that, for the majority of urbanites, there was a great deal of concern for their "unemployed brethren" (*shiye xiongdi*).¹⁵⁸ Meanwhile, local organs of governance were placed under significant pressure to rectify the mistakes of late 1949. In Shanghai, the local Ministry of Education set about to rehire the teachers that had been fired. Although almost 200 of the original 300 who had lost their jobs were ultimately rehired, they were required to undergo political training classes that foreshadowed the formal Thought Reform Campaign of 1952.¹⁵⁹ Although generally haphazard, these early policies helped alleviate the burden of unemployment facing intellectuals.

The state could hardly afford to devote much attention to the unemployment crisis in late 1950, when it became occupied with sending troops to fight in Korea. Nevertheless, the war offered some opportunities for alleviating unemployment; the state created military training academies (as has already been discussed in this chapter) and cadre schools designed to attract enrollment from unemployed intellectuals. Although demand for the traditional private higher

¹⁵⁸ Liu Zhangsheng *guanyu shanghai shi jiuji shiye zhigong zhishifenzi de qingkuang baogao*, 1950, B129-1-10-83, Shanghai Municipal Unemployed Workers Emergency Committee, SMA.

¹⁵⁹ U, "The Hiring of Rejects," 52-54.

education institutions would ultimately eclipse that for PLA or cadre training, it appears that these alternative schools managed to outpace the traditional school system for a brief time period in late 1950.¹⁶⁰ Moreover, the central government took steps at formalizing the process of finding work for the unemployed. Although the crisis was not as severe in Beijing (with only about 10,197 persons without work), the issue of having a large slate of out-of-work intellectuals was increasingly difficult for the state to ignore. Intellectuals who had left to return to their rural places of birth (often to help manage their families' finances in the wake of the Land Reform Campaign) returned to Beijing, causing an influx of newly-unemployed intellectuals. In response, the CCP established the Emergency Unemployment Committee to formally assign work to the unemployed.¹⁶¹ The Beijing committee became a model for other Chinese cities, which moved to create their own work assignment committees in late 1950 and throughout 1951. In general, the government urged urban work assignment committees to prioritize staffing factories with technical experts. Any intellectuals assigned to work or study at a state-run school was expected to undergo some kind of political study program, although as already discussed such study programs tended to be largely self-directed at this point.¹⁶²

The siphoning of unemployed into state-run universities, as opposed to private colleges, was formalized through official regulations in late October that state-run universities had to fill quotas for hiring unemployed intellectuals. In addition, municipal governments were expected to shoulder the costs of job training programs to turn academics into technical advisers to assist in industrial production. In some cases, local education ministries might assign unemployed

¹⁶⁰ *Zhonggong gongyang zhuangfa Beijing shiwei guanyu jiuji shiye gongren he shiye zhishifenzi de baogao*, August 9, 1950, LR-SPP.

¹⁶¹ *Ibid.*

¹⁶² Liu Changsheng, *Liu Changsheng "guanyu shanghai shi jiuji shiye zhigong shiye zhishifenzi" de baogao*, October 17, 1950, LR-SPP.

intellectuals to conduct classes in the rural areas outside of their city, in order to promote literacy among the peasantry and, perhaps, foster a new generation of working-class intellectuals. In general, however, local cadres typically found intellectuals lacking a “public-service viewpoint” (*quefa wei renmin fuwu guandian*), and as such put pressure on higher levels of government to organize formal political study.¹⁶³ Although the later Thought Reform Campaign was no doubt planned from the start, it should be noted that the campaign’s launching appears to have been at least partially in response to pressure from local cadres.

In November, Shanghai followed Beijing’s lead in creating an emergency committee of its own to handle the problem of unemployed workers and intellectuals. Overall, the unemployment crisis had forced the state to reconsider its priorities in dealing with the private sector; ultimately, most cities settled on tackling unemployment before fully dismantling the private ownership of capital. Indeed, in Shanghai at least, the Let’s Donate a Day’s Wages Campaign came out of a consultative meeting between Shanghai officials and private business owners. Businesses generally concurred with the government’s argument that having a large populace of unemployed individuals was detrimental to the social order, and as such relinquished hiring responsibility over to the municipal government.¹⁶⁴ One problem faced by the work assignment committee in Shanghai was a lack of public knowledge about the program; as such, one of its first duties was to popularize its own existence. Some of the first job assignments for the unemployed in Shanghai were actually for the emergency committee itself; they were hired to hang fliers (*gua xinjian*) around Shanghai advertising the work assignment program and

¹⁶³ *Zhengwu yuan guanyu chuli shiye zhishifenzi de buchong zhishi*, October 27, 1950, LR-SPP.

¹⁶⁴ “*Guanyu shanghai shi jiuji shiye zhigong shiye zhishifenzi*” *de baogao*; *guanyu tiaozheng gongsi guanxi yu Shanghai gongshangye qingkuang*; *guanyu muqian Shanghai laozi guanxi de baogao* / “*Shanghai gongshang*” *hedingben*, November 1, 1950, C48-2-2410-14, Shanghai Municipal Association of Industry and Commerce, SMA.

encouraging others to register.¹⁶⁵ It is unclear if any intellectuals were hired to hang fliers for the committee, although they would have almost certainly come into contact with these pronouncements—and more than a few may have even registered for the work assignment program thanks to its popularization. Even intellectuals who had jobs or were enrolled in a school or university still came into contact with the committee, which picked up where the Let's Donate a Day's Wages Campaign left off by soliciting charitable donations for unemployment relief. As of November 1950, students in Shanghai had donated a sum of 103,216,632 RMB toward unemployment relief (or about 10,322 new RMB, after the government's currency reform). Local artists (who were also classified as intellectuals under the state's classification norms) donated a sum of 35,397,799 RMB (3,540 new RMB).¹⁶⁶

The work assignment program in 1951 underwent a variety of changes. The moves to popularize the program in 1950 bore fruit, and soon cadres overseeing the program could not keep pace with demand. As such, the program transferred from the purview of municipal and provincial governments to specific, formal committees designed to process unemployment applications. Over time, these work assignment committees had to rely on the advice of district-level governments as well as non-Party organizations, such as the minor democratic parties, and the Women's Federation.¹⁶⁷ In the beginning of 1951, the central government made official requirements that every major city establish some kind of work assignment program in the mold of the Emergency Unemployment Committee in Beijing. Moreover, the world of intellectuals experienced a seismic shift as the central government mandated that cities accept job applications from both male *and* female intellectuals, thus opening the door to good academic or

¹⁶⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶⁶ Ibid.

¹⁶⁷ For an in-depth examination of the various minor parties in the PRC, see James D. Seymour, *China's Satellite Parties* (New York: M. E. Sharpe, 1987).

industrial jobs for educated women almost overnight.¹⁶⁸ Indeed, a slight majority of the applicants in Shanghai—57 percent—were women.¹⁶⁹

Cities like Shanghai took tentative steps at introducing a more formal process to work assignment by instructing overseeing cadres to balance both the unique strengths of the unemployed intellectual in question alongside the general needs of the public. Although officials expressed plenty of concern about “reactionary defects” (*fandong quexian*) among out-of-work intellectuals, the government had learned the lessons of late 1949 and early 1950. Although a handful of applications were still denied, the overwhelming majority of unemployed intellectuals were given job assignments—even those coming from a liberal or right-wing political background.¹⁷⁰ Although the work assignment program did not entirely ignore the problem of staffing schools and universities, cities tended to prioritize assigning intellectuals with an engineering or technical background to serve as advisors in the factories. In order to determine whether an applicant had the requisite scientific know-how for assignment to a factory production team, cadres would use aptitude tests (*zhaokao*). It appears that this change caused confusion among applicants, who expected the process to be quick and easy as in 1950. Because the use of aptitude tests was new in 1951, work assignment boards had to spend a good deal of effort clarifying the new application procedures in propaganda and advertisements.¹⁷¹

Urban work assignment programs were laboring under enormous demand by mid-1951. The use of aptitude tests were highly beneficial to some intellectuals, particularly with scientific or economic expertise. Moreover, the first wave of job assignments gave intellectuals coveted

¹⁶⁸ *Shanghaishi chuli shiye zhishifenzi weiyuanhui guanyu jiejie shiye zhishifenzi wenti de fangzhen he banfa*, 1951, B130-1-1-2, Shanghai Municipal Committee on Handling Unemployed Intellectuals, SMA.

¹⁶⁹ U, “The Making of *Zhishifenzi*,” 113-114.

¹⁷⁰ *Shanghaishi renmin zhengfu guanyu chuli shiye zhishifenzi banfa de cailiao*, 1951, B1-1-1122-1, Shanghai Municipal People's Government, SMA.

¹⁷¹ *Shanghaishi renmin zhengfu guanyu zhaopin zhaokao ji guyong jishu yuangong, shiye zhishifenzi zhi shouxu de guiding de tongzhi*, 1951, B127-1-13-8, Shanghai Municipal Bureau of Labor, SMA.

roles in new organs of governance. Many of the first job assignments went to labor safety supervision teams (*laobao*) or factory democratic management committees (*minzhu guanli weiyuanhui*). To aid the war effort, other intellectuals were pressed into service producing public media in support of the Resist America, Aid Korea Campaign.¹⁷² Municipal work assignment boards were forced to become more discriminating around the same time. For example, any applications from elderly or physically weak intellectuals were marked *shenti shuairuo* (“frail-bodied”), and they were assigned only to posts that did not involve any physical labor—or, more likely, they simply could not find employment at all.¹⁷³

If an intellectual’s work application forms were denied, they were generally allowed to stay inside their city of residence, however, unless they applied to work in a city despite living in a suburb or a rural area nearby. In those cases, intellectuals with denied applications were allowed to reside in the city where they applied for just a full 24 hours before they were required to leave for their point of origin.¹⁷⁴ Although the official residence permit—*hukou*—system was not introduced until later, the local guidelines for the work assignment program suggest that the CCP was well aware of the problem of rural-to-urban migration, and took steps at clamping down on intranational migration. That being said, municipal governments generally had much fewer qualms about sending local intellectuals *away* from their city. As more and more posts became filled, work assignment boards generally turned toward school assignments in less developed regions of the country, such as the northeast. A number of Shanghai intellectuals were reassigned to the faculty at Northeast People’s Revolutionary University.¹⁷⁵

¹⁷² *Chaosong laodong bu guanyu jingji shiye gongren yu zhishifenzi de han*, April 27, 1951, B105-5-327-19, Shanghai Municipal Bureau of Education, SMA.

¹⁷³ *Guanyu song chuli shiye zhishifenzi banfa de caoan de baogao*, May 15, 1951, B105-5-327-21, Shanghai Municipal Bureau of Education, SMA.

¹⁷⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁷⁵ *Ibid.* and *Shanghaishi renmin zhengfu guanyu chuli shiye zhishifenzi banfa de cailiao*, 1951, B1-1-1122-1, Shanghai Municipal People's Government, SMA.

Although the work assignment program was first envisioned by the central government, the process of consolidation suggests the rapid maturation of municipal governance across the country (or at least, in intellectual-dense cities and provinces). Moreover, local governments in close proximity engaged in a form of mutual supervision. The provincial government of Zhejiang, for example, wrote a letter to the municipal government of Shanghai dated May 29, 1951 in response to a solicitation from Shanghai for neighboring local governments to offer appraisals of its work assignment policies. Although broadly supportive of the Shanghai government's policies, the letter from Zhejiang did offer some criticism regarding a lack of adequate attention to young intellectuals and recent graduates. In addition, the letter suggested that Shanghai might turn its attention toward alternative career paths from either education or industrial management; for example, work in a research institute.¹⁷⁶ As such, Shanghai continued to implement changes in the second half of the year to its work assignment policies. The municipal government turned control of the program over to the Office for Handling Unemployed Intellectuals (OHUI) in October 1951—previously, most of the directives regarding work assignment had come from either the local Ministry of Education or the upper levels of municipal government themselves.¹⁷⁷ The new OHUI was headed by a local intellectual and Party affiliate named Dai Baitao, who sought to ensure that intellectuals' representatives had a voice in the program.¹⁷⁸ In November, the city government transferred staff from a variety of

¹⁷⁶ *Guanyu shiye zhishifenzi chuli wenti de pifu*, May 29, 1951, B105-5-327-43, Shanghai Municipal Bureau of Education, SMA.

¹⁷⁷ U, "The Making of *Zhishifenzi*," 110.

¹⁷⁸ *Guanyu shiye zhishifenzi chuli wenti de pifu*, May 29, 1951, B105-5-327-43, Shanghai Municipal Bureau of Education, SMA.

other government departments—Civil Affairs, Labor, Human Affairs, and Culture—to the OHUI.¹⁷⁹

Dai and the OHUI began working more closely with the local chapters of the democratic parties—primarily, the China Democratic League—and local teachers’ unions.¹⁸⁰ In addition, the office incorporated the suggestions from the Zhejiang letter by holding a number of conferences with local Party organizations, such as the Youth League and the Women’s Federation, in order to better accommodate the needs of young and female out-of-work intellectuals.¹⁸¹ In addition, the OHUI began to pay more attention to students who had to drop out of school for financial reasons or other hardships. These former students—who were seen as perhaps less “tainted” by the pernicious influence of a non-socialist education than those who already had degrees—were able to find new opportunities to continue their education through the OHUI.¹⁸² As such, the office, like government policy more broadly, was generally responsive to the needs of intellectuals as well as their suggestions. The relationship between the CCP and China’s intellectuals still was not devoid of tension—in particular, local cadres and intellectuals were often at odds—but the overall thrust of the work assignment program suggested a sharp break from the model of Stalinist purges tried briefly after liberation.

The expanded role of the OHUI invited a number of other bureaucratic changes.

Although Dai Baitao had a good deal of agency in managing the day-to-day affairs of the work

¹⁷⁹ *Shanghaishi renmin zhengfu jiaoyu ju guanyu chouzu shanghaishi chuli shiye zhishifenzi weiyuanhui qingkuang Jian Song guicheng banfa biao* *Deng Qing fenbie heding beian cankao de baogao*, November 16, 1951, B1-1-1121-1, Shanghai Municipal People's Government, SMA.

¹⁸⁰ *Guanyu shanghaishi chuli shiye zhishifenzi weiyuanhui zuzhi guicheng caoan de han*, October 8, 1951, B105-5-327-50, Shanghai Municipal Bureau of Education, SMA.

¹⁸¹ *Shanghaishi renmin zhengfu jiaoyu ju guanyu chouzu shanghaishi chuli shiye zhishifenzi weiyuanhui qingkuang Jian Song guicheng banfa biao* *Deng Qing fenbie heding beian cankao de baogao*, November 16, 1951, B1-1-1121-1, Shanghai Municipal People's Government, SMA.

¹⁸² *Guanyu Jiang Xianyou youguan shiye shixue zhishifenzi de cailiao bao bu de tongzhi*, October 16, 1951, B105-5-327-67, Shanghai Municipal Bureau of Education, SMA.

assignment program, the city government still held monthly conferences to place the OHUI's work under review and correct any serious errors.¹⁸³ Although intellectuals were asked to direct their applications directly to the OHUI, the office's work assignments were subject to a "check-and-ratify" (*heding*) process by the municipal government.¹⁸⁴ It is unclear, however, how much oversight the city ultimately choose to exercise over the OHUI's work. The OHUI was subject not only to oversight from above, but also influence from below. As more and more intellectuals signed up for the program, Dai turned to district-level committees to process the flood of applications. District governments in Shanghai would provide a list of approved names to the OHUI, which would then provide in turn a list of assignments within that district. Assignments for any given district had to be approved by both the director and deputy director of the district government.¹⁸⁵ The usage of district governments was probably convenient for the applicants, who wouldn't have had to make a trip into the downtown area to submit their required materials. At the same time, the move tended to lock applicants into whatever district they currently resided—it appears that district committees tended to prefer that unemployed intellectuals be assigned work positions in the same district where they resided.¹⁸⁶

By the end of 1951, requirements for application to the program became stricter. Although cities did not ban non-residents from applying, municipal governments began to place more of an emphasis on official residence (*zhengshi huji*) when considering applications. By 1952, one of the only surefire ways of getting a job assignment for non-resident intellectuals was

¹⁸³ *Shanghaishi renmin zhengfu guanyu chuli shiye zhishifenzi banfa de cailiao*, 1951, B1-1-1122-1, Shanghai Municipal People's Government, SMA.

¹⁸⁴ *Shanghaishi renmin zhengfu jiaoyu ju guanyu chouzu shanghaishi chuli shiye zhishifenzi weiyuanhui qingkuang Jian Song guicheng banfa biao* *Deng Qing fenbie heding beian cankao de baogao*, November 16, 1951, B1-1-1121-1, Shanghai Municipal People's Government, SMA.

¹⁸⁵ *Guanyu chouzu qu chuli shiye zhishifenzi weiyuanhui ji dengjichu de dai shanghaishi renmin zhengfu ni de tongzhi yu han*, 1951, B105-5-327-64, Shanghai Municipal Bureau of Education, SMA.

¹⁸⁶ *Shanghaishi renmin zhengfu jiaoyu ju guanyu chuli shiye zhishifenzi wenti de baogao*, November 14, 1951, B1-1-1121-18, Shanghai Municipal People's Government, SMA.

to be related to someone who was already an official resident—most likely, a spouse.¹⁸⁷ The city of Shanghai published an official handbook for the local OHUI, which detailed a new set of guidelines for administering the work assignment program. With industrial production churning, many cities began to prioritize the expansion of the local education system in late 1951. At the same time, city governments encouraged work assignment boards to subject applicants to more scrutiny of their personal politics than before. In Shanghai, for example, the city proposed a vague classification system—progressive, centrist, retrogressive, or counterrevolutionary—for the OHUI to use. Even right-wing intellectuals were not rejected outright, however, unless they had been guilty of serious crimes in addition to their political leanings.¹⁸⁸ In order to combat the problem of fraudulent applications, Shanghai also stipulated that applicants provide a certificate proving their level of educational attainment (*wenhua chengdu zhengmingshu*). By December, the amount of information that unemployed intellectuals had to provide in their applications was much greater than before, and included their place of birth, years of residence in Shanghai, and information about the school or university where they had gotten their highest degree. In addition, applicants were asked to describe the “political situation” (*zhengzhi qingkuang*) at the school.¹⁸⁹ Anticipating the advent of the Thought Reform Campaign, applicants also had to write “autobiographies” (*zizhuan*) regarding the political beliefs, activities, and affiliations.¹⁹⁰

By the end of the first two years of the PRC era, urban intellectuals were on track to achieving full employment. As discussed in Chapter 1, intellectuals’ career prospects generally suffered after the elimination of the civil service exams in the early 1900s. Fewer intellectuals

¹⁸⁷ *Shanghaishi chuli shiye zhishifenzi weiyuanhui guanyu shanghaishi shiye zhishifenzi shenqing dengji de banfa*, 1951, B130-1-1-7, Shanghai Municipal Committee on Handling Unemployed Intellectuals, SMA.

¹⁸⁸ *Shanghaishi chuli shiye zhishifenzi weiyuanhui gongzuo ren yuan shouce*, November, 1951, B105-5-327-84, Shanghai Municipal Bureau of Education, SMA.

¹⁸⁹ *Shanghaishi quji yishang renmin tuanti wei benshi shiye zhishifenzi chu ju wenhua chengdu zhengmingshu banfa*, December 1951, B130-1-3-4, Shanghai Municipal Committee on Handling Unemployed Intellectuals, SMA.

¹⁹⁰ U, “The Making of *Zhishifenzi*,” 110.

were able to find stable employment, and many grew to resent the lack of opportunities presented by a formal education by the 1940s. As such, the CCP's work assignment programs provided crucial relief to the intellectual class and perhaps helped calm the tensions that existed between the state and the scholarly community. At all levels of government, the state invested heavily in the livelihoods of intellectuals, often assigning them prestigious jobs in schools or factories. Moreover, the work assignment program represented a sharp departure from the Soviet model briefly enacted with the purges of late 1949. Even during the repression of the Thought Reform and Anti-Rightist Campaigns in the later 1950s, the Communist Party rarely abandoned the ultimate goal of political rehabilitation and transformation—not solely punishment—entirely.

Incipient Ideological Refashioning

The idea of thought rectification—as well as its political importance—was long-standing within the Communist tradition in China, dating back to the wartime years. As was discussed in Chapter 1, the CCP undertook tentative steps toward thought rectification work in captured areas as they marched toward Beijing, and ultimately south China, during the civil war. After taking over the country, however, the government realized they simply did not have the resources to commit to instituting a formal campaign of thought reform across the country, and accordingly relied instead on voluntary participation in study sessions. As such, Chinese intellectuals already affiliated with a university (in contrast to those suffering from unemployment, discussed previously) were generally given free rein in imagining the role that intellectuals could play as thought leaders in the new nation for much of 1950 and 1951.

Older scholarship, on the other hand, has generally not taken such a positive view on the agency of intellectuals during these years. In his seminal text on thought reform in the 1950s,

Theodore Chen writes, “to avoid undue harshness at the beginning for fear of arousing violent reaction, the Communist method is to introduce changes gradually. Later, moderation gives way to more stringent measures, and ‘methods of persuasion’ assume a coercive character. Increasing pressure is brought to bear on individuals to ‘persuade’ them to conform ‘voluntarily’.”¹⁹¹ I take a different stance; I see the Communist Party’s hesitation at enacting formal thought reform policies as a matter of necessity based on the realities of limited resources and a lack of uniform control over the university system rather than a form of calculated strategy. Moreover, I disagree that intellectuals were mainly “coerced” by the party at the outset of the PRC era. Examining the editorials and documents produced by intellectuals during 1950 and 1951, I see these works as far more invested in a passionate discussion of the problems of the education system and opportunities for improvement as opposed to cynical rehashing of government slogans. Before there could be formal Thought Reform among intellectuals, there first had to exist a genuine interest in ideological refashioning from below.

To be sure, there was a barrier of entry to publishing anything during this period. Intellectuals who wanted to publish articles levying severe criticism at the party would have been unable to find an outlet in state media for their writings, and simply trying may have invited attention from the authorities. At the same time, the intellectuals who *were* able to find a platform for their views cannot be simply written off as having been “coerced.” Rather, their writings reflect the general interest of intellectuals during the Republican Era in reforming and even revolutionizing the education system, and in expanding the reach of the academy to better incorporate the commoner classes. The first two years of Maoist China thus allowed for the

¹⁹¹ Chen, *Thought Reform of the Chinese Intellectuals*, 12.

blossoming of intellectual activism that had been budding for decades, even alongside the growth of an increasingly authoritarian political culture.

The period was also marked by significant geographic variance. At the epicenter of Communist power—mostly the greater Beijing-Tianjin area—party influence was much greater than elsewhere. Intellectuals living in Beijing, especially, tended to be the most supportive of the state (and also had the greatest access to publishing venues via the conveniently nearby *People's Daily* headquarters), and faced little resistance in organizing voluntary study sessions. Feng Youlan, for example, then the president of Qinghua University, organized a year-long study session with several senior colleagues in the philosophy department.¹⁹² At Beijing University, a faculty member named Luo Changpei chaired the Joint Committee of Faculty and Staff in order to promote self-study and engage in public scholarship.¹⁹³ At the other end of the spectrum, intellectuals far removed from the northeast were able to implement a number of barriers to any attempts at instituting thought rectification policy. In Lintao County, Gansu, for example, the local People's Assembly was dominated by intellectuals, who made up more than 70% of all representatives. As such, cadres had difficulty making any inroads to the local education system, and the county government shut down any attempts at carrying out self-study programs.¹⁹⁴ Until the launching of the actual Thought Reform Campaign, it was impossible to talk about any national attempt at ideological refashioning.

Indeed, the ideal of engaging in “self-study” was vague enough that it took a variety of forms. In some areas, offices that employed intellectuals (usually government bureaus) asked employees to arrive to work a half hour earlier than usual for the purpose of engaging in study

¹⁹² Feng Youlan, *Yinian xuexi de zongjie*, January 26, 1950, LR-SPP.

¹⁹³ Chen, *Thought Reform of the Chinese Intellectuals*, 13.

¹⁹⁴ *Zhonggong zhongyang zhuanfa xibei ju guanyu gansusheng lintaoxian renmin daibiao huiyi de baogao*, January 15, 1950, LR-SPP.

sessions. Some universities experimented with having a formal “political class,” taught by a CCP cadre, who would explain various Marxist concepts such as historical materialism, dialectics, and the history of social development via loudspeaker in school auditoriums. At Qinghua, meanwhile, traveling opera performers staged plays about the importance of thought rectification. One such production, *Sixiang Wenti* (“Thought Problems”), was about a number of intellectuals who were able to combat a number of personal failings—naive pro-Americanism, obsession with high social status, allegiance to the Guomindang, or a lack of a political activist spirit, for example—through collective discussions and self-study. After the play was finished, professors and students engaged in small-group discussions about how to apply these lessons to their own lives.¹⁹⁵ The common thread linking these strategies of conducting informal, voluntary ideological refashioning was a general lack of heavy-handed involvement from the state. Study sessions tended to be relatively informal, and cadres only very rarely attended.¹⁹⁶ To the extent that the national government got involved, it was to rein in overzealous cadres. In Hunan Province, for example, the state accused local cadres of engaging in several “erroneous tendencies” (*pianxiang*): without consulting the opinions of rural peasants, cadres had instead subjected intellectuals to harsh criticism on their own. In addition, cadres had rushed the process of thought rectification by mechanically applying the party’s teachings without ensuring that the lessons had truly been absorbed by local intellectuals. Ultimately, the national government recalled several Hunan cadres in late July of 1950.¹⁹⁷

Intellectuals, for their part, seem to have seized on the moment to advance their own opinions on how education might be reformed. One anonymous editorial (although the writer did

¹⁹⁵ Chen, *Thought Reform of the Chinese Intellectuals*, 12-14.

¹⁹⁶ J. Hutchinson to Bevin, Conditions in China, March 27, 1951, CPR9, 259.

¹⁹⁷ *Hunan bufen diqu zai hui fu yu zheng dun xuexiao jiaoyu gongzuo zhong fasheng yanzhong pianxiang*, July 24, 1950, LR-SPP.

make public their affiliation with a university) published on June 24 criticized the lack of a cooperative spirit among intellectuals. The author suggested that school faculty might engage in increased intellectual collaboration, or even participate in group sports drills. The author also criticized the tendency for intellectuals to only talk with others within their own academic department. In order to best assist the project of national rejuvenation, the author suggested that economists and scientists might engage in joint research projects.¹⁹⁸

The relatively relaxed climate of 1950 changed somewhat heading into 1951, although the fundamental characteristics of ideological refashioning were not altered until the following year. For one, the exigencies of wartime made for a different political calculus of the national government. Instances of sabotage increased state paranoia, which responded harshly through a crackdown on “counterrevolutionary” behavior. State media turned toward the publication of “confessions” by intellectuals, although the practice certainly was not widespread until 1952.¹⁹⁹ Intellectuals generally escaped being targeted by the Suppress the Counterrevolutionaries Campaign, although executions of Guomindang “agents” in Beijing and Tianjin received considerable attention in state media.²⁰⁰ Considering that many intellectuals, especially older professors, may have had some form of relationship with the old regime—if they had not joined the GMD outright—the executions almost certainly could have had some coercive element. Moreover, some intellectuals began to capitalize on the political climate by leveling accusations of right-wing thought or behavior at colleagues they resented—a strategy that would persist through the Maoist period. At Shengfangji Middle School in Shanghai, for example, a number of teachers published an accusation of the principal, Bai Yuheng, for harboring reactionary political

¹⁹⁸ *Zhengwu yuan wenhua jiaoyu weiyuanhui guanyu zhongguo kexue yuan jiben renwu de zhishi*, June 24, 1950, LR-SPP.

¹⁹⁹ Chen, *Thought Reform of the Chinese Intellectuals*, 30.

²⁰⁰ J. Hutchinson, Telegram No. 8, From Peking to Foreign Office, March 2, 1951, CPR9, 166.

beliefs on July 25, 1951.²⁰¹ Although the accusation was short and vague, it foreshadowed a shift to a new culture of academic infighting during the later 1950s and beyond. At the same time, the Suppress the Counterrevolutionaries Campaign and the early use of ideological accusations seem to have had little effect on the broader state of intellectual speech. Plenty still continued to write and publish editorials, and the general character of intellectual writings—focusing on educational reform instead of affirming loyalty to the government—stayed consistent.

Especially as the government began to draw up plans for a formal program of thought rectification heading into 1952, state media published more and more intellectual writings in late 1951. On November 19, for example, an editorial from Ma Dayou built off of earlier criticisms over departmentalism in academia. Ma suggested that academic departments at Beijing University (Beida for short, after *beijing daxue*), where he taught engineering, “had become little cliques, so much so that there are independent blocs within the school.” He painting a bleak picture of the political situation at Beida, where departments were engaged in a heated competition over funding and expenditures. Ma expressed a general openness toward greater state control over higher education, noting that the CCP might provide a better semblance of leadership to bring the warring departments into line.²⁰² Meanwhile, a mathematics professor at Qinghua, Hua Luogeng, criticized the elitist nature of his institution, arguing its sole purpose, historically, had been to provide “education for the gifted” (*tiancai jiaoyu*).²⁰³ As such, Hua and others’ complaints about higher education’s lack of mass appeal dovetailed nicely with the CCP’s wider program of expanding access to education. A primary school teacher in Jiangxi, Xiao Jiajian, drew attention to the poor career prospects of primary school teachers, who usually

²⁰¹ *Jiaojū jiēshǒu Shèngfāngjī shìshèng yāoqiú chéhuān fāndòng xiǎozhāng Bǎi Yùhéng*, July 25, 1951, LR-SPP.

²⁰² Ma Dayou, *Cóng wǒ de sīxiàng tāndào Bèijīng dàxué de gōngzuò*, November 19, 1951, LR-SPP.

²⁰³ Yang Jianqun, *Yīnggāi bǎ jiāoshī sīxiàng gāizào yúndòng tuiguāng dào quánguó*, December 3, 1951, RR.

had few prospects (*meiyou qiantu de*) before taking low-paying work at a primary school. Xiao argued that better pay for teachers could reduce the tendency of the school system to attract “wrong-thinking” (*bu zhengque de sixiang*) individuals.²⁰⁴ Although Ma, Hua, and Xiao’s views were generally supportive of the government and its education policies, the main thrust of their writings was the reform of the academic system. They grew out of the tradition of reformism that had been growing for decades.

Nevertheless, the effect of these writings may have convinced the national government that the time was ripe to abandon the relatively *laissez-faire* oversight of education that had taken root during the previous two years. The government undertook a number of surveys of primary, secondary, and higher education in later 1951. These studies generally revealed weak party control over the education system. For example, a survey of the Beijing school system revealed that the overwhelming majority of teachers and professors had not undergone any sort of political training as of November 1951.²⁰⁵ For most schools, the only exposure students had to party oversight was through textbooks, which were published by the Propaganda Department.²⁰⁶ In nearby Tianjin, a review of the self-study program at local universities revealed significant weaknesses. Because department heads typically organized study sessions, the quality of these reformative meetings varied wildly. The survey suggested that generally, department heads were too willing to criticize others while immodestly promoting themselves. Even when groups were comfortable airing criticism, professors were often quick to defend close colleagues (*huxiang*

²⁰⁴ Xiao Jijian, *Jiangxi pingxiang xian wenjiao jiguan: ying lingdao xiaoxue jiaoshi jinxing sixiang gaizao xuexi*, December 8, 1951, RR.

²⁰⁵ *Beijing shiwei xuanchuanbu guanyu beijingshi zhongdeng xuexiao zhengzhi jiaoyuan qingkuang de jiancha baogao*, November 1, 1951, LR-SPP.

²⁰⁶ *Ibid.* These textbooks introduced state ideology through un-subtle, leading review questions such as “Why does capitalism lead to imperialism, and how are these stages of history ultimately extinguished?” or “Why do imperialist countries necessarily wage wars of aggression?”

tanhu).²⁰⁷ Of course, this was only true of professors who had actually attended a study session. The survey also said that, of Party-affiliated faculty at Tianjin University, only half had ever attended a study session by December 1951. That number was even smaller for non-Party faculty (about 40% had attended a study session). Meanwhile, a tenth of the faculty had neither attended a study session nor expressed any desire to do so in the future. These faculty argued that they simply did not have time to cover the vast amounts of Marxist-Leninist literature the party asked them to study. One professor, Deng Yuemo, for example, said, “The government is already telling me to implement a plan for designing steelmaking furnaces. Now they’re telling me to study on top of that.”²⁰⁸ These surveys—conducted in the generally party-friendly cities of Beijing and Tianjin, highlight the weak control of the state over the education system even in late 1951.

The state’s response to a lack of control was the Thought Reform Campaign, officially announced as far back as September.²⁰⁹ In some ways this is misleading, however; foreign observers did not note the beginning of the campaign until late November, and state media did not draw attention to the campaign’s plans until around then as well.²¹⁰ The campaign began in Beijing and Tianjin in the last few weeks of 1951, and would not spread to the entire nation until the following year. Professors in these cities were expected to stay on campus during the upcoming holiday season and participate in official study sessions. Attendance was no longer voluntary, and cadres took over leadership positions from department heads. Even still, the state proceeded with caution. One of the earliest initiatives of Thought Reform was to “thoroughly confess one’s past with honesty and fidelity” (*zhongcheng laoshi jiaoqing lishi de yundong*)

²⁰⁷ *Tianjinshi gaodeng xuexiao jiaoshi xuexi qingkuang*, November 26, 1951, LR-SPP.

²⁰⁸ *Tianjinshi gaodeng xuexiao jiaoshi sixiang gaizao xuexi xianyu tingdun zhuangtai*, December 10, 1951, LR-SPP.

²⁰⁹ Chen, *Thought Reform of the Chinese Intellectuals*, 31.

²¹⁰ Lamb, Telegram No. 25, From Peking to Foreign Office, November 29, 1951, CPR9, 200.

rather than to instill a broader Marxist-Leninist worldview.²¹¹ Because the party's influence on university campuses was still low, however, it was forced to rely on cooperation with a variety of sources in order to achieve its Thought Reform program. Students, for example, may have been more amenable to the Communists than their older professors. At Qinghua, a student activist named Wei Chenguan energetically helped organize the students to assist in the Thought Reform Campaign, arguing that "our teachers' thorough though rectification can best help us advance." Wei and other activist students wrote big-character posters (*dazibao*) in support of the campaign, organized campus broadcasts, published editorials in campus newsletters and magazines, and distributed political texts to the teaching staff.²¹²

Although student zeal for reform may have been high, the party could not rely on young activists alone. The government realized that the organizations that held the most sway over intellectuals were the minor democratic parties. As such, the government typically allowed minor parties like the Democratic League to take the lead in promoting the campaign. In Guangzhou, the city chapter of the CDL organized a conference for local university professors in December 1951. At the conference, the CDL organized a mock criticism session of a local writer named Qin Mu. Although criticizing Qin's work, the Democratic League also affirmed his righteous and good character quality, thus suggesting that ideological criticism was not tantamount to a personal attack.²¹³ In an editorial published on December 24, Huang Yaomian, the deputy director of the propaganda committee of the CDL's national branch, argued in favor of the Thought Reform Campaign, and committed the resources of the party to helping intellectuals

²¹¹ *Zhongyang guanyu zai xuexiao zhong jinxing sixiang gaizao he zuzhi qingli gongzuo de zhishi*, November 30, 1951, LR-SPP.

²¹² Xi Feng, *Jingjin gaodeng xiaoxue tongxue shi zenyang duidai laoshimen de sixiang gaizao de*, December 3, 1951, LR-SPP.

²¹³ *Minmeng guangzhoushi zhibu juxing daxue jiaoshou zuotanhui jilu—jiehe Qin Mu kangju piping shijian taolun sixiang gaizao bing renzhen pipan xiao zichan jieji zhishifenzi de gerenzhuyi sixiang*, December 16, 1951, LR-SPP.

navigate the campaign. Huang noted that the CDL party leadership had voted unanimously to support the Thought Reform Campaign (as well as the other mass mobilization movements) at a recent conference.²¹⁴ Although the support of the democratic parties probably helped improve popular acceptance of the Thought Reform Campaign, intellectuals still pushed back against too much oversight. At a conference in Shanghai, for example, delegates unanimously approved a proposal by the president of Beida, Ma Yinchu, to allow universities to maintain ultimate authority over the organization of study committees.²¹⁵ It is unclear how effective the proposal was at keeping cadres out of the school system (in fact, it probably was not effective, at least in the long term), it showed that intellectuals were a powerful bloc the state would have to reckon with in its quest for control over the schools.

The scope of the Thought Reform Campaign widened over the course of the month. On December 10, the government announced plans to expand the campaign to include writers and artists, although it pledged to work through the democratic parties much as it had with teachers and professors.²¹⁶ Only five days later, an editorial in *People's Daily* called on medical professionals to follow the emerging Beijing/Tianjin model of Thought Reform.²¹⁷ And on December 23, an editorial from Lin Shiba called on fellow artisans and craft workers to engage in self-criticism and combat arrogance (*zigao zida*; literally, “thinking of oneself as tall and great”).²¹⁸ By the end of the year, the Thought Reform Campaign was in full swing, encompassing all kinds of intellectuals all over the country. Nonetheless, the state’s successes in

²¹⁴ Huang Yaomian, *Cong minzhu tongmeng de xingzhi tandao mengyuan de sixiang gaizao*, December 24, 1951, RR.

²¹⁵ *Huadong wenhua jiaoyujie juxing zuotanhui, taolun kaizhan quanqu sixiang gaizao xuexi yundong, zhengshi chengli huadong “Mao Zedong sixiang” xuexi weiyuanhui*, December 11, 1951, RR.

²¹⁶ Lamb, Telegram No. 1742, From Peking to Foreign Office, December 10, 1951, CPR9, 250.

²¹⁷ Chen Zhenhua, *Gedi weisheng lingdao jiguan: ying zuzhi yiwuren yuan jinxing sixiang gaizao xuexi*, December 15, 1951, RR.

²¹⁸ Lin Shiba, *Wo zenyang renshi he tihui jishujie de sixiang gaizao*, December 23, 1951, RR.

initiating the campaign were based on the cooperation of student groups, professors, and the democratic parties. Moreover, the campaign built off of a burgeoning desire for genuine reform and transformation among intellectuals. Entering 1952, the state still faced resistance, especially outside of its strongholds in the northeast. In Shanghai, for example, a survey conducted at Jiaotong and Tongji Universities revealed that intellectuals were not wholly unsupportive of the Thought Reform Campaign, but they also did not see political study as particularly urgent. One elderly professor encouraged his younger colleagues to attend study sessions while neglecting them himself; “being old,” he said, “I cannot reform myself very well” (*nian lao le, gaizao buhao le*).²¹⁹ In Beijing, meanwhile, over 80% of high school teachers had completed thought rectification work by the end of the year. Cadres had achieved the most successes by praising intellectuals’ roles as “thought leaders” in the new era.²²⁰ For the government, the challenges of expanding the Thought Reform Campaign were significant heading into 1952.

Conclusion

The practical realities of governing China forced the Communist Party to work alongside, rather than fully in opposition to, the intellectual class. The state’s efforts at expanding the education system relied on recruiting more teachers and providing new sources of employment for those facing upheaval after over a decade of warfare. Intellectuals were one of the only classes to offer genuine support for a military invention in the Korean War, especially in the face of protests from commoners. Moreover, the military’s logistics department swelled after a slew of patriotic enlistments by young intellectuals. Back at home, the government sought to redress

²¹⁹ *Shanghai guoli Jiaotong daxue he Tongji daxue daduoshu jiaoshuo dui sixiang gaizao yaoqiu bu poqie*, December 26, 1951, LR-SPP.

²²⁰ *Jingjin gaodeng jiaoshi sixiang gaizao xuexi yundong: di er jieduan xuexi you chengji*, December 30, 1951, RR.

the unemployment crisis, especially among intellectuals, through urban work assignment programs. Although the program took months to formalize, and initially focused only on job assignments to the factories, it ultimately became a major source of relief for intellectuals by the end of 1951. Intellectuals themselves did not take the epochal changes of 1950 and 1951 lying down; instead, they participated in a robust national conversation about the importance of educational reform. They saw opportunities to expand the reach of the education system as well as reform problematic practices, such as department in-fighting, via the leadership of the Communist Party. Toward the end of 1951, as the state turned its attention to the launch of the formal Thought Reform Campaign, it sought to ally with intellectual organizations like the democratic parties and build off of the ideas presented in intellectuals' writings.

As such, two significant conclusions can be drawn about the first two years of the PRC: (1) the central government's position was generally weak, and therefore reliant on genuine support from intellectuals, and (2) state policies were typically designed to promote cooperation rather than conflict with the intellectual class. Over time, the fragile alliance between the state and the intellectuals would bend—although never break entirely—under the weight of mutual suspicion and more aggressive state efforts at imposing controls on the thoughts and behaviors of intellectuals. Nonetheless, events in 1950 and 1951 still set the tone for the rest of the decade. Intellectuals found their voice and participated energetically in the processes of state-building. The new society would belong to them just as much as it did the Communist Party.

CHAPTER 3: THE FORMALIZATION OF THOUGHT REFORM, 1952

The intellectual class, and the nation at large, were both in the throes of great transformation by the beginning of 1952. Many unemployed persons with an education had found work thanks to the state's work assignment program. The program had also changed the face of the intellectual class; in Shanghai, for example, 78.9% of work assignments went to intellectuals below 35 years of age. Over a fourth of applicants were women.²²¹ The archetype of the older, male scholar had undergone serious revision. Meanwhile, the leadership of the Communist Party had seemingly brought the nation back from the brink of collapse, leading to a growth in production figures unseen for over a decade.²²² The state had successfully halted the advance of the American military toward the Yalu River, increased opportunities for and granted rights to women, and combatted inequality in the countryside. It is unsurprising that the regime would therefore be popular heading into 1952, as it moved to expand the Thought Reform Campaign (*sixiang gaizao yundong*) from its stronghold in the Beijing-Tianjin region to the nation as a whole. Moreover, these moves could be accomplished without significant resistance or resentment from the intellectuals under scrutiny from the campaign. Indeed, the previous years had seen an outpouring of intellectual activism regarding the necessity of a class-wide transformation in order to best adapt to the new era. The Thought Reform Campaign built off of previous, spontaneous practices and self-directed study sessions already underway in the universities, thus formalizing and institutionalizing the idea of ideological refashioning.

This is not to imply that the Thought Reform Campaign was not transformative, however. Perhaps more so than any other policy initiative thus far, the campaign provided cover for the

²²¹ *Shanghaishi chuli shiye zhishifenzi weiyuanhui guanyu song fa gequ dengji renshu tongjibiao de han*, 1952, B1-1-1121-93, Shanghai Municipal People's Government, SMA.

²²² Wheat production was growing at a rate of about 10% annually, for example, thus improving access to food and an end to rationing in the cities. See Lamb, Telegram No. 10, May 28, 1952, CPR9, 345.

state assumption of authority over the schools and universities. By the end of the year, party cadres enjoyed top administrative roles in academies across China. As such, the links between the masses and the intellectuals had never been greater. On the other hand, expanded contact was not always for the better. Cadres and party loyalists took charge in the schools and interfered more directly with academics' daily schedules than before. Meanwhile, the Thought Reform Campaign—in particular, the publication of intellectuals' "confessions" in media—popularized the party's one-size-fits-all portrayal of the intellectual class as bourgeois, elitist, disloyal to the regime, and even hedonistic.²²³ Especially in subsequent years, the relationship between intellectuals and uneducated cadres became badly fractured. Moreover, the party's ambitious aims in establishing a beachhead in the school system required further reliance on young students and activists, thus widening the generation gap in education. Some changes were less deleterious, however; the confessions revealed institutional problems of waste and corruption, cleaning up during the Three-Anti Campaign (conducted concurrently with the Thought Reform Campaign; in some areas, the two melded into a single mass movement). And although intellectuals faced unprecedented scrutiny from the state and wider society, actual punishments or career setbacks were extremely rare.

The year began with a nationwide collection effort of confessions: documents written by intellectuals that shed light on previous behaviors or thoughts seen as problematic. For some, that meant financial corruption; for others, that meant normal participation in capitalist profiteering. Although a number of these confessions were published in state media, many more were collected and kept by the party, thus increasing intelligence-gathering on the intellectual class. Over the course of the year, the state began to emphasize cutting waste, corruption, and

²²³ See Eddy U, "The Making of Chinese Intellectuals: Representations and Organization in the Thought Reform Campaign," *The China Quarterly* 192 (December 2007): 977.

“bureaucratism” with the Three-Anti Campaign. Universities and schools tackled many of these problems alongside Thought Reform; indeed, many confessions focused on the writer’s participation in some kind of profiteering racket or scheme. Behind the scenes, the state worked furiously to establish government control of the school system under the cover of Thought Reform. By the end of the year, the state had made dramatic cuts to the number of private institutions, although some still survived. Lastly, the state wrestled with the question of punishment. In almost every case, even intellectuals who confessed to fairly serious errors, such as loyalty to the old Guomindang regime or militant anti-communism, were left alone. That said, cadres on the ground often took a harder line that the national government may have wanted. Over the course of the year, the government had to continue issuing directives to rein in zealous cadres. These four developments show the progression of the Thought Reform Campaign and the alteration of the relationship between intellectuals and the state.

The Rehabilitative Model and the Use of Confessions

Although the immediate origins of the “confessions” (*jiaodai*) were probably the informal “study conclusions” mandated by the Communist Party during previous rectification work in Yan’an, the idea behind them has a long genealogy.²²⁴ Since around the turn of the twentieth century, reformers from across East Asia became interested in new options for prison reform that focused on transformation rather than through punishment alone. For the next fifty years, intellectuals in China, Japan, and Korea proposed new ideas that transformed ideas of incarceration and criminal punishment.²²⁵ The Communists grew out of this tradition, and had a

²²⁴ For a discussion of the study conclusions, see Chen, *Thought Reform of the Chinese Intellectuals*, 59.

²²⁵ Jan Kiely provides a fascinating history of penal reformation (*ganhua*) in China in *The Compelling Ideal: Thought Reform and the Prison in China, 1901-1956* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2014).

chance to apply their rehabilitative goals in the aftermath of World War II. While the Guomindang carried out a significant number of executions of Japanese prisoners of war convicted of war crimes, the CCP sought a different approach. Although a good number of Japanese were executed by the Communists in the immediate aftermath of the war, the party changed course before taking power in 1949. Instead, it would promote the idea of reform through imprisonment and physical labor for Japanese POWs—the goal being to turn “devils back into men.” Confessions were to be extracted at a later date.²²⁶ For the Communists, rehabilitation seemed like a humane alternative to punitive justice. They structured their approach to intellectuals around the idea that, through sincere reflection on the past, intellectuals might genuinely be able to shed their old characteristics.

As such, confessions became the *modus operandi* of the Thought Reform Campaign. Confessions were first used by the party-state informally during a separate mass movement, the Five-Anti Campaign, which targeted the capitalist class. Cadres and inspection teams began to use confessions on an ad hoc basis with Beijing business owners concurrent with the nationalization of the Thought Reform Campaign. The initial response from business owners was panic and alarm (*huangkong buan*); many even fled Beijing and Tianjin for southern cities like Guangzhou. Some even committed suicide rather than submit materials to an inspection team.²²⁷ That said, there was considerably less consternation among intellectuals when asked to submit their own confessions. Theodore Chen speculates that intellectuals wrote confessions with little protest for a variety of reasons: opportunism, patriotism, although most likely simply a sense of

²²⁶ Barak Kushner describes the overall treatment of Japanese POWs in China in *Men to Devils, Devils to Men: Japanese War Crimes and Chinese Justice* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2015), with 248-299 focusing on the Communists' treatment of war prisoners.

²²⁷ *Beijingshi zibenjia kangju wufan yundong de xin huayang: yong “tanbai shu” lai dui fu jiancha zu*, February 8, 1952, LR-SPP.

having to do so in order to keep their heads low.²²⁸ For many intellectuals, however, the process would have seemed familiar; indeed, reformist intellectuals had been pushing for rehabilitative justice for decades. And for many, wrestling with a sense of unease about their own privileges was sincere. As described in Chapter 2, many intellectuals seem to have been genuinely affected by their participation in the Land Reform Campaign and their firsthand experience of rural poverty. Even in memoirs written well after the Thought Reform Campaign, intellectuals like the overseas returnee Zhou Yiliang expressed a sense of “sin” or guilt when meeting the impoverished face-to-face.²²⁹ As such, I tend to read the intellectuals’ confessions as sincere reflections on inequality, class privilege, and the transformative possibilities of a new era.

One of the most common points of self-criticism made in confessions was the “commodification of knowledge” (*chumai zhishi*), as described by Deng Chumin, a member of the Central Operations Committee of the national branch of the Democratic League. Deng wrote a number of editorials urging intellectuals to devote serious energy and attention to the Thought Reform Campaign; indeed, the crucial support of the CDL may have helped the government, which still did not have the kinds of reach that the League had among intellectual communities. Deng Chumin argued that intellectuals had been producing and profiting off of education, writings, and art for “reactionary governments”—the Qing Dynasty, the warlords, and the Guomindang—for decades.²³⁰ Only an intense devotion to the party-state’s mass mobilization efforts could help intellectuals wash away their problematic behavior of the past. Perhaps in a testament to the enduring leadership of the CDL among intellectuals, many early confessions would echo Deng’s point about the commodification of knowledge.

²²⁸ Chen, *Thought Reform of the Chinese Intellectuals*, 69-70.

²²⁹ Cheek, *The Intellectual in Modern Chinese History*, 152.

²³⁰ Deng Chumin, *Minmeng mengyuan ying zenyang juti de jinxing sixiang gaizao*, January 1, 1952, LR-SPP.

A Shanghai professor named Gu Xiegang described his background as having come from a middle-class family, which gave him the opportunity to move to Beijing and attend the prestigious Yanjing University. At the time, the school was a private institution run by Christian missionaries. As such, Gu said he developed an uncritical acceptance of American imperialism.²³¹ During World War II, Gu fled Beijing along with many other intellectuals to inland areas unoccupied by the Japanese. He moved around between cities like Chengdu, Kunming, and Chongqing in an effort to start a new magazine, which focused on topics such as Chinese literature and history. As readership of his publication increased over the course of the war, Gu raised the subscription price. As such, Gu confessed to using his knowledge as a source of capital, having profited off of the nationalist sentiments evoked by the war.²³²

Like Gu, many intellectuals confessed that their backgrounds had exposed them to foreign influence. Wang Guoxiu, the vice-principal at Zhendan University²³³ in Shanghai, described his extensive travels in the United States as part of a multi-year study abroad program. Upon returning to China, Wang accepted a job at St. John's University in Shanghai, another missionary-run school.²³⁴ His classes featured the use of English-language textbooks which portrayed the US and Britain in a favorable light.²³⁵ A professor in the Chinese department at Fudan University, Zhao Jingshen, describes a similar professional experience. Through his time spent abroad, Zhao had become fluent in English, and worked to publish Chinese translations of

²³¹ Gu Xiegang, *Geren sixiang gaizao xuexi zongjie*, January 1, 1952, LR-SPP.

²³² Ibid.

²³³ "Zhendan" is the Chinese name for Aurora University, a private school founded by Jesuit missionaries. The school ultimately closed in 1952 as a result of the Thought Reform Campaign. Wang Guoxiu would have most likely been transferred to the public East China Normal University. See Liu Xian, "Two Universities and Two Eras of Catholicism in China: Fu Jen University and Aurora University, 1903-1937," *Christian Higher Education* 8, no. 5 (2009): 405-421.

²³⁴ In 1952, the university was closed during the course of the Thought Reform Campaign. Many faculty were integrated into East China Normal University, while others went on to work at Shanghai University.

²³⁵ Wang Guoxiu, *Jiancha wo de jiaoxue gongzuo ji chongmei sixiang*, January 1, 1952, LR-SPP.

foreign texts prolifically back in China. Most notably, Zhao was involved in the translation project of Hans Christian Andersen's fairy tales. Over time, however, Zhao says that he became status-obsessed, seeking to "publish prolifically without regard for quality" (*cuzhi lanzao*). All three intellectuals—Gu, Wang, and Zhao—showed an increasing awareness of the confluence of economic privilege and educational attainment, which could then be leveraged to maintain one's social status during the Republican Era.

Not all early confessions were as reflective and remorseful as Gu's, Wang's or Zhao's, however. A confession published in *People's Daily* by a Beijing professor, Jin Kemu, sought to deflect criticism from the author and toward the intellectual class as a whole. Jin spent little time discussing his own "errors," and instead criticized the broader traits of arrogance and individualism among intellectuals. Although many of his colleagues expressed concern about submitting confessions due to potential repercussions to their careers or reputations, Jin argued that dutiful participation in Thought Reform had to take precedence over these anxieties.²³⁶ In another published confession, the scholar Lan Gongwu focused more on championing the Communist Party instead of reflecting on his own shortcomings. Lan had spent most of his life living abroad in Britain, although he said that he had slowly developed a "revolutionary outlook on humanity" (*geming rensheng guan*). However, his support for the government came out of a largely conservative mindset; he said that the CCP alone had been able to bring an end to the cycles of chaos and disorder unleashed by the collapse of the Qing Dynasty.²³⁷ Another *People's Daily* editorial was written by a Beijing intellectual, Wang Shutang, who moved to the city after growing up in a rural village. Wang spent little time discussing his ideology, but instead criticized his "luxurious" life in the city: buying clothes from shopping centers and living in a

²³⁶ Jin Kemu, *Sixiang gaizao xuexi suibi*, January 16, 1952, RR.

²³⁷ Lan Gongwu, *Wo de sixiang gaizao de yixie tiyan*, February 1, 1952, RR.

comfortable apartment, for example. Wang pledged to devote more time to physical exercise and communal well-being.²³⁸ These public confessions may have been intended to create a certain image of the intellectual in the public's eye. Nevertheless, they show little of the genuine self-reflection of other documents from the same period.

The earliest confessions came out of major cities like Beijing, Tianjin, and Shanghai. However, the state put significant effort into expanding the campaign nationwide by February of 1952. An editorial by Deng Chumin on February 3 presaged the expansion of Thought Reform. Unlike his editorial from January, the February piece portrayed the need for ideological rectification work in much starker terms. Deng spent a considerable amount of space repeating Maoist slogans and making sharp injunctions against “Western capitalist and imperialist traditions” that continued to plague China’s intellectual community.²³⁹ Although plenty of intellectuals may have still had concerns about the campaign, the forceful defense of Thought Reform by the CDL helped the campaign migrate. Moreover, intellectuals quickly learned that the Thought Reform Campaign presented opportunities for school reform. In nearby Shandong Province, for example, school faculty were encouraged to freely criticize figures in the administration in addition to self-criticizing and writing confessions. Cadres and provincial government representatives generally made an effort to attend these study sessions, and therefore gained a better understanding of teachers’ perspectives.²⁴⁰

By mid-February, the campaign had arrived at the southwest, considerable number of confessions were collected from Southwest People’s Revolutionary University in Yunnan from

²³⁸ Wang Shutang, *Wo yao zai zheci sixiang gaizao yundong zhong kefu jincheng hou zisheng de tuihua sixiang*, January 9, 1952, RR.

²³⁹ Deng Chumin, *Minmeng mengyuan ying zenyang juti de jinxing sixiang gaizao*, February 3, 1952, RR.

²⁴⁰ Zhang Dagan, *Shandong gaodeng xuexiao jiaoshi sixiang gaizao de xuexi: yi zhuanru fantanwu fanlangfei fanguanliaozhuyi yundong*, February 8, 1952, RR.

both faculty and students alike. Because of the dynamics of the new public people's universities, many students were older, having only been assigned to these schools during the work assignment program of 1950-51 in order to continue their education. As such, students at the university may have felt that they had more baggage in their personal histories that they needed to confess. At the outset of the campaign, students were generally fearful about the campaign. Zeng Chao, for example, feared that writing a confession might get him expelled. And having lived in a five-member household, he worried that expulsion might harm his family's capability to make a living. Despite his misgivings, Zeng saw his fellow classmates dutifully submitting confessions of their own. He wrote that he "tried to come up with something so that my classmates wouldn't doubt me." However, in reviewing the confessions of his classmates, he came to appreciate the extent of wastefulness at the university, which had misappropriated funds to the tune of 152,000 yuan (15.2 new RMB) and wasted 200 catties of surplus rice. Over the course of the campaign, Zeng changed his views and began to inform on other instances of wrongdoing.²⁴¹

The university took these reports of wastefulness and corruption seriously, and combined its conduct of the Thought Reform Campaign with the Three-Anti Campaign (the Three-Anti Campaign and its overlap with Thought Reform is treated more fully in the following section of this chapter). Provost Su announced in a university-wide convention that small-group meetings and large assemblies would be held after the dinner hours to tackle both Thought Reform and the Three-Anti Campaign. The school used a combination of carrots and sticks to elicit confessions from students and faculty. Provost Su announced, for example, that anyone coming forward with relevant information about waste or corruption would be given a special "award" (Su was not

²⁴¹ Zeng Chao, *Wo zai sanfan yundong zhong de sixiang zhuanbian*, February 18, 1952, LR-SPP.

specific about what the award would be) from the provost's office. At the same time, the provost also said that the campaigns would not end unless they had been "thorough," and threatened that "[the university] will not issue graduation certificates until the campaign has succeeded."²⁴² This seemed to serve as a powerful motivation for student section leaders, who urged others to ignore the traditional demands of "face"—that is, to avoid shame or embarrassment by refusing to submit confessions.²⁴³ One student, Lü Peiyan immediately confessed to having engaged in a smuggling operation for Kunming businessmen during 1950, where he ran both gold and opium into the city.²⁴⁴ True to form, Lü was not punished for his confession.

Other students were far more circumspect. Moreover, it appears that many students had not kept up with the shifting tides within the political realm; Qian Sixun, for instance, did not understand that the Three-Anti Campaign was meant to apply to society as a whole. Having originally thought it only applied to party cadres, he described suffering from bouts of anxiety when he realized that everyone at Southwest People's Revolutionary University would be placed under scrutiny.²⁴⁵ Qian ultimately did confess to having engaged in corrupt business practices before enrollment. In his confession, he wrote that he helped the owners of a small shop he worked for hide the extent of their reported income in 1950 to avoid a higher tax rate from the government. And in November of the same year, after he had transferred to work in a cotton factory, he accepted a bribe from the foreman to falsify a report of the factory's annual yield, thus leaving an extra 50 catties of cotton untaxed by the state. The foreman then used the surplus cotton to undercut cotton supplies from official state-approved sources.²⁴⁶

²⁴² Lü Peiyan, *Wo de sixiang shi ruhe zhuanbian de*, February 21, 1952, LR-SPP.

²⁴³ Mayfair Mei-hui Yang gives a thorough account of the Chinese concept of "face" (*mianzi*) and the importance of "relationships" (*guanxi*) in modern Chinese history in *Gifts, Favors, and Banquets: The Art of Social Relationships in China* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1994).

²⁴⁴ Lü Peiyan, *Wo de sixiang shi ruhe zhuanbian de*, February 21, 1952, LR-SPP.

²⁴⁵ Qian Sixun, *Wo xuanze le tanbai de daolu*, February 21, 1952, LR-SPP.

²⁴⁶ *Ibid.*

The situation at the university became more serious by the end of the month. On February 25, Provost Su announced that a student had committed suicide rather than submit confession materials.²⁴⁷ The somber announcement may have helped relax the tense atmosphere at the school, with some students realizing that submitting confessions produced little to no punishment. Chen Yongxi, for example, had previously “turned a deaf ear” (*zhiruo wangwen*) to the administration’s call for confessions and self-criticism. After the provost’s announcement, however, he said that he realized this was not the outcome that Mao Zedong or the Communist Party would have wanted. Chen was convinced that the party earnestly wanted to help care for the student populace, and believed that engaging in self-criticism was the best way to prepare students for life in the new society. As such, Chen resolved to “atone for his sins” (*shuzui*). He confessed to stealing from a grain office in Yanshan County, Hebei in order to provide enough money for a childhood friend to return home (Chen’s friend was serving in the PLA). Chen also ratted out a classmate who had stolen money from their own workplace in order to host a dinner party in Xichou County, Yunnan.²⁴⁸

Other students came forth with their own confessions after the February 25 announcement from Provost Su. Pu Zhongyun, for example, confessed that he had skimmed funds off the top of production figures along with his colleagues while working as a secretary in an agricultural cooperative in Hekou County, Yunnan.²⁴⁹ Another student, Ding Zhifu, described his experiences working on socialist construction projects in the countryside. He had secretly hoarded supplies like rice and firewood for himself, sometimes exchanging these commodities with villagers for favors. He cultivated a relationship with the local landlord, for example, and

²⁴⁷ Chen Yongxi, *Tihui le dang he Mao zhuxi de weida wo tanbai le!*, February 25, 1952, LR-SPP.

²⁴⁸ *Ibid.*

²⁴⁹ Pu Zhongyun, *Ban diao xinzhong de da shitou*, February 25, 1952, LR-SPP.

traded rice and firewood for the landlord's private supply of alcohol and meat.²⁵⁰ The increased participation in Thought Reform after February 25 may have also affected other students who were previously content to watch the campaign from the sidelines. Long Jian, for example, described having little emotional attachment to the Communist Party before the start of the campaign. Long was a member of one of the recognized ethnic minorities—the Miao people—and only wanted the campaign to end so he could visit relatives in Myanmar over the holiday. However, Long described developing an intense zeal for the campaign and a deepening allegiance to the Communist Party after witnessing the extent of the corruption and waste revealed by the confessions.²⁵¹

It is difficult to say how genuine these confessions were. To be sure, practices such as skimming funds off the top were no doubt widespread, but students—especially Zeng Chao and Qian Sixun—described an intense pressure to confess to *something*. Others may have intentionally inflated the extent of their illegal activities in order to satisfy the administration's desire for a spectacular, cathartic process of self-criticism. Qian ultimately confessed to hiding over 10 million yuan's worth of taxable revenue (1,000 new RMB) from the government, for example. Even if the content of the confessions might invoke some skepticism, however, the broad effects are less doubtful. The practice of engaging in self-criticism and submitting confessions seems to have built upon itself; the more students participated in the campaign, the more popular the campaign became. This led to even more confessions in the long run, and the cycle repeated. Although perhaps some students may have only participated opportunistically, the broad thrust of the confessions reveal a widespread wrestling with the ideas of status and

²⁵⁰ Ding Zhifu, *Sanfan yundong ba wo jiuchu le huokeng*, February 25, 1952, LR-SPP.

²⁵¹ Long Jian, *Sanfan yundong zhong de wo*, February 25, 1952, LR-SPP.

intellect. And, moreover, these confessions demonstrate a desire for a new era—one marked by a more harmonious, cooperative relationship between intellectuals and commoners.

By March, the campaign was in full swing at Southwest People’s Revolutionary University. The vast majority of the student body had submitted confessions. Zhang Bingming confessed to relatively minor crimes in his document, describing his tenure as section chief at Yaolong Electric Company in Guangdong Province. About a dozen workers left to join the PLA, and many experienced fighting in Korea. Upon returning home, the electric company could not afford to give them their old jobs. However, Zhang illicitly stole enough money from the company to give each returning soldier 300 yuan.²⁵² Wang Zhengyao, meanwhile, expressed remorse for his haughty actions toward fellow villagers back on his family’s plot. One night, Wang was out hunting with his dog, who he let run free without a leash (*luanpao*). That evening, however, the dog spotted another villager’s calf and killed it. The other peasants promptly reported this incident to the local Public Security Bureau, although it is unclear if Wang or his family ever received much punishment.²⁵³ These later confessions reveal a collective reckoning with the idea of a fractured relationship with the masses. Moreover, they appear in a climate much different than in previous months, where few students were even willing to submit confessions. As one student described, the prevailing attitude in previous months was “you criticize yourself, I’ll criticize myself.”²⁵⁴ By the end of March, however, the campaign had blossomed into a nationwide, all-encompassing movement of transformation.

Confessions continued to come in throughout the rest of the first half of 1952. Many subsequent confessions, having drawn on the model of earlier documents from February and

²⁵² Zhang Bingming, *Wo xuanze le guangming de daolu*, March 20, 1952, LR-SPP.

²⁵³ Wang Zhengyao, *Geda ba wo you fangeming de silu shang la le huilai*, March 20, 1952, LR-SPP.

²⁵⁴ Shao Nianying, *Geda qiangjiu le wo!*, March 20, 1952, LR-SPP.

March, described a renewed vigor for activism among the intellectual class. In some cases, confessions not only led to no punishment, but could even serve as a conduit for career advancement. Yu Deyuan, for example, confessed to seeking “status” and “celebrity” through academic publications alone pre-liberation. After 1949, however, Yu had been swept up in mass enthusiasm for the new era, and signed up to serve as an adviser to a natural resource survey team. In thanks for his service, he was appointed to the position of vice-principal at Northeast Geological University.²⁵⁵ Xu Zhilun, head of the Irrigation Department at Jiaotong University in Shanghai, had a similar career path that diverged after liberation. Unlike Yu, Xu refused the opportunity to work at a hydroelectric engineering bureau in Sichuan. He said that he preferred his “cozy, carefree lifestyle” (*shushi he anxian de shenghuo*) in the city. However, his own teaching assistants criticized him during the Thought Reform Campaign, leading to Xu submitting a formal confession.²⁵⁶ More so than many other confession documents, Xu’s demonstrates the power of young, politically-engaged scholars who found unprecedented freedom to criticize their elders.

As the Thought Reform Campaign died down over the course of the year, a number of university administrators reflected on the campaign. Chen Yuan, president of Furen University (which was merged a number of other Beijing schools, like Renmin University, Beijing University, and Beijing Normal University before the end of the year), praised the Communist Party for “accomplishing a decade’s worth of national construction in under three years.” He also expressed extreme confidence that “everyone” at his school had completed their duties in the Thought Reform Campaign, leading to a campus-wide transformation. Whereas one professor had previously argued that “in order to make a living, self-interest must come first” (*wo yiqie*

²⁵⁵ Yu Deyuan, *Pipan wo de “mingliu xuezhe” sixiang*, May 18, 1952, LR-SPP.

²⁵⁶ Xu Zhilun, *Pipan wo de zisizili de gerenzhuyi sixiang*, July 14, 1952, LR-SPP.

weile fanwan, geren liyi diyi), faculty and students were now committed to public welfare.²⁵⁷ The president of Renmin University, Wu Yuzhang, echoed these comments in November. Wu said that students and faculty at his school were learning from the model of Soviet intellectuals. Wu also noted that students who had participated enthusiastically in the Thought Reform Campaign were better able to find good jobs in government bureaus around the country.²⁵⁸ In Wu's analysis, the campaign had begun to parallel the civil service exams from the imperial era—a barrier of entry to state service. Perhaps intellectuals could once again regain their previous role as scholar-bureaucrats, but they would have to undergo significantly different patterns of preparation and study to do so.

The confessions served as the bread and butter of the Thought Reform Campaign. These documents represent a more formal approach at expressing the ideas that had been growing among academic circles since before liberation, however—in particular, the idea that scholars' primary goal should be establishing a connection with their communities and working in the public interest. Through the campaign, these ideas passed from a few committed activist scholars to the wider intellectual community. At the same time, the confessions created a certain stigma around intellectuals by defining their class character as out-of-touch or arrogant. And within universities, the pressure to confess may have exacerbated tensions between generations of scholars, as was the case with Xu Zhilun. Both for better and for worse, the campaign and the confessions turned the idealistic vision of ideological refashioning into a formal, government-directed mass project that encompassed all corners of the academic world.

²⁵⁷ Chen Yuan, *Sixiang gaizao zai Furen daxue*, June 1, 1952, LR-SPP.

²⁵⁸ Wu Yuzhang, *Xuexi sulian zhishifenzi de bangyang, jiji canjia zuguo de jianshe—shiyiyue qiri zai zhongyang renmin guangbodiantai de guangbo ci*, November 8, 1952, RR.

Combatting Waste and Inefficiency during the Three-Anti Campaign

The Three-Anti Campaign (*sanfan yundong*), which officially targeted waste, corruption, and “bureaucratism” (*guanliao zhuyi*) initially had little to do with the Thought Reform Campaign. Indeed, the first seeds of the campaign were planted in mid and late 1951, when Mao Zedong began to fear that the seizure of urban China had led to a dampening of the revolutionary enthusiasm of the cadre class. For Mao, the capture of political power was “only the first step in a march of 10,000 *li*” rather than an end unto itself. The chairman became despirited as reports from urban China rolled in that described the extensive favor-trading and brokering taking place between urban cadres and local businesses and intellectuals. Fearing that urban cadres had begun to mirror the same the corrupt practices the CCP had criticized Guomindang state administrators for, the government launched the Three-Anti Campaign in December 1951.²⁵⁹ In other cities, especially southern areas like Shanghai or Guangzhou, the CCP had been forced to recruit heavily from populations initially wary of the Communist Party, and who had extensive contact with foreigners. These cadres too were seen as potentially disloyal and in need of rectification.²⁶⁰

Early Three-Anti Campaign meetings usually were either classified as “criticism sessions” or “struggle sessions.” During criticism sessions, cadres would confess their own shortcomings before a small audience of coworkers. Usually, self-criticism was sufficient; however, if their colleagues felt they did not fully own up to their mistakes, they would chime in with their own criticism. Struggle sessions were far more serious, however, and usually involved intense denunciations from a mass audience. Although not permitted by official guidelines, there were reports of physical abuse occurring during struggle sessions.²⁶¹ As such, the Three-Anti

²⁵⁹ Lieberthal, *Revolution and Tradition in Tientsin*, 154.

²⁶⁰ Cell, *Revolution at Work*, 50.

²⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 102.

Campaign was conducted, initially, in a far different environment and with far different methods than the Thought Reform Campaign. However, in the time span of only a few months, the two began to overlap. Many of the confessions submitted by intellectuals, envisioned to focus mostly on ideological errors, also revealed instances of corruption and waste within the school system. As such, these instances of wrongdoing prompted a more thorough state supervision of schools and universities to root out corruption under the auspices of the Three-Anti Campaign.

Although the Thought Reform and Three-Anti Campaigns were still distinct programs in early 1952, the state began to turn to the mobilization of student activists in late January. The government mandated that end-of-semester exams would be cancelled for the Fall Semester. Cadres on the ground would capitalize on students' time off to encourage them to conduct discreet investigations into any wrongdoing on behalf of their teachers, local government officials, or the business community.²⁶² In Beijing, these student-led investigations revealed widespread waste at schools and universities. A total of 684 teachers and professors were identified as "corrupt" in a report submitted in early February. Moreover, it appeared that universities had stockpiled far too many materials for use in scientific laboratories. Beida, for example, had secretly been letting a large quantity of vitamin B sit in a storeroom. At Qinghua, students uncovered a trove of unused copper sulphate.²⁶³ The February report spawned a renewed effort to investigate waste in the school system, and revealed an effective strategy for doing so: reliance on pro-CCP student activists.

By the end of the month, schools and universities around China had begun conducting the Three-Anti Campaign. As discussed in the previous section, student confessions from Southwest

²⁶² Lamb, Telegram No. 3, January 29, 1952, CPR9, 330-331.

²⁶³ *Beijing shiwei guanyu beijingshi ge daxue sanfan douzheng de qingkuang he jingyan de baogao*, February 1, 1952, LR-SPP.

People's Revolutionary University reveal a good deal of corrupt dealings. Students confessed to financial crimes like smuggling, misrepresenting a business' finances as a form of tax evasion, and stockpiling of luxury items. These confessions too may have influenced the central government to press further with the Three-Anti Campaign in an academic context. Theodore Chen has shown that, in previous months, universities transformed the Three-Anti Campaign and the tangentially-related Five-Anti Campaign into broader struggles against "bourgeois ideology," which became a defining feature of the reorganization of the education system. Teachers and professors constantly had to grapple with previous support for anything that could be labelled "bourgeois"—which was seen as fundamentally retrograde or reactionary.²⁶⁴ Over time, however, the campaign crystallized around more concrete objectives, perhaps partly in response to the actual instances of waste being reported in government investigations and the confessions. An editorial in *Guangming Daily* (a newspaper aimed at an intellectual readership) signals this change, describing the extent of waste in China's education system. Ultimately, the waste in Beijing was calculated to be equivalent to about 34 jet fighters—the contextualization of the costs of waste in a military sense may have been more effective for an audience well aware of the intense fighting in nearby Korea. Around the same time, an exhibit on the Three-Anti Campaign revealed the systemic problems of waste in the capital. The Beijing College of Engineering had wasted hundreds of millions of yuan on scientific instrument sets simply to match the supply cache at Qinghua.²⁶⁵ Ultimately, the national government came to see the Three-Anti Campaign as relevant within an academic context.

A full government report on the state of waste in the education system came out on March 15. The report suggested that the norm at many schools and universities was that the

²⁶⁴ Chen, *Thought Reform of the Chinese Intellectuals*, 53.

²⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 54.

administration lacked any real oversight authority over spending and acquisitions, which were generally handled by individual academic departments.²⁶⁶ In this regard, the report echoes many of the criticisms intellectuals themselves were making of the education system. It was not uncommon for university faculty to complain about inter-department competition, which in turn may have had financial repercussions for the school as a whole. Moreover, departments that spent more were generally able to attract better talent from across the country; the state report expresses a general cynicism about intellectual careerism, criticizing professors for “running wherever there are higher wages and better jobs” (*kandao nali xinshui gaojiu xiang wang nali pao*). The national government thus noted that students would have to be mobilized in order to effectively carry out the Three-Anti Campaign on college campuses.²⁶⁷

Less than two months later, however, the government went further. During March and April, local propaganda departments had increasingly turned toward combining the Thought Reform and Three-Anti Campaigns in schools and universities. Local bureaus ultimately possessed more authority in handling the day-to-day affairs of carrying out the campaigns, although they were still subject to oversight from the national government. In May, the government officially directed bureaus to expand the Three-Anti Campaign by merging it with the already-underway Thought Reform Campaign.²⁶⁸ Prominent intellectuals like Li Da, president of Hunan University, voiced strong support for the merger.²⁶⁹ The first official directives regarding the merger of the two campaigns came out later that month, when the national government issued a set of instructions to schools after having submitted their

²⁶⁶ *Zhonggong su nanqu weiyuanhui guanyu zhixing zhongyang ji huadong ju zai zhongdeng yishang xuexiao jinxing “sanfan” yundong yu sixiang gaizao de jihua he bushu*, March 15, 1952, LR-SPP.

²⁶⁷ *Ibid.*

²⁶⁸ *Zhongyang xuanchuanbu dui huabei ju xuanchuanbu guanyu zhongdeng xuexiao jiaoshi sixiang gaizao yu zuzhi qingli wenti de fu shi*, May 1, 1952, LR-SPP.

²⁶⁹ Chen, *Thought Reform of the Chinese Intellectuals*, 54.

confessions for review. The next step was to “check inventories and materials” (*qingdian zicai*).²⁷⁰ In the second half of 1952, the lines between the two campaigns blurred considerably in schools and universities.

Unfortunately, less data exists on the conduct of the Three-Anti Campaign than the Thought Reform Campaign. Unlike the latter, with a wealth of evidence coming from confessions and government surveys, there is less of a rich body of source material on the former. As such, it seems likely that the national government exercised little oversight over the process after its initial steps to merge Thought Reform and the Three-Anti Campaign. As such, schools and universities might have had little incentive to undergo a thorough process of rooting out waste and corruption. Teachers, meanwhile, were likely exhausted by the frantic pace of mobilization campaigns. Many had foregone a vacation to assist in carrying out Land Reform; nearly everyone had not taken vacation time to undergo Thought Reform and prepare confession materials. As such, many intellectuals had the first opportunity to take a genuine break from work in years during the summer of 1952.

The evidence that exists describing the Three-Anti Campaign tends to support the idea that objectives were completed quite quickly. At the Central Arts School in Beijing, for example, reported that all rectification work relating to both Thought Reform and the Three-Anti Campaign had been completed by July. The report notes that the college identified 103 million yuan’s worth of waste, and that the administration had cut the budget accordingly. Moreover, the college described the frequent practice of outright plagiarism from American magazines. As such, the administration urged faculty and students to realize that “art could not be separated from politics” and to reject ideas emanating from the United States.²⁷¹ Campaign activities also

²⁷⁰ *Shanghai diyi, erpi gaodeng xuexiao jiaoshi sixiang gaizao qingkuang*, May 28, 1952, LR-SPP.

²⁷¹ *Zhongyang meishu xueyuan huadong fen yuan sixiang gaizao zongjie*, July 1, 1952, LR-SPP.

did not take particularly long at Jiaotong University in Shanghai, for example, which completed rectification work in three months. The university did admit to serious overstocking issues; the chemistry department, for example, had acquired 300 years' worth of metal antimony (according to 1951 rates of usage).²⁷² These reports do suggest that waste was a significant problem nationwide, although it appears that university administrations took steps to quickly resolve the problem without requiring faculty to sacrifice yet another vacation period. By the start of the fall semester, the government's attention had turned to the question of how to deal with the errors and crimes exposed by Thought Reform and the Three-Anti Campaign.

Ultimately, the Three-Anti Campaign was a relatively minor chapter within the broader story of Thought Reform. That being said, the conduct of the campaign reveals a number of key conclusions. First, it shows that state policy was multifaceted; that is, government initiatives responded to conditions on the ground just as much as imposing ideological dictums from above. Second, the campaign demonstrates the continuing reliance of the state on young intellectuals in order to accomplish its objectives vis-a-vis education reform, thus accentuating and maybe even widening the generation gap among scholars. Third, the publicization of findings on waste and corruption in the school system further helped promulgate the party's vision of the intellectual community and the problems within the school system. For many commoners, the reports on millions of yuan going to supplies left unused in university stockrooms no doubt soured them further on the intellectual community. The party's efforts to establish direct control over the school system thus became further justified in light of these findings.

The Expanding Reach of the State on Campuses

²⁷² *Jiaotong daxue sixiang gaizao yundong zongshu*, August 1, 1952, LR-SPP.

Upon taking control of the country, the Communist Party had far too much on its plate to effectively govern the school system. By 1952, however, the party had made strides in a number of other areas, from marriage law reform to agrarian policy to the military intervention in the Korean War. As such, the time was ripe for the state assumption of power in the nation's schools and universities by 1952. Moreover, the Thought Reform Campaign gave impetus to the takeover efforts. In order to ensure that intellectuals adequately fulfilled their required duties or studying, criticizing themselves and others, and submitting confessions, cadres would have to be installed in the schools; previously, without much enforcement authority, participation in study sessions was mostly voluntary and not near universal. The confessions exposed a need for transformation in the party's view—and perhaps the view of the working classes as well. Cadres would be needed in order to ensure that intellectuals' work reflected the catharses reporting in the confessions. Moreover, the party would need a say in school administrations in order to cut budgets and provide leadership for recalcitrant departments. The government's goal was to establish a rational, hierarchical system of national education along Soviet lines, thus dividing the nation into six major education regions (North, Northwest, Northeast, Central South, East, and Southwest), each with its own fair share of high-quality institutes of learning. The state hoped to prioritize the study of heavy industry in China's schools to stimulate the industrialization of the Chinese hinterland.²⁷³ Although the takeover of education remained unfinished by the end of the year—and the expansion of state authority was hampered by plenty of resistance from below and hesitation from above—the CCP enjoyed a dramatically enlarged say in the affairs of China's schools and universities by 1953.

²⁷³ Hayhoe, *China's Universities*, 80-82.

Until 1952, the biggest contribution of the CCP to the education system was through the work assignment program, discussed in Chapter 2. The program ultimately led to an expanded faculty roster at schools and universities, where many newcomers had reason to express gratitude for the state. In Shanghai, for example, local work assignment bureaus provided teaching assignments for thousands of female scholars. Many of these women were previous housewives, but had husbands who worked in the city. As such, they tended to stay at home with their children and live in one of the suburbs or villages around Shanghai. The party's work assignment program not only provided them with jobs of their own, but allowed housewives to relocate to an area convenient for both them and their husbands, thus facilitating better childcare.²⁷⁴ The work assignment program was a key first step in the process of asserting control of the education system. Without the goodwill the party had built up among previously-unemployed scholars, academic workers might not have been as willing to accept the state's directives and reforms.

During the first half of 1952, the state focused more on the expansion of the Thought Reform Campaign instead of establishing control of the schools. Although the campaign was well underway among academics, other non-academic intellectuals (such as artists or professionals) generally remained unaffected by the campaign at the start of the year. Often, the party used favorable coverage or critiques from party-friendly intellectuals to justify an expansion of the campaign into other professional circles. An editorial in *People's Daily* from January 9, for example, provides support for party authority over the arts. Chang Xiangyu, a professional actor, said that his acting troupe was able to perform productions that they wanted to put on (namely, *Mulan* and *Tale of the White Snake*) thanks to government support. Chang also noted that many of his colleagues had learned to read and write thanks to the state's literacy

²⁷⁴ *Shanghaishi chuli shiye zhishifenzi weiyuanhui guanyu song fa gequ dengji renshu tongjibiao de han*, 1952, B1-1-1121-93, Shanghai Municipal People's Government, SMA.

campaigns.²⁷⁵ Less than two months later, the party also expanded the Thought Reform Campaign among filmmakers in partnership with the Shanghai Filmmakers' Alliance.²⁷⁶ At the end of April, the state seized upon a scathing editorial written by Dai Nianci, an architect frustrated with the general practice of shoddy workmanship (*tougong jianliao*). Dai argued that poor construction and a lack of architectural standardization were the result of "old bourgeois values." The government agreed, and actively pushed the Thought Reform Campaign among the architect community.²⁷⁷ Although the primary focus of the campaign was always the education system, the government similarly used the campaign to solidify its control of other professions during the first half of 1952.

During the second half of the year, however, as the campaign began to wind down, the party turned its attention to a comprehensive takeover of the school system. These efforts began in earnest in May, when the national government distributed a set of instructions to local and provincial bureaus throughout the country. Each private university or school had to work with a party-affiliated work team in order to carry out the Thought Reform Campaign. However, the new instructions greatly expanded the agenda of these work teams. Per the report, the work teams were tasked with setting up "base-level committees" (*jiceng weiyuanhui*) and "core groups" (*hexin zu*) within the school, each staffed with party members or party-allied intellectuals. These groups and committees would in turn accept the "practical leadership" (*shiji lingdao*) of the overseeing work team.²⁷⁸ Work teams were responsible for reviewing all the findings submitted by the core groups and base-level committees, and had to mediate any

²⁷⁵ *Chang xiangyu zhengqu zaori juanxian feiji yijia bing yuan chedi jinxing sixiang gaizao*, January 9, 1952, RR.

²⁷⁶ *Zhongyang xuanchuanbu guanyu Shanghai lianhe dianyingzhipian han de fangzhen wenti de zhishi*, March 1, 1952, LR-SPP.

²⁷⁷ Dai Nianci, *Women jianzhushi yao renzhen de jinxing sixiang gaizao*, April 27, 1952, RR.

²⁷⁸ *Zhongyang pizhuan Jiang Nanxiang tongzhi guanyu Yanjing, Furen er daxue qingli zhongceng gongzuo de baogao*, May 1, 1952, LR-SPP.

conflicts that arose within. If a group or committee uncovered any serious political errors or crimes, the work teams would then have to forward any relevant information to the local Public Security Bureau office. Although submission of materials to the police was serious, work teams appeared to have taken this step very rarely. In Yanjing and Furen Universities in Beijing, for example, the affiliated work teams only submitted a combined amount of 50 cases to the Public Security Bureau out of thousands. Moreover, very few intellectuals were removed from their jobs due to a police investigation.²⁷⁹ These administrative reforms explain the effectiveness of the Thought Reform Campaign, especially when compared to the informal study sessions of 1950-51. Even still, there were limits to the reach of the state. At Yanjing and Furen, for example, about 10% of faculty managed to escape submitting confessions.²⁸⁰ Nonetheless, the government had created a method for infiltrating the school system by the middle of the year.

Intellectuals were divided over how receptive they were to the party's intrusion into the education system. Although intellectuals appear to have broadly accepted the party's directives on thought reform, the state takeover of the schools provoked less consensus. Government reports blasted older intellectuals for "thinking of themselves as extraordinary" (*ziju teshu*) and "putting on airs" (*baijiazi*), using these characteristics as explanations for why some intellectuals may have opposed the nationalization of education.²⁸¹ It is unnecessary to accept the government's prejudices, however, to understand why many may have been more skeptical of the state's education policies. For many older professors, they were raised in an environment when the path to academic attainment was relatively exclusive and difficult—as such, a system of mass education almost certainly would have led to a reduction in status, coupled with an

²⁷⁹ Ibid.

²⁸⁰ Ibid.

²⁸¹ *Shanghai gaodeng xuexiao jiaoshi xuexi yundong de qingkuang*, May 20, 1952, LR-SPP.

intense increase in workload. Even with the work assignment program, it is unclear if the hiring of new education professionals kept pace with enrollment increases. Outside of major coastal cities, intellectuals tended to put up greater resistance to the state's efforts. Although the overwhelming majority of intellectuals in Beijing or Shanghai submitted confessions, the rate of submissions across China was only between 60% and 70% by mid-1952.²⁸² Even in Shanghai, moreover, government documents indicate a noticeably lower inflow of submissions in Beijing (although exact figures were not given).²⁸³ Unlike with the launching of the Thought Reform and Three-Anti Campaigns, the party-state had to confront the geographic limits of its power as it moved beyond the campaigns and sought to bring the majority of China's schools under the purview of the state.

As was common in other avenues of policy implementation, the government turned to building alliances on the ground in order to accomplish its objectives. Allying with student groups or other organizations often forced the state to moderate its approach or provide incentives to encourage cooperation. In the Chinese Academy of Sciences, a research institute in Beijing, for example, the state had minimal influence on the inside. As such, it could only coordinate campaigns within the academy through cooperation with the democratic parties, which had much more influence among high-ranking scientists. On the other hand, the minor parties argued that there could be harmful "counter-effects" (*fan xiaoguo*) from Thought Reform, and persuade the state to adopt a more moderate line: scientists should not reject all previous scientific theory, but rather work to understand the relationship between theory and practical

²⁸² *Zhonggong zhongyang guanyu zai gaodeng xuexiao zhong pipan zichanjieji sixiang he qingli "zhongceng" de zhishi*, May 2, 1952, LR-SPP.

²⁸³ *Shanghai diyi, erpi gaodeng xuexiao jiaoshi sixiang gaizao qingkuang*, May 28, 1952, LR-SPP.

utility.²⁸⁴ In the northeast, similarly, the party found itself with a relatively limited influence among most schools in the region. The best option, the government concluded, was to incentivize students to inform on their teachers by offering admittance into the Youth League in exchange for relevant information on others.²⁸⁵ Even then, a severe shortage of cadres in the region meant that the local propaganda department had to work through independent school administrations and teachers' unions.²⁸⁶ These alliances allowed the government much greater influence outside of its centers of power, but there was a cost. Some intellectuals could moreover seize upon the climate to advance their own careers, whether they were students who could gain easy admission into the Youth League or democratic party members who could trade a stake in policymaking in turn for providing influence among intellectuals.

As the state continued to implement its takeover policies throughout the summer, it fine-tuned its appeal to intellectuals. Although there was a sizeable contingent of intellectuals identified as “progressives”—those who supported the party and were committed to socialist ideology, the party’s popularity in the schools also depended on winning over some classified as “centrists” or even “retrogressives.” At Yanjing University, only recently nationalized, party cadres came in with instructions to focus on emphasizing nationalism over socialist ideology in winning over the faculty. Rather than discussing class or capital, cadres instead focused study sessions on patriotic zeal, criticizing the common belief that “America is number one in the world, while nothing works in China” (*meiguo shijie diyi, zhongguo yiqie buxing*).²⁸⁷ One of Mao’s personal advisers, Chen Boda, made an appeal to scientific experts through a speech at the

²⁸⁴ *Zhongyang guanyu zai kexueyuan jinxing sixiang gaizao yundong de fangzhen wenti gei huadong ju xuanchuanbu de fu shi*, June 1, 1952, LR-SPP.

²⁸⁵ *Dongbei ju xuanchuanbu guanyu dongbei qu zhongdeng xuexiao jiaoshi sixiang gaizao gongzuo jihua de baogao*, June 1, 1952, LR-SPP.

²⁸⁶ *Ibid.*

²⁸⁷ Xie Changkui and Luo Han, *Qinmei chongmei sixiang zenyang qinshi le Yanjing daxue*, July 3, 1952, LR-SPP.

Academy of Sciences, noting that the new era was “an opportunity for the extensive application of scientific knowledge” in order to promote national reconstruction efforts. Chen also used his connections within the party to press the leadership to acknowledge that the revolution could not have succeeded without key support from intellectuals.²⁸⁸ Chen also made a pragmatic pitch for the party-state, arguing that the CCP alone provided the security necessary to industrialize—a feat that neither the Qing Dynasty nor the Guomindang could accomplish. In other words, according to Chen, now was the intellectual’s chance to contribute to a real national transformation.²⁸⁹ These various efforts from the party realized that it had to adopt new strategies to convince intellectuals that the nationalization of education would be beneficial. Influence also went both ways; just as the state changed the national environment scholars operated in, scholars mediated the state’s approach and policy priorities.

During the fall semester, the state continued to press forward with efforts to expand its control of the education system, while still working with academic workers on the ground. These efforts were generally successful, particularly in cementing the loyalty of student activists. At Shandong University, for example, professors remained broadly supportive of the American model (even if they supported the Resist America, Aid Korea Campaign). Previously, the extent of party influence had been through textbooks; cadres would criticize the usage of “out-of-date” materials in the classroom, and then require professors to use texts produced by the Central Propaganda Department. However, hundreds of applications were streaming in from students eager to join the Youth League, allowing cadres to harness young scholars to promote the party line.²⁹⁰ The central government doubled down on its appeal to young intellectuals by instructing

²⁸⁸ Chen Boda, *Chen Boda zai zhongguo kexueyuan yanjiu renyuan xuexi hui shang de jianghua*, July 18, 1952, LR-SPP.

²⁸⁹ *Ibid.*

²⁹⁰ *Shandong daxue sixiang gaizao yundong zongjie baogao*, August 1, 1952, LR-SPP.

work assignment bureaus across the county to assist recent graduates in finding employment, alongside those suffering from long-term unemployment.²⁹¹ Moreover, the state promoted an overall expansion of the work assignment program for intellectuals. In Shanghai, the Office on Handling Unemployed Intellectuals had added 116 new cadres since its inception in late 1951. Many of these cadres had been temporarily assigned from other bureaus, such as Work Affairs, Human Affairs, or the Labor Employment Office. The objective was to distribute talent optimally by relying on the specialized knowledge of these cadres.²⁹² Work assignment bureaus became increasingly willing to assign intellectuals to work in other parts of the country in order to guarantee fulfilling employment; in Shanghai, for instance, the work assignment office began deploying out-of-work intellectuals to the northeast or Inner Mongolia by the end of 1952.²⁹³ As such, intellectuals could generally expect to find fulfilling, good careers where they could apply their expertise most optimally. The favorable climate for intellectuals did much to soften the blow of the state's education policies.

The state also reviewed the conduct of the Thought Reform Campaign and encouraged policy changes to better address the concerns of the participants. In Shenyang, the capital of the northeastern Liaoning Province, a report analyzed the shortcomings of Thought Reform efforts during the previous summer. Although the state had opened the door to the employment of female scholars in the school system, party cadres were sometimes insensitive to the needs of women while conducting thought rectification work. Many women employed by the Shenyang school system were expected to shoulder the burden of childcare during the summer in their

²⁹¹ Lamb, Telegram No. 19, August 29, 1952, CPR9, 355.

²⁹² *Shanghaishi renmin zhengfu renshi ju guanyu tongyi shanghaishi renmin zhengfu gongwu ju tongguo laodong jiuye weiyuanhui ji shiye zhishifenzi dengjichu wuse xishou de sishiliu ming ganbu de fuhan*, October 9, 1952, B23-4-691-83, Shanghai Municipal Human Affairs Office, SMA.

²⁹³ *Shanghaishi renmin zhengfu renshi ju guanyu tongyi zhonggong zhongyang renmin zhengfu jiaotong bu Shanghai qu gangwu ju xiang chuli shiye zhishifenzi weiyuanhui wuse liushiba ming ganbu de fuhan*, November 18, 1952, B23-4-691-139, Shanghai Municipal Human Affairs Office, SMA.

families, and could not do so adequately while they were on campus participating in Thought Reform. As such, the city government provided free nursery care for the children of female intellectuals so they could study.²⁹⁴ Although these policies met approval from the central government, the state also criticized the insistence of local cadres on long study sessions, which were taxing on pregnant women, women who had recently given birth, or professors of advanced age.²⁹⁵ The Shenyang report also described successes in improving the day-to-day lives of intellectuals; campaigns to eliminate pests like bed bugs or mosquitos were seen as a means of improving intellectuals' sleep.²⁹⁶ Ultimately, the report demonstrated the successes of working alongside intellectuals and the drawbacks of cadre inflexibility.

On October 17, the national Ministry of Education released a report on developments within the school system thus far, as well as a five-year plan for deepening state control of the education system. The report is a testament to the rapid changes that had occurred over the course of the previous few years—many of them during 1952 itself. University enrollments had increased by 218.2% since the Communist victory in late 1949, with 95 new colleges or universities having been constructed. Enrollments in secondary school were relatively similar, increasing by 230.4%. However, the number of newly-constructed secondary schools vastly exceeded the number of new universities, with the government building 3500 new secondary schools around the country.²⁹⁷ The Ministry of Education agreed with the central government's initiatives to find work for unemployed intellectuals, and argued that the construction of new schools would open up more jobs for intellectuals. At the same time, the new hires would be

²⁹⁴ *Zhongyang xuanchuanbu pizhuan huadong, dongbei guanyu zhongdeng xuexiao jiaozhiyuan sixiang gaizao gongzuo de liangge wenjian*, September 1, 1952, LR-SPP.

²⁹⁵ *Ibid.*

²⁹⁶ *Ibid.*

²⁹⁷ *Zhonggong zhongyang pizhuan jiaoyubu dangzu guanyu jiaoyu wenti de sige baogao*, October 17, 1952, LR-SPP.

subject to increased scrutiny. The Ministry of Education instructed all local government branches to periodically review the work and research of intellectuals, as well as direct the practical application of intellectuals' talents through cadre-training and promoting mass literacy.²⁹⁸

Over the next five years, the Ministry described a plan to achieve near-full state control of the education system. First, foreign-owned private schools would be prioritized for nationalization, followed by domestically-owned academies. In general, the Ministry also prioritized the takeover of schools with poor achievement and/or funding over those in a better situation. Moreover, secondary schools would be nationalized before primary schools. In the case of private schools catering to ethnic minorities, the Ministry pledged to hold off on full nationalization, although the state would provide supplemental financial assistance and assume control over any schools that "volunteered." Lastly, although the plan ultimately left few schools outside of the state apparatus, the Ministry did pledge to not discriminate against or ignore schools that remained private.²⁹⁹ This ambitious agenda was feasible due to the expansion of the education system, the work assignment program, and the formalization of the Thought Reform Campaign.

The state of education had thus changed dramatically by the end of 1952 in contrast with the beginning. Enrollments in both secondary and higher education had more than doubled over the past three years, with thousands of new institutions under construction. The state also approved a method for establishing control of the school system that relied on infiltration through contacts and alliances with party-friendly sources on the inside. This meant that school institutions' autonomy all but disappeared by the end of the year. Intellectuals' salaries and benefits were now directly under the state's purview. The kind of self-directed study system that

²⁹⁸ Ibid.

²⁹⁹ Ibid.

had thus far predominated would have been impossible after 1952. Although scholars would face nearly unprecedented scrutiny over their professional lives, thoughts, and work after 1952, not all effects of the state takeover of education were negative. Intellectuals were able to gain a seat at the policymaking table through strategic alliances with cadres on the ground. Those identified as “activists,” particularly students, could expect rewards and favorable career prospects in exchange for service to the party. Lastly, it would be a mistake to assume that the nationalization of education also implied a standardization of experience. Outside of Beijing, the party faced more challenges in extracting confessions and asserting control. Cadres thus were even more reliant on cooperation from intellectuals on the ground. The options for intellectuals to have a say in the future of their school and the nation as a whole did not disappear alongside school autonomy during the course of the year.

A Question of Punishment: State Responses to the Confessions

With the state exercising an unprecedented degree of control over the schools, and a litany of “wrongdoings” exposed via the confessions as well as the Three-Anti Campaign, the question of what to do about wayward behavior among intellectuals naturally became a focus of the party center during 1952. Ultimately, the state settled on a policy of doing very little beyond carrying out the Thought Reform Campaign. The most severe cases—intellectuals labelled as “reactionaries” or “counterrevolutionaries”—were generally handled by submitting biographical information to the local Public Security Bureau, although few if any corrective actions were ever taken. At the same time, there was no nationwide universal standard for handling problematic intellectuals. The national government had to rely on cadres to enforce discipline in the school system outside of Beijing, and many of these cadres had significantly worse personal or working

relationships with the intellectuals they oversaw than the national government did. As such, 1952 saw the beginnings of a divide between policy from the center and implementation on the ground. In almost all cases, any gaps usually came from cadres being harsher than the state may have wanted them to be. A number of government instructions from the year appear to have been in direct response to cadre overreach, sternly telling party workers on the ground to back off from an overly confrontational approach to managing the schools. Overall, the question of punishment reveals a relatively lenient climate for intellectuals at this juncture.

Of course, there were also geographic differences between standards of punishment as well. It was not uncommon for intellectuals critical of the CCP to flee from the eastern littoral zone inland after 1949, suggesting that cadres in western China may have been confronted with far less amicable scholars than their colleagues along the coast. A report from the Northwest Bureau at the beginning of 1952, for example, suggests a climate of severe paranoia among local cadres about intellectuals. Having surveyed 775 universities and schools in the region, cadres noted that 53.3% of teachers and professors had previously held membership in a “reactionary political party”—most likely, the Guomintang. As such, cadres painted a dire portrait of the situation, saying that there were reactionaries “hiding in the dark” (*anzhong qianfu*) throughout the northwest region.³⁰⁰ Since local work teams also had the final authority in setting an agenda for Thought Reform, northwest cadres settled on a significantly more thorough program of rectification work that would last the entire year (some schools on the coast, by contrast, completed Thought Reform duties in a matter of months). During the first half of the year, intellectuals in northwestern schools would be required to participate in individual study

³⁰⁰ *Xibei ju xuanchuanbu guanyu 1952 nian zai xuexiao zhong jinxing sixiang gaizao he zhengzhi jiaoyu wenti de baogao*, January 1, 1952, LR-SPP.

programs. Group study sessions would be held throughout the second half of 1952.³⁰¹ The report from northwest demonstrates both the authority given to local administrators in carrying out the campaigns, as well as the willingness of cadres on the ground to go beyond the instructions of the party center.

Requiring a year-long commitment to rectification work was highly irregular, however. In May, as the state made plans to cement control over the school system, the party center published a set of guidelines for taking over private universities in Beijing. The document proposes a “don’t pursue, don’t compel” (*buzhui bubu*) policy with regards to getting intellectuals to attend study sessions or submit confessions.³⁰² It would be a mistake to say that the state’s approach was non-coercive, however; it is clear that plenty of pressure, perhaps from peers just as much as cadres, fell on intellectuals to perform their Thought Reform duties. At the same time, there were at least some limits to the extent of coercion the national government was willing to tolerate. In Beijing, for example, about 11% of intellectuals ultimately refused to submit confessions—a small number, but not insignificant.³⁰³ The party was also careful to not alienate intellectuals even as it leveled criticism at them. In a publicized case from April of a right-wing scientist at the Academy of Sciences, Le Tianyu, cadres suggest that Le may have been insulated from the problems of the masses due his landlord background. Moreover, the party gave explicit instructions that Le would have a chance to stay at the academy and reflect on his political positions rather than being cast out.³⁰⁴ Ultimately, the response favored by the state was to promote rehabilitation rather than punish or imprison wrongdoers or those with

³⁰¹ Ibid.

³⁰² *Zhongyang pizhuan Jiang Nanxiang tongzhi guanyu Yanjing, Furen er daxue qingli zhongceng gongzuo de baogao*, May 1, 1952, LR-SPP.

³⁰³ Ibid.

³⁰⁴ *Zhongguo kexueyuan zhibu dahui duiyu Le Tianyu tongzhi suo fan cuowu ji dui qi chufen de jueyi*, April 1, 1952, LR-SPP.

“incorrect” ideologies. Although the overwhelming majority of intellectuals were willing to cooperate, those that refused to do so probably did not face serious backlash until later in the Maoist period.

In some cases, party cadres were more concerned with rewards than punishment. A report from a number of schools in the southwest—Chongqing University, Southwest Normal University, and Southwest Work Specialization University—praised the diligence of the professoriate in carrying out Thought Reform work. As such, regional cadres proposed that these universities be allowed to “rapidly go through” (*xunsu guoguan*) rectification work, completing the campaign in a couple of months.³⁰⁵ The report also said that no explicit punishment would be recommended for those with “serious problems” in their political histories. Indeed, cadres held out an olive branch to right-wing intellectuals, describing the case of the professors Wu Mi and Liu Pu. Although both were extremely opposed to the CCP at the outset of the Maoist period, both gradually shifted their views over the course of the next three years.³⁰⁶ As such, Wu and Liu served as models for the possibility of genuine transformation. Although it is unclear if this climate of leniency persisted throughout the wider southwestern region, it is clear that some schools and universities had relatively painless experiences of the Thought Reform Campaign.

A report from Nanjing University from around the same time describes a different approach cadres took under different circumstances. Nanjing cadres expressed a general sense of wariness about the university’s faculty, 29% of whom had materials that were ultimately submitted to the Public Security Bureau. Cadres were apparently concerned that the apparent progress made during Thought Reform was transient, and thus instructed professors to keep

³⁰⁵ *Xinan ju xuanchuanbu guanyu Chongda, Xishi, Xigong sanxiao laoshi sixiang gaizao gongzuo de baogao*, July 1, 1952, LR-SPP.

³⁰⁶ *Ibid.*

personal diaries detailing their old habits and patterns of thinking. The idea was that these diary entries could help “overcome the forgetting of old habits” (*kefu danwang de jixi*).³⁰⁷ Unlike in Beijing, Nanjing cadres had difficulty getting a majority of professors to submit confessions; roughly 30% of campaign participants ultimately refused to provide biographical materials to the authorities.³⁰⁸ Even still, it is unclear if many of these intellectuals were punished or removed from their jobs. The case of Nanjing University represents a sort of middle road, where cadres remained wary of intellectuals but only carried out relatively benign corrective actions—in this case, the writing of diary entries.

The national government took a few steps to rein in overzealous activity at the local level. In a memorandum submitted on July 25, the state laid out new guidelines expressly prohibiting the incarceration or physical torture of any intellectuals, no matter the extent of their counterrevolutionary history.³⁰⁹ It is difficult to know whether there were many instances of torture or imprisonment used against scholars. The report itself cites no specific cases, nor do academic studies from the time.³¹⁰ To be sure, those identified as “counterrevolutionaries” outside of an academic context may have faced incarceration, torture, or execution (especially if they were found to have committed crimes against the state, such as sabotage). It is possible that some intellectuals may have been caught up in the concurrent Suppress the Counterrevolutionaries Campaign, and punished accordingly. That said, available source material at the time cannot confirm how widespread the use of physical punishment was for intellectuals. Either way, it is significant that concrete protections for intellectuals were

³⁰⁷ *Nanjing daxue, Jinling daxue sixiang gaizao yundong zongjie baogao*, July 15, 1952, LR-SPP.

³⁰⁸ *Ibid.*

³⁰⁹ *Zhonggong zhongyang pizhuan dongbei ju guanyu zhongdeng xuexiao jiaoshi sixiang gaizao yu zuzhi qingli gongzuo de guiding*, July 25, 1952, LR-SPP.

³¹⁰ See Chen, *Thought Reform of the Chinese Intellectuals*, 71.

established as a result of the July 25 guidelines. The government established similar guidelines with respect to medical personnel in particular, noting that they could not be considered the same as “general intellectuals” (*yiban zhishifenzi*) due to the critical nature of their work. Although less specific than the July 25 guidelines, the Central Propaganda Department told local branches to “avoid agitation” (*buyao gudong*) when pushing for medical professionals to undergo Thought Reform.³¹¹ Although little to no evidence exists of severe punishments being levied against intellectuals, both academics and non-academic intellectuals enjoyed expanded legal protections from local cadre overreach by the second half of the year.

As the Thought Reform Campaign came to a close at the end of the year, regional bureaus submitted work reports detailing how local intellectuals responded to the campaigns as well as whatever further corrective steps provincial or municipal governments were planning to take. In the northeast, most evidence indicates a generally successful implementation of the Thought Reform Campaign. As previously indicated, the regional bureau successfully recruited a number of students to assist in carrying out both Thought Reform and the Three-Anti Campaign, leading to a speedy process; rectification work was completed in only 45 days.³¹² The Northeast Bureau released guidelines on punishment for intellectuals by the end of October, although these instructions were extremely vague. In cases where an intellectual may have “committed great evils” (*zuida eji*) or those who possessed “blood debts” (*xuezhai*) could be subject to incarceration—although no specifics are given about what specific actions might constitute a “great evil” or “blood debt.”³¹³ More likely, these stipulations may have become more relevant in

³¹¹ *Zhongyang xuanchuanbu dui zai yiwuren yuan zhong jin xing sixiang gaizao wenti de tongzhi*, August 7, 1952, LR-SPP.

³¹² *Zhonggong zhongyang pizhuan dongbei ju guanyu zhongdeng xuexiao jiaoshi sixiang gaizao yu zuzhi qingli gongzuo de guiding*, July 25, 1952, LR-SPP.

³¹³ *Zhongyang pizhuan dongbei ju xuanchuanbu guanyu chuli you zhengzhi lishi wenti de zhongxue jiaoshi de jixiang guiding*, October 28, 1952, LR-SPP.

the future, when old actions could come back to haunt intellectuals, for example, during the Anti-Rightist Campaign of 1957. Ultimately, the state gained critical information over the vast majority of intellectuals, which could then be used as leverage or even to discredit them at a later date. At the time, however, there is no record of active steps taken against right-wing intellectuals in the northeast. As long as intellectuals were willing to “confess” their previous ideological errors (even if the authorities suspected that intellectuals were not sincere in these confessions), the most they might deal with in the short term was increased supervision.³¹⁴

Reports from other regional bureaus echo the Northeast Bureau’s insistence on the highly-subjective standard of sincerity. In the southwest, records show that intellectuals “capable of being honest” (*nenggou tanbai*) about any previous shortcomings or flaws would not be punished in any form. Similar to the northeast, the Southwest Bureau adopted a wait-and-see approach with intellectuals who were deemed unrepentant, which involved allowing them to keep their jobs.³¹⁵ The central government was quick to use this lenient policy as a model for other regional bureaus; the party center forwarded the report from the southwest to other regional bureaus, praising their wait-and-see approach for “not raising the masses’ misgivings” (*yimian zengjia zunzhong yili*) and instructing other bureaus to “take note” (*jiayi zhuyi*).³¹⁶ In areas where intellectuals were generally seen as in need of further thought rectification, party officials would rely on simply extending the Thought Reform Campaign instead of using punishment. In Shaanxi, for example, the provincial party committee was unsatisfied with the rate of progress in carrying out Thought Reform, and established special study branches (*xuexi fenhui*) that would continue rectification work through the end of the year and into 1953 if necessary. The provincial

³¹⁴ Ibid.

³¹⁵ *Zhongyang pizhuan xinan ju zhongxue jiaoyuan jixun chuli yuanze de zhishi*, October 1, 1952, LR-SPP.

³¹⁶ Ibid.

government exerted active oversight over the special study branches by deploying section chiefs (*kezhang zhuanmen*) from the provincial state apparatus to oversee meetings.³¹⁷ Although these moves may have continued the overall disruption of intellectuals' lives, it was clear that regional party branches could not stray too far from the national government's line, which emphasized leniency and a conservative approach to dealing with problematic intellectuals.

The Thought Reform Campaign was ultimately an exercise in self-reflection and self-criticism, and involved few real consequences at this juncture. There is scant evidence that any significant number of intellectuals lost their jobs, faced incarceration, or were subjected to physical torture as a result of the campaign. Communications between regional party branches and the state do suggest that local cadres may have had a dimmer view of the intellectuals under their charge, although in every documented case the regional, provincial, or municipal party branches acquiesced to the central government's instructions to pursue a lenient approach in dealing with intellectuals. The worst a local government branch might do was usually just to extend the duration of the Thought Reform Campaign within its area, which is indicative of an overall bloodless—if also disruptive and inconvenient—method of handling problematic scholars. In the long term, however, the relationship between local cadres and intellectuals soured. The memory of Thought Reform fresh in their minds, where student activists were critical to the successful implementation of the campaign, cadres increasingly grew to suspect older intellectuals of being incapable of reform.

Conclusion

³¹⁷ *Shaanxi shengwei guanyu jieshu jiaoshi sixiang gaizao gongzuo de tongzhi*, September 1, 1952, LR-SPP.

Compared to the first two years of PRC history, 1952 was significantly more eventful. Confident after overcoming the worst crises of 1950-51, the CCP launched steps to transform the education system and enshrine party rule in the schools. A necessary precondition for institutional transformation was transformation of the individuals within first—and thus, the Thought Reform Campaign was spawned. Intellectuals had been engaging in self-directed study and even some group criticism for some time, but the campaign made these meetings mandatory. And intellectuals had to go much further than the past, writing and submitting confessions that detailing their class background, political history, and any crimes or ideological mistakes they had committed. These confessions tend to suggest a willingness to wrestle with the ideas of class inequalities and their own privilege. Moreover, they informed the state of genuine problems of corruption and waste within the education system, prompting the party to expand the concurrent Three-Anti Campaign into the schools. Over the course of the year, implementing these campaigns required greater formal authority over the schools. Slowly, campaign teams infiltrated school and university administrations, gradually taking control of the majority, if not all, of China's schools in just a year's time. With the nationalization of education accomplished, the state could then begin to think about what punitive measures might be taken against intellectuals in light of the errors and crimes revealed in the confessions and in the Three-Anti Campaign. The central government consistently urged subnational branches to take a lenient approach; the worst an intellectual might face would be having their information forwarded to the local Public Security Bureau and facing increased supervision from party cadres. But—perhaps to the chagrin of local cadres, who grew an increasing distaste for intellectuals—no intellectuals faced any meaningful, officially-sanctioned punishment.

The year thus saw huge changes with respect to the education system and the daily lives of intellectuals, although nothing like the excesses of the later Anti-Rightist Campaign or, especially, the Cultural Revolution in the next decade resulted. The party had managed to nest itself inside institutions of learning, but the lesson of the past years had not yet been forgotten: succeeding in policy goals required the government to work alongside intellectuals rather than in opposition. Cadres on the ground would have been unable to collect confessions or establish control of school administrations without the willing support of some intellectuals, especially student activists. Often, young intellectuals who cooperated had to be enticed with the promise of Youth League membership, which could bolster long-term career prospects. Arguably, the entire idea of the Thought Reform Campaign could never have been implemented without the spontaneous popularity of ideological refashioning in previous years. All this being said, however, the year fundamentally changed the dynamics of the relationship between intellectuals and the state. Moving forward, the government would be far more visible to China's scholars, who now worked for local cadres in the school administrations. And no matter what the central government's broader plans were for intellectuals, the relationship would be mediated by cadres on the ground, who showed signs of desiring to take a harder line with intellectuals than the national government may have been comfortable with at the time. The year thus saw the sowing of the seeds of conflict that would continue to grow over the rest of the decade.

CHAPTER 4: CRISSCROSSING AGENDAS, 1953-1955

In theory, everything should have calmed down after 1952. The Communist Party had reshaped society in a few short years, transforming both urban and rural spaces along socialist lines. Party cadres exercised unprecedented authority over the school system, effectively ending the long predominance of private academies in Chinese history. Intellectuals, who had suffered from a long decline in standards of living and a severe unemployment crisis, found stable jobs both in and outside of academia. However, the 1953-1955 years were far from calm. The party-state continued to deal with the fallout of the Thought Reform Campaign, and it slowly began to realize how deeply-rooted the conflict between cadres and intellectuals truly was. For intellectuals, who had generally been supportive of—or at least open to—the CCP’s policies began to chafe under the harsh regimens of their new administrations. Scholars who had been greatly affected by their experiences in campaigns like Land Reform, offered support for intervention in the Korean War, and who had organized spontaneous study sessions in advance of the formal Thought Reform Campaign, gradually soured on the state. As the organs of state governance expanded and deepened, intellectuals sought out new avenues of voicing their discontent.

The mid-1950s thus represent a critical juncture in the decade, as all three primary actors—the party-state, cadres on the ground, and intellectuals—increasingly became aware of the divergences in their interests. Government policies in the second half of the decade would have to grapple with cadre resentment of what they perceived as disproportionate privilege among the intellectuals, as well as intellectual dissatisfaction with workloads and standards of living. Ultimately, the turmoil bubbling beneath the surface in the 1953-55 years spawned a number of widely different attempts by the party-state to deal with the “problem” of

intellectuals—from appeasement in 1956, to repression in 1957, and ultimately to a strange synthesis at the end of the decade. A view from the top would suggest that the party’s policy shifts were planned from the start; as Mao Zedong described in an early 1957 speech, the Communists’ favored format for resolving issues between the state and the people was “unity—criticism—unity” (*tuanjie—piping—tuanjie*).³¹⁸ In reality, however, this formula belies the ambiguities exposed during the 1953-55 period, during which the party-state had to wrestle with the crisscrossing priorities of both its cadres on the ground as well as the intellectuals it identified as key to national reconstruction.

The Communist Party, its cadres, and intellectuals—both inside and outside of academia—all went through significant changes from 1953 to 1955. The CCP initially backed off of its intense focus on establishing supervision of intellectuals’ lives of 1952, preferring a more hands-off approach. For 1953 and much of 1954, the CCP continued to try and rein in the excesses of the Thought Reform Campaign, all the while taking stock of the actual political ramifications of rectification. Over time, however, the state came to grips with the worsening relationship between cadres and intellectuals, to the extent that it felt that it had to act. The government did so awkwardly, promoting criticism campaigns against “rightist” intellectuals like Hu Feng or Hu Shi before shifting gears and attempting to bring cadres and intellectuals closer together in 1955. Overall, the party-state realized that it would have to take a proactive approach to education and intellectual policy in order to ameliorate the tensions on the ground. Cadres, meanwhile, grew increasingly resentful of intellectuals, who they saw as elitist, out-of-touch, and recalcitrant. As intellectuals’ standards of living did improve in the aftermath of Thought

³¹⁸ Mao Zedong, “On the Correct Handling of Contradictions among the People,” February 27, 1957, Marxists.org, https://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/mao/selected-works/volume-5/mswv5_58.htm (Accessed February 1, 2019).

Reform, cadres began to express frustration at the advantages scholars had over commoners—particularly in light of the linkages between generational wealth and intellectual status, as discussed in Chapter 1. Intellectuals, meanwhile, seized upon the more lenient climate and began to push for improvements in their livelihoods. Through petitioning government offices or working through their *danwei* (work unit), intellectuals engaged in a new bout of activism with the intent of improving their and their families' standards of living.

The Maturation of the State's Policies toward Intellectuals

From the beginning, the year 1953 showed signs of significant changes from the previous ones. A government memorandum from the beginning of the year, addressed toward cadres working in the school system, indicated that the Thought Reform Campaign was only “temporary” and “should not become a universal facet” (*buyi pubian jianli*) of college life.³¹⁹ Although the Thought Reform Campaign was never meant to last forever, the January memorandum shows a willingness of the party center to confront overly punitive cadres, who may have extended the rectification movement as a sort of punitive measure (see Chapter 2). There were probably two major reasons for this policy shift. First, the state had good reason to feel confident at the outset of 1953. It had nearly fought the United States, the most powerful military in the world, to a standstill in Korea, and national reconstruction was proceeding spectacularly. Overall production figures had at last surpassed those from 1936, just before the Japanese invasion at the outset of World War II. Landholdings were equalized, and the currency was stable.³²⁰ Second, the state had come to grapple with the dark ramifications of the Thought

³¹⁹ Zhongyang dui xibei ju “guanyu jiaqiang dang dui gaodeng xiaoxue lingdao de jue ding” he “guanyu jiaqiang geji dangwei dui zhong, xiaoxue lingdao de jue ding” de zhishi, January 1, 1953, LR-SPP.

³²⁰ Lamb, Dispatch No. 15, January 7, 1953, CPR9, 412-413.

Reform Campaign. Although the CCP had generally encouraged cadres to punish intellectuals sparingly, and had in most cases prohibited violence or incarceration, the central government was not all-powerful. Reports from the northwest in February 1953 indicated that two professors from the region, Ding Xinwu and Li Xiaomin, had died from stress-induced illness and suicide, respectively. Alarmed by these reports, the central government issued instructions that all municipal and provincial branches should ensure the material well-being of the intellectual class.³²¹ The state's attention had been roused to the plight of the intellectual class, although it saw little need for transformative policy changes at this point.

Nevertheless, the government still made an effort to rein in sub-national organs of government. On the heels of the report from northwest regarding the deaths of Ding and Li, the CCP Central Committee released a more detailed set of instructions of February 2, calling on all party members to “attentively listen” (*qingting*) to the “shouting” (*husheng*) of the intellectuals. The Central Committee then suggested that local party members ought to “resolve the reasonable demands” (*jiejue heli yaoqiu*) of scholars.³²² The February 2 memorandum represents a shift in the state's policies toward intellectuals, although not necessarily a sea change. The government had consistently maintained that one of the most effective ways of transforming the class consciousness of the intellectuals was through generational change, and the February 2 instructions reaffirmed that approach. The report called on all local branches to admit young intellectuals into the Youth League *en masse*, barring any findings of serious political errors.³²³ This report led to institutional changes on the ground. In Shanghai, for example, where the

³²¹ *Zhongyang xuanchuanbu pizhuan xibei xuanchuanbu guanyu Shaanxi Weinan sucheng shifan yihai jiaoshi shengming de tongbao*, February 1, 1953, LR-SPP.

³²² *Zhonggong zhongyang guanyu jiaqiang xiaoxue jiaoshi zhengzhi sixiang jiaoyu de zhishi*, February 2, 1953, LR-SPP.

³²³ *Ibid.*

Office on Handling Unemployed Intellectuals was wrapping up its work, a separate Youth Committee was established within the office to focus on providing for young intellectuals and channeling their energies into the Youth League. The Youth Committee had expanded into every municipal district by the end of March.³²⁴ The first few months of 1953 suggest that the party center was willing to recalibrate its short-term policies toward intellectuals, although less so its long-term strategies. The extent of the problem had yet to reveal itself.

One critical change at this juncture was the promulgation of the work unit (or *danwei*) system. *Danwei* refers to a social organization based on one's area of employment that was in turn responsible for meting out benefits like food, salaries, and housing. Although historical scholarship on the origins of the *danwei* is inconclusive, it seems that they were formally established at some point in the first few years of the PRC.³²⁵ In February 1951, the architect of early PRC labor laws, Li Lisan, passed a series of provisions regarding medical care, disability pay, and retirement pensions. These reforms likely led to the formation of the *danwei* system.³²⁶ In terms of my own research, the historical record shows no mention of *danwei* representing intellectuals until 1953. The *danwei* produced a unique interplay of state, small organization, and the masses unlike the system that existed in the Soviet Union. In Communist China, municipal governments rarely owned more than 10% of the housing in the cities they governed; instead, the

³²⁴ *Shanghaishi chuli shiye zhishifenzi weiyuanhui guanyu yu guohua tongzhi linshi diaolai de han*, March 26, 1953, B23-4-549-13, Shanghai Municipal Human Affairs Office, SMA.

³²⁵ Xiaobo Lü argues that the *danwei* emerged out of supply pooling groups among PLA units during the civil war as well as World War II in "Minor Public Economy: The Revolutionary Origins of the *Danwei*." Elizabeth J. Perry argues that the *danwei* emerged out of labor union cells in "From Native Place to Workplace: Labor Origins and Outcomes of China's *Danwei* System." Wen-hsin Yeh instead draws attention to the role of white-collar work associations (such as the one in the Shanghai branch of the Bank of China in the Republican Era) as a possible origin source in "The Republican Origins of the *Danwei*: The Case of Shanghai's Bank of China." Kenneth M. Straus suggests that the Chinese Communists looked to the factory management organizations in the USSR as a source of inspiration for the *danwei* in "The Soviet Factory as Community Organizer." All are in *Danwei*, edited by Lü and Perry.

³²⁶ Perry, "From Native Place to Workplace," in *Danwei*, 45.

danwei controlled the other 90% and took on the responsibilities for housing their employees.³²⁷ For the state and its municipal sub-branches, the *danwei* were a convenient answer to the problems of governance. *Danwei* allowed for the state to forego expenditures on costly bureaus (such as a national housing administration), centralize economic planning objectives, and ensure a simplified mechanism of purchasing and distributing foodstuffs.³²⁸ For intellectuals in particular, the formation of the *danwei* was beneficial in creating an organ of governance with a responsibility, in theory, to be responsive to their needs. Over the course of the 1950s, intellectuals increasingly turned to their *danwei* to voice their concerns and express frustrations with their standards of living.

Municipal governments began to wrap up their work assignment programs in the second half of 1953. As time had wore on, unemployed intellectuals were able to have more of a say in the process of finding a job, although only indirectly. The rise of the *danwei* allowed for representatives to provide some degree of oversight over the assignment process.³²⁹ As cities had begun to fill up, however, municipal work assignment bureaus began deploying intellectuals to the nation's peripheral areas. In Shanghai, for example, hundreds of intellectuals were assigned to work posts in Inner Mongolia during 1953. The *danwei* representing intellectuals could influence assignments through submitting information about an unemployed intellectual's "expected personnel use" (*yongren*) and "requested work conditions" (*yaoqiu tiaojian*).³³⁰ At the same time, *danwei* requests were not necessarily honored. Still, the process shows that

³²⁷ Lü and Perry, "Introduction: The Changing Chinese Workplace in Historical and Comparative Perspective," in *Danwei*, 10.

³²⁸ Bray, *Social Space and Governance in Urban China*, 112.

³²⁹ Even unemployed intellectuals were affiliated with a *danwei* by 1953. See Lü and Perry, "Introduction," in *Danwei*, 3.

³³⁰ *Shanghaishi chuli shiye zhishifenzi weiyuanhui guanyu ranliao gongye bu, dier jixie gongye bu, dongbei difang gongye ju zai benhui zhaokao shiye zhishifenzi gongzuo de yijian*, April 3, 1953, B130-2-6-10, Shanghai Municipal Committee on Handling Unemployed Intellectuals, SMA.

intellectuals at least were able to exercise more indirect on the process of work assignment than they had during the previous several years. Moreover, the Office on Handling Unemployed Intellectuals in Shanghai increasingly turned to *danwei* in order to administer the aptitude tests that were used to determine an intellectual's career prospects.³³¹ This would have been both more convenient for intellectuals, and moreover might have allowed them to fudge test results without the municipal office knowing. Although no documentation of such fudging exists, it does appear that the Shanghai government had become increasingly concerned with fraudulent applications to the work assignment program. As such, the city required intellectuals who had older degrees to renew their credentials, which often involved participation in formal political study courses.³³² As such, one of the hitherto hardest demographics to reach during Thought Reform had been brought under the purview of the state.

By June 1953, over 500 unemployed intellectuals from Shanghai had been assigned to a work post in Inner Mongolia—usually, for work in secondary education, teaching subjects like chemistry, history, or biology.³³³ As such, intellectuals became part of the wider story of the changing ethnic politics in China. Although the CCP had promised an equal say in politics to the nation's numerous ethnic minorities, the government's policies in power proved quite different. The state had moved to aggressively change the demographic character of ethnic minority regions like Inner Mongolia, where ethnic Mongols dropped from 20% to 13% of the population

³³¹ Ibid.

³³² *Shanghaishi chuli shiye zhishifenzi weiyuanhui bangongchu guanyu shiye zhishifenzi huanzheng de gongzuo fang'an*, April 14, 1953, B130-2-6-18, Shanghai Municipal Committee on Handling Unemployed Intellectuals, SMA.

³³³ *Shanghaishi chuli shiye zhishifenzi weiyuanhui guanyu dongyuan shiye zhishifenzi yingkao neimeng zhongxue jiaoshi gongzuo de zongjie baogao*, June 8, 1953, B130-2-6-1, Shanghai Municipal Committee on Handling Unemployed Intellectuals, SMA.

within a few years of liberation.³³⁴ In general, qualifications for a job in Inner Mongolia were much laxer than for a job in the city. Even intellectuals who had not finished a secondary or university degree program were eligible for assignment to Inner Mongolia. Moreover, it appears that a large number of these assignments went to those who were deemed ideologically problematic. Of the 500 intellectuals sent to Inner Mongolia, a full 191 had previously belonged to a “reactionary” political party like the Guomindang. Of those 191, 44 had gone through special, intensive background screenings by the local Public Security Bureau.³³⁵ Perhaps because these intellectuals felt that their only real career prospects was to take jobs in far-out Inner Mongolia, many were dissatisfied with their assignments. Some of this may have come from a lack of knowledge about the region. A common belief was that “the entire province is covered in deserts, steppes, and yurts.” Others seemed to be under the impression that almost no one lived in the province (*renyan xishao*).³³⁶ Although some intellectuals could influence their assignment through working with their respective *danwei*, those with low levels of political influence generally had to take whatever they could.

The work assignment program came to an official close at the end of the year. In Shanghai, the program had been enormously successful, finding about 30,000 unemployed intellectuals jobs or enrolling them in an advanced degree program.³³⁷ The party-state began to back off from the intense management of intellectuals’ lives it had insisted on over the past three

³³⁴ Uradyn E. Bulag, “Alter/native Mongolian Identity: From Nationality to Ethnic Group,” in *Chinese Society: Change, Conflict, and Resistance*, edited by Elizabeth J. Perry and Mark Selden (New York: Routledge: 2010), 264-269.

³³⁵ *Shanghaishi chuli shiye zhishifenzi weiyuanhui guanyu dongyuan shiye zhishifenzi yingkao neimeng zhongxue jiaoshi gongzuo de zongjie baogao*, June 8, 1953, B130-2-6-1, Shanghai Municipal Committee on Handling Unemployed Intellectuals, SMA.

³³⁶ *Ibid.*

³³⁷ *Guanyu jinhou gongzuo ji jigou bianzhi niding yijian de qingshi*, December 29, 1953, B24-2-23-73, Shanghai Municipal Administrative Committee, SMA. In reality, intellectuals only made up a small fraction (about 10%) of the total number of unemployed individuals who were helped by the program.

years. To the extent that intellectuals had any kind of formal contact with the state, it was generally through the government's efforts to improve standards of living in urban China. The national government had made improving educational facilities and expanding housing options a priority in mid-1953.³³⁸ Moreover, the state finally dealt with the flood of complaints from intellectuals that political study took up too much of their time by making study sessions voluntary. However, it is unclear whether this had much of an immediate effect, with social pressure still proving a powerful motivator to attend these study sessions.³³⁹ In a *People's Daily* editorial on July 2, the CCP attempted to defend the Thought Reform Campaign by comparing it to the Red Scare in the United States; specifically, the hearings and subpoenas issued by the Senate Subcommittee on National Security, which tended to target American intellectuals. The article argued that the CCP's policies were far less draconian than the Red Scare; even the famous Albert Einstein had been brought before the subcommittee under suspicion of having connections to American communists. The editorial looked favorably on Einstein's call on other US intellectuals to refuse to testify against colleagues or friends.³⁴⁰ It is unclear if the editorial changed any minds, although it certainly had an intellectual audience in mind. Chinese intellectuals had it much easier than their American counterparts, the piece argued. Moreover, the editorial signalled a shift in the party's attitudes toward Chinese intellectuals; instead of imposing thought rectification responsibilities, it would instead seek to convince them that ideological reform was in their own interests.

The government's recalculation in 1953 led to a generally calmer climate in education during 1954. The national mood was focused more on socialist construction rather than

³³⁸ Lamb, Occasional Review, 1951-1953, June 16, 1953, CPR9, 523.

³³⁹ Ibid., 526.

³⁴⁰ *Meiguo zhuming kexuejia Aiyinsitan [Einstein]: haozhao meiguo zhishifenzi buyao dui meiguo fandongshili qufu*, July 2, 1953, RR.

ideological rectification, a shift reflected in many institutes of higher learning. At Tongji University in Shanghai, reports from early 1954 suggest that the professoriate were focused, first and foremost, on providing “excellent education” (*gaohao jiaoxue*). Moreover, the day-to-day affairs at the university had mostly returned to the pre-Thought Reform norms.³⁴¹ Still, some of the changes from the Thought Reform era could still be felt. At Nanjing University, for example, the centralizing efforts of the new party administration had led to more cross-department conferences and meetings.³⁴² Intellectuals began to get a feel for the shifting political winds of the era, often abandoning their memberships in the minor democratic parties in an effort to apply for membership in the Communist Party. At the Shandong School of Agricultural Science, 172 applications had come in from professors for CCP membership. 36 had already been accepted as of January 1, 1954.³⁴³ And students around the country began to take their studies more seriously, reflecting on the career possibilities offered by currying favor with the party-state. At Zhendan University, one study, Zhang Zhici, noted that he was taking his studies far more seriously than in the past, when he preferred “going to dance halls” or “pursuing girlfriends.”³⁴⁴ The survey of higher education institutions reveals that things were not the same as before Thought Reform; however, the climate had cooled considerably from fever pitch.

The idea of thought rectification hardly disappeared in 1954, however. The party-state’s strategy had changed from 1952; instead of focusing on comprehensive reform among all intellectuals, both inside and outside academia, the state instead targeted a small number of famous intellectuals for views that were deemed problematic. This practice began somewhat haphazardly in late 1954, when a work of literary criticism on *Dream of the Red Chamber* (a

³⁴¹ *Huadong gaodeng xuexiao sixiang gaizao yundong hou de xin qixiang xuan ji*, January 1, 1954, LR-SPP.

³⁴² *Ibid.*

³⁴³ *Ibid.*

³⁴⁴ *Ibid.*

famous eighteenth-century work of Chinese literature), written by Yu Pingbo, came under criticism from two radical students. The students charged that Yu's analysis promoted "art for art's sake," instead of (correctly, in the view of the CCP) arguing that literature should be seen as a vehicle for ideology. *People's Daily* published a supportive editorial regarding the students' criticisms; afterward, a number of conferences were held to criticize the "idealism" and "subjectivity" of Yu Pingbo.³⁴⁵ When activists discovered that Yu had been trained by none other than the famous liberal intellectual Hu Shi, they began to attack Hu in turn for his "bourgeois idealism."³⁴⁶ The brief campaign extended briefly into the first few weeks of 1955, and claimed another two targets: Hu Feng, a professor at the Central Literary Research Institute, and Liang Shuming, a delegate in the People's Political Consultative Congress and occasional independent publisher.³⁴⁷ In the case of all four scholars, the campaign involved frequent, scathing criticism from *People's Daily* and party-affiliated magazines, as well as in-person struggle sessions. Some, such as Liang, had to write new confessions.³⁴⁸ Although these men certainly faced savage criticism, it is unclear how much everyday intellectuals were affected by these movements. Indeed, it is unclear if criticism sessions were held outside of Beijing. The campaign to criticize Yu, Hu Shi, Hu Feng, and Liang showed that thought rectification had not disappeared. But it also showed that the party-state's strategy was significantly different than in 1952, when it attempted to encourage all intellectuals to engage in self-criticism. In 1954, the list of targets would remain small.

Moreover, the government began to further its program of improving the everyday lives of intellectuals. A report from the Shanghai Municipal Bureau of Education reflected on the

³⁴⁵ Chen, *Thought Reform of the Chinese Intellectuals*, 81-83.

³⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 83-85.

³⁴⁷ For a background on the anti-Hu Feng campaign, see Goldman, *Literary Dissent in Communist China*, 129-157.

³⁴⁸ Chen, *Thought Reform of the Chinese Intellectuals*, 85-93.

various strategies the city had employed to achieve “unity” (*tuanjie*) with its intellectuals. In Shanghai primary schools, the city government engaged teachers via conferences with municipal representatives (*daibiao huiyi*). In local secondary schools, the government instead focused on promoting study sessions. At universities, the city relied on the fallout from the various mass mobilization campaigns: Three-Anti, Suppress the Counterrevolutionaries, Thought Reform, and Resist America, Aid Korea.³⁴⁹ The Shanghai government also pledged to take steps at further “adjustment and reorganization” (*tiaozheng zhengdun*) of education by expanding services for “sparetime education” (*yeyu jiaoyu*) for workers and nearby villagers, providing more support for private schools, and increasing salaries for local intellectuals (although later records suggest that most pay increases did not come through until the following year).³⁵⁰ The national government also took steps at increasing intellectuals’ livelihoods. For example, in one of the new “worker-peasant accelerated secondary schools” (*gongnong sucheng zhongxue*) in Beijing, the state pledged an expanded budget to cover more supplies, books, and scientific equipment over the next few years.³⁵¹ Municipal governments also made an effort to reduce rents in October 1954, which tended to outpace any decreases in salary urbanites may have experienced during previous economic reforms. As such, urban leisure commodities like movie tickets were more affordable for intellectuals.³⁵² Although the most dedicated efforts the state would take at improving intellectuals lives would not come until 1955 and especially 1956, developments in 1954 show that the government had begun to sympathize with intellectuals and take action accordingly.

³⁴⁹ *Guanyu zai zhixing tuanjie faxing zhishifenzi zhengce fangmian jinxing de gongzuo*, April 30, 1954, B105-5-1035-1, Shanghai Municipal Bureau of Education, SMA.

³⁵⁰ *Ibid.*

³⁵¹ Guo Dekui, *Wei zuguo peiyang xinxing de zhishifenzi—ji Qinghua daxue fushe gongnong sucheng zhongxue*, July 6, 1954, RR.

³⁵² Shanghai Fortnightly Summary No. 2, October 8-October 21, 1954, CPR9.

Although the government was interested in improving conditions for all intellectuals, it left little ambiguity with regards to the intellectuals seen as most critical: educated youths. The CCP was pleased with increasing applications for and enrollments in the Youth League; a full 45.8% of the graduating class of 1954 nationwide were Youth League members. 21.2% of 1954 graduates were full-fledged CCP members, by contrast.³⁵³ The party center also issues a set of instructions to education cadres, calling on them to better facilitate the integration of Youth League members into the Communist Party. Moreover, cadres were criticized for “obtaining confessions [from students] under duress” (*bigongxin*).³⁵⁴ For educated youths, membership in the Youth League could open real doors for their postgraduate careers. Over the course of 1954, the city of Shanghai made it a priority to hire 100 recent graduates for high-profile positions (either in education or the city bureaucracy), and pledged to double that number in 1955.³⁵⁵ Although it is true that the institutional changes the party made in 1954 represented a rising tide that lifted all boats, metaphorically, it lifted some boats more than others. Young intellectuals—especially those who had demonstrated acceptable loyalty to the party and the reigning ideology—could find ways of fast-tracking their careers after graduation. For older intellectuals, they would have to be content with modest salary increases and promises of further “attention” from municipal governments in the future.

The party also developed a more concrete plan for the Youth League around this time. In early 1955, a report emerged detailing the League’s three-step plan at inculcating “communist ethics” (*gongchanzhuyi daode*) among its members. First, the Youth League would organize

³⁵³ *Zhonggong Beijing shiwei guanyu zai zhe ge gaodeng xuexiao biyesheng zhong jinxing zhongcheng laoshi yundong de jihua xiang zhongyang, huabei ju de baogao*, July 22, 1954, LR-SPP.

³⁵⁴ *Ibid.*

³⁵⁵ *Zhonggong Shanghai shiwei zuzhi bu guanyu choudiao 200-250 ming qingnian zhishifenzi ganbu jiaqiang Shanghai gaodeng xuexiao gongzuo de han*, January 8, 1955, B243-1-20-82, Shanghai Municipal Ministry of Higher Education, SMA.

physical training drills and cultural enrichment activities during academic breaks (starting during the winter break for the Spring Festival in 1955). Second, the League would hold more serious study sessions, when cadres would correct any ideological problems and “vague understandings” (*renshi mohu*) in the young scholars’ mentalities. The national government promised to provide appropriate propaganda materials for this second step. Third, the League would help members reflect on their experiences in the program, and encourage them to model and promote their newfound values outside of official Youth League spaces.³⁵⁶ The program shows an increasing attention being paid to the cultivation of educated youths, in line with a more hands-off attitude toward the education system more generally during this period. Ultimately, however, developments inside the school system would again draw the attention of the party-state.

As the government continued to collate reports of a worsening relationship between administrative cadres and the intellectuals they oversaw, it changed tactics in February 1955. Moving forward, the party-state committed itself to taking a more active managerial role in the schools and bureaus that employed intellectuals. And it laid plans for trying to help the divide between cadres and intellectuals. The first step in mending ties would be a nationwide study campaign focusing on the differences between Marxist “materialism” (*weiwuzhuyi*) and “bourgeois idealism” (*zichanjieji weixinzhuyi*). In cities, the municipal party governments began to hold weekly meetings for both cadres and intellectuals on the topic; the frequency was limited to once per week so as to not detract too much from intellectuals’ other duties.³⁵⁷ In Shanghai,

³⁵⁶ *Zhonggong shanghai shi gaodeng xuexiao weiyuanhui guanyu zhuanfa zhonggong Shanghai shiwei pizhuan zhonggong Shanghai shiwei xuanchuan bu, qingniantuan Shanghai shiwei guanyu jiji peiyang qingnian gongchanzhuyi daode, dizhi zichanjieji sixiang qinshi de xuanchuan jiaoyu gongzuo de dati buzhou de tongzhi de tongzhi*, January 13, 1955, A26-2-398-1, Chinese Communist Municipal Government of Shanghai Higher Education Committee, SMA.

³⁵⁷ *Zhonggong Shanghai shiwei guanyu guanche zhonggong zhongyang “guanyu zai ganbu he zhishifenzi zhong zuzhi xuanchuan weiwuzhuyi sixiang, pipan zichanjieji weixinzhuyi sixiang yanjiang gongzuo de tongzhi” de*

the local propaganda bureau took charge of the campaign. The bureau employed similar strategies as the Thought Reform Campaign: the use of speeches and having intellectuals and cadres study documents like *People's Daily* editorials.³⁵⁸ The campaign was concurrent with the campaign to criticize Hu Shi (who himself was seen by the regime as a proponent of bourgeois idealist views).³⁵⁹ At the same time, however, the movement to criticize Hu Shi only partially explains the reasons for carrying out the wider campaign to promote materialism and reject bourgeois idealism. The foundations of the campaign grew out of the growing distaste intellectuals and cadres had for each other, which forced the state's hand.

The mechanisms of carrying out the campaign had been formalized by March. Political “experts” would travel to factories or schools in order to present speeches on the correctness of materialism, emulating the traveling scholar of the Qing-era *xiangyue* system. Although the campaign targeted intellectuals and administrative cadres, these speeches attracted a wider audience. *People's Daily* reporters and other media personnel often attended, who publicized the campaign through summaries or transcriptions of the speeches in their papers. At the conclusion of the lectures, intellectuals and cadres had to break off into small discussion groups to reflect on what they had learned.³⁶⁰ All levels of government appear to have been heavily invested in the campaign, with documents from mid-March describing promoting Marxist materialism as “the

tongzhi, February 20, 1955, A71-2-982-1, Chinese Communist Shanghai Municipal Suburban Work Committee, SMA.

³⁵⁸ *Zhonggong shanghaishi diyi zhonggongye weiyuanhui xuanchuan bu guanyu zai ganbu he zhishifenzi zhong zuzhi xuanchuan weiwuzhuyi sixiang pipan zichanjieji weixinzhuyi sixiang de yanjiang gongzuo de tongzhi de tongzhi*, March 9, 1955, A43-1-175-1, Shanghai Municipal First Committee for Heavy Industry, SMA.

³⁵⁹ *Zhonggong shanghaishi xinjingqu weiyuanhui guanyu zai ganbu he zhishifenzi zhong zuzhi xuanchuan weiwuzhuyi sixiang, pipan zichanjieji weixinzhuyi sixiang yanjiang gongzuo de yijian*, March 12, 1955, A71-2-982-24, Chinese Communist Shanghai Municipal Suburban Work Committee, SMA.

³⁶⁰ *Zhonggong shanghaishi guoying fangzhi gongye weiyuanhui guanyu zai ganbu yu zhishifenzi zhong zuzhi xuanchuan weiwuzhuyi sixiang pipan zichanjieji weixinzhuyi sixiang yanjiang gongzuo tongzhi*, March 10, 1955, A47-1-39-147, Chinese Communist East China State-run Textile Industry Committee, Chinese Communist Shanghai Municipal State-run Textile Industry Committee, SMA.

most fundamental objective of the regime at this time.”³⁶¹ The problem of bridging the gap between intellectuals and cadres preoccupied the state, which emphasized that, in attending the lectures, cadres might “raise their own level of understanding regarding Marxism-Leninism.”³⁶² The idea was that, in recognizing that even cadres still had something to learn, they might develop a greater sense of camaraderie with the intellectuals they oversaw, particularly older ones who had only undergone partial thought rectification.

The campaign to promote materialism and reject bourgeois idealism was over almost as soon as it began; no documents after March 1955 explicitly refer to the campaign as still being underway. Nevertheless, the campaign led to a sea change in terms of the state’s approach to education. Both the national government as well as municipal governments would develop more of a presence on campuses and attempt to actively affect the environment. Starting on March 17, the Shanghai government began sending representatives to local universities in order to sell construction bonds.³⁶³ The symbolism was meaningful; previously, one of the main reasons behind intellectuals’ support for the CCP had been a faith that the party and the party alone could deliver on its promises to provide the right environment for national reconstruction. The selling of municipal construction bonds thus returned to the roots of the relationship between the party and intellectuals. On Shanghai campuses, representatives of the city government convened “promote-and-support meetings” (*tuixiao zhihui*) that encouraged administrative cadres, students, and faculty alike to buy bonds. In addition, the city showed an increasing awareness of the

³⁶¹ *Zhonggong shanghaishi jiangwanqu weiyuanhui xuanchuan bu guanyu zhixing zhonggong zhongyang ji zhonggong Shanghai shiwei guanyu zai ganbu he zhishifenzi zhong zuzhi xuanchuan weiwuzhuyi sixiang, pipan zichanjieji weixinzhuyi sixiang yanjiang gongzuo de chubu yijian ji yanjiang timu, yanjiang ren yuan de baogao*, March 19, 1955, A71-2-982-8, Chinese Communist Shanghai Municipal Suburban Work Committee, SMA.

³⁶² *Ibid.*

³⁶³ *Zhonggong shanghaishi gaodeng xuexiao weiyuanhui guanyu zai gaodeng xuexiao nei tuixiao 1955 nian guojia jingji jianshe gongzai de jige wenti de tongzhi*, March 17, 1955, A26-2-398-52, Chinese Communist Municipal Government of Shanghai Higher Education Committee, SMA.

previous modes of student activism—big-character posters and blackboard advertisements—and instructed its representatives to appropriate these methods in support of the campaign. The city, perhaps optimistically, hoped that about half of the total contributing funds to municipal construction might come from selling bonds at local higher education institutions.³⁶⁴ Although far different from the campaign to support materialism, the selling of construction bonds again tried to treat cadres and intellectuals as a single, unified group. And the effort moreover reflected a revitalized attempt at promoting aspects of the government’s agenda (construction) seen most favorably by intellectuals.

The national government too was starting to pay attention to schools once again. In April and May, the central party commissioned a series of reports and surveys on conditions on campuses around the country in advance of a number of policy changes in the latter half of the year. The reports, at first, were disheartening. A nationwide survey cast serious doubt on the real effectiveness of the Thought Reform and Three-Anti Campaigns, despite rosy reports from cadres on the ground. It was revealed that almost 80% of primary schools and 30% of secondary schools around China had not undergone any kind of “tidying up” (*qingli*) reforms. Although the Central Committee called for more direct action to extend its influence over the education system, it reaffirmed the “don’t pursue, don’t compel” approach from 1952.³⁶⁵ A report from around the same time from Yingde County, Guangdong revealed that the local party had contributed to educational workforce shortages by requisitioning 70 primary teachers (about 6% of the total intellectual workforce in the county) for work in public enterprises. The Central Committee criticized this practice and instructed all local branches to address shortages in

³⁶⁴ Ibid.

³⁶⁵ *Zhongyang guanyu dui zhong, xiao xuexiao jiaozhiyuan jinxing zuzhi qingli de zhishi*, April 1, 1955, LR-SPP.

education.³⁶⁶ In late May, the Central Committee published a criticism of cadres in Northwest Normal University in Lanzhou, Gansu. The state had discovered that cadres had demoted staff and cut wages (*jiangzhi jianxin*), thus raising the ire of older intellectuals in particular.³⁶⁷ In response to intellectual outcry, the party-state had begun to change its approach to the management of the school system. These early instructions presage the heyday of improvements in intellectuals' lives of 1956 and early 1957.

At the same time, the education system continued to remain in a state of flux. Previous chapters have shown the scale of expansion in terms of enrollments in all levels of schools. The 1955 fall semester saw some of the biggest enrollments as of yet. Part of the cause was the shift away from short-term training classes, as cities like Shanghai increasingly looked to enroll workers and peasants in full-time courses of study. This had a big effect in Shanghai, where the 1955-1956 academic year saw an increase in enrollments of 30,000 when compared to 1954-1955, with a projected increase of 100,000 students for the 1956-1957 academic year.³⁶⁸ Although these numbers refer only to primary and secondary schools, universities too experienced growth. In total, Shanghai universities enrolled 3000 additional students in the fall of 1955. Significantly, the majority of new admittees were either full-fledged CCP members or at least belonged to the Youth League.³⁶⁹ Although the rest of the country may not have seen enrollment increases as sharp as Shanghai, data suggests that urban schools across the country were enrolling more students. In Beijing, the 1955-1956 academic year saw a 7.5% increase over the previous year, for example.³⁷⁰ Unlike Shanghai, however, where the municipal government

³⁶⁶ *Zhongyang pizhuan huanan fenju "guanyu jiuzheng Yingde xian choudiao dapi xiaoxue jiaoshi dao qiye deng bumen yiner yingxiang xuexiao jiaoyu gongzuo de tongbao"*, April 1, 1955, LR-SPP.

³⁶⁷ *Cong xibei shifan xueyuan zhixing zhishifenzi zhengce de cuowu zhong xiqu jiaoxun*, May 31, 1955, LR-SPP.

³⁶⁸ Shanghai Political Summary No. 20, July 15-August 11, 1955, in *China: Political Reports, Volume 10: 1911-1960*, edited by Robert L. Jarman (Cambridge: Archive Editions, 2001) [hereafter CPR10], 45.

³⁶⁹ Shanghai Political Summary No. 22, August 26-September 8, 1955, CPR10, 52.

³⁷⁰ O'Neill, Telegram No. 849, From Peking to Foreign Office, September 13, 1955, CPR10, 124.

had begun shifting from short-term, accelerated programs to formal education, spare-time schools around the country saw the highest rate of increase in enrollments. Nationwide, enrollments in a spare-time study program increased by 110,000.³⁷¹ The state had achieved its goal of popularizing education, especially for the working class, which tended to gravitate toward the spare-time schools. Even as the government began to reassess its policies toward older intellectuals, the stage had been set for generational transformation.

Sweeping changes in state policy toward intellectuals (including the famous airing of free speech and free criticism of the CCP during the Hundred Flowers Campaign) did not come until the following year. Nevertheless, policies in late 1955 laid the groundwork for the most significant changes to come. For one, the government brought its intentions to raise the standards of living for intellectuals into the public realm. A bulletin from *Xinmin Evening News* in Shanghai on the night of October 28 laid out the city government's plans to improve the lives of intellectuals, from wage increases to better housing to reduced work hours.³⁷² Moreover, cities were instructed to recalculate their approach to right-wing or non-party intellectuals. The CCP had long applied a classification scheme of progressive/centrist/retrogressive/reactionary (or counterrevolutionary) to intellectuals. Starting in late 1955, municipal governments began to call out "errors" in the treatment of centrists and retrogressives; however, reactionaries would still be disciplined harshly.³⁷³ Moreover, cities revised their classification rationales, noting that "the most important [criterion] is whether or not there has been progress." This marked a shift from the classification scheme applied during Thought Reform, where an ideological label was

³⁷¹ Shanghai Political Summary No. 23, September 9-October 6, 1955, CPR10, 56.

³⁷² *Xinminbao dang zhibu guanyu 1956-1957 nian zhishifenzi gongzuo de guihua*, October 28, 1955, G21-1-176-1, *Xinmin Evening News*, SMA.

³⁷³ *Guanyu xuexiao xingzheng zhixing dang dui zhishifenzi tuanjie, gaizao zhengce de yixie qingkuang*, November 22, 1955, B105-5-1354-1, Shanghai Municipal Bureau of Education, SMA.

applied based on submitted materials (like confessions). In addition, non-ideological characteristics, such as “professional skill” (*yewu shuiping*) and “inventiveness and innovations” (*faming chuangzao*) might affect which category and intellectual belonged to.³⁷⁴ A report from the Shanghai government on December 10 suggested that there had been an erroneous tendency of “listening to only one side” (*pianying pianxin*); that is, having more confidence in younger scholars than older scholars, and also favoring Soviet intellectuals over Chinese intellectuals. The city government also announced plans to review problems with wages (*daiyu*) and an increasingly common frustration among intellectuals in “having a position without any real authority” (*youzhi wuquan*).³⁷⁵ The last few months of 1955 saw the most explicit acknowledgement yet from all levels of government of the issues plaguing the intellectual community.

The Communist Party began 1953 with the intention of backing off from the nation’s schools, easing the attention that it had paid education reform during 1952. This approach led to a more relaxed national climate during 1953 and 1954, with the government encouraging more leniency toward intellectuals but doing little else beyond vague pronouncements. To the extent that the state still focused on thought rectification, it focused more on high-profile scholars like Hu Feng or Hu Shi instead of the entire national community of scholars. Over time, however, the Chinese government began to realize that the schools had fostered a growing resentment between intellectuals and cadres, prompting a recalculation. The state pushed for a new campaign to unite the cadres and intellectuals: criticizing bourgeois idealism while promoting Marxist materialism.

³⁷⁴ *Gaojiao bu renshi diyisi ji qu “guanyu shouji zhifenzi wenti cailiao de timu dan” yifen de han*, December 10, 1955, A23-2-73-27, Chinese Communist Municipal Government of Shanghai Education and Hygiene Work Bureau, SMA.

³⁷⁵ *Ibid.*

In the aftermath of the campaign, the government committed itself to taking direct steps to improve the lives of intellectuals—reforms that would be carried out the following year.

The Growth of Resentment for Intellectuals

Although the government's policy changes in the 1953-1955 years were generally favorable for intellectuals, not everyone greeted these policy shifts enthusiastically. As Chapter 3 has shown, cadres on the ground sometimes took more punitive actions toward wayward intellectuals than the central government (or even their overseeing municipal government) necessarily endorsed. For many cadres, especially those who had been a part of the communist movement for a long time, it would not have been hard to harbor some sense of resentment for intellectuals. Scholarship had always been linked with economic privilege (see Chapter 1); in theory, the CCP's mandate was to equalize the kind of socioeconomic imbalances that had produced the intellectual class in the first place. Moreover, the majority of older intellectuals had been educated in Guomindang schools. Some had even supported the old regime before switching allegiances to the CCP. Although the central government had desired to rectify the thinking of intellectuals through the Thought Reform Campaign, it had shown less initiative in attending to the privileged status of older intellectuals. As such, the state's calls to improve the lives of intellectuals and for cadres to adopt a more lenient approach no doubt irked cadres. Just as the 1953-1955 years saw a recalculation from the government, the same time period saw the growth of resentment for intellectuals among their overseeing cadres.

One of the first organs of governance to experience problems with intellectuals was the military. The PLA had recruited a number of intellectuals (especially youths) for the Korean War, although they were generally confined to logistics roles. Even then, only the most

ideologically-committed were admitted into the ranks in the first place; military officials tended to be suspicious of the “bourgeois” intellectual class, and limited enlistments as much as possible. As the war died down and the PLA began to assess its logistics capabilities, however, there was a push to recruit more intellectuals in mid-1953. The General Political Department of the military issued a set of instructions in June calling for an end to the differential treatment of intellectuals. Still, the military pledged to conduct “prudent inspections” of all prospective enlistees.³⁷⁶ Documents from the East China Military Command suggest that the PLA was in general skeptical that the background checks conducted during the Thought Reform Campaign were thorough and sweeping. They may have been right—only about 27% of young intellectuals (2899 individuals) in the East China military region had undergone a thorough investigation as of mid-1953.³⁷⁷ Even as the central government was undergoing shifts in terms of how it perceived intellectuals and how it would enact responsive policy to the needs of intellectuals, other organs of governance—particularly subnational bodies such as the East China Military Command—expressed considerably more skepticism about prospects of intellectuals. To the extent that subnational governing organs were willing to work with intellectuals, they tended to focus on youths, especially Youth League members.

The military’s skepticism may have been borne out by studies done of the effectiveness of its intellectual enlistees during the Korean campaign. In the second half of 1953, the PLA commissioned a number of studies on how intellectuals serving during the Korean War had

³⁷⁶ *Junwei zongzhengzhiwu pizhuan zhongnan junqu dangwei hui guanyu juzheng yayi zhishifenzi de pianxiang de zhishi*, June 1, 1953, LR-SPP.

³⁷⁷ *Zhongguo renmin jiefangjun huadong junqu houfang dongwu bu weiyuanhui guanyu tongpan shencha zhongdian chuli qingnian zhishifenzi jibie de zhishi*, June 4, 1953, A39-2-214-2, East China Rear Military Command Military Supplies and Political Bureau, Chinese Communist East China Military Supply Production and Administrative Office Committee, Shanghai Municipal Military Supply Industry Union, Chinese Communist Party Shanghai Municipal Military Supply Industry Committee, Youth League of the Shanghai Municipal Military Supply Industry Work Committee, SMA.

performed. In general, the reports revealed a litany of problems and issues in terms of intellectuals interacting well with other enlistees. Overall, a little less than a third (31%) of all intellectuals deployed to Korea had been written up by their superiors for exhibited some form of attitude problem. For some units, that number was as high as 50%.³⁷⁸ The most common problems for enlisted intellectuals were exhibiting a “dejected” (*xiaochen*) attitude or “neglecting their duties” (*gongzuo pita*). Both represented a drain on overall unit morale.³⁷⁹ Moreover, young intellectuals were quick to complain about a lack of advancement opportunities within the military; however, an internal investigation suggested that young intellectuals had not been categorically denied for promotion (thus suggesting that these complaints held little water). The military’s reports concluded with an overall condemnation of the intellectual class, describing enlisted scholars as generally “proud and arrogant” (*jiaobao*) and “self-satisfied” (*ziman*).³⁸⁰ As the PLA reports circulated among other subnational government bureaus, other low-level cadres began to pick up on the military’s critical view. In some cases, the specific terminology of the PLA were echoed; for example, the South Central Bureau wrote a scathing summary of intellectuals in the region, referring to them as “*jiaobao ziman*” much as the PLA had.³⁸¹ The military had, deliberately or not, given cadres around the country a vocabulary with which to express their frustration with intellectuals’ attitudes.

³⁷⁸ *Zhongguo renmin jiefangjun huadong junqu ganbu bu dui zhixing junwei zong ganbu bu guanyu tiaozheng canjun zhishifenzi zhiwu yu jibie guiding de zhishi*, June 16, 1953, A39-2-220-7, East China Rear Military Command Military Supplies and Political Bureau, Chinese Communist East China Military Supply Production and Administrative Office Committee, Shanghai Municipal Military Supply Industry Union, Chinese Communist Party Shanghai Municipal Military Supply Industry Committee, Youth League of the Shanghai Municipal Military Supply Industry Work Committee, SMA.

³⁷⁹ *Zhongguo renmin jiefangjun huadong junqu zhengzhi bu ganbu bu guanyu dui huadong junqu zhishu yiyuan tiaozheng canjun zhishifenzi jibie he zhiwu de qingkuang diaocha*, August 22, 1953, A34-2-220-18, East China Rear Military Command Military Supplies and Political Bureau, Chinese Communist East China Military Supply Production and Administrative Office Committee, Shanghai Municipal Military Supply Industry Union, Chinese Communist Party Shanghai Municipal Military Supply Industry Committee, Youth League of the Shanghai Municipal Military Supply Industry Work Committee, SMA.

³⁸⁰ *Ibid.*

³⁸¹ *Zhongnan ju xuanchuanbu guanyu gaodeng xuexiao gongzuo de baogao*, November 1, 1953, LR-SPP.

Attitudes continued to fester among the cadres. A speech by Chen Xiuliang (the wife of the governor of Zhejiang Province) to the Shanghai municipal government on November 5, 1954 demonstrates continuing frustration with the slow rate of “progress” for intellectuals.³⁸² Chen argued that “in order to achieve well-managed schools...we must expose and criticize the influence of [older] thinking.” She said that, in her experiences, intellectuals in Zhejiang’s level of understanding of Marxist-Leninist theory remained quite low, and that the most important thing for intellectuals to learn was how to stay “committed to the course” (*yuanfeng budong*).³⁸³ Whereas the central party was starting to rein in some of the excesses of the Thought Reform and Three-Anti campaigns, Chen praised both, suggesting that they were both highly successful in exposing “the boundary between us and the enemy” (*diwo jixian*).³⁸⁴ It is striking to hear a party official allude to intellectuals, at least in part, as “the enemy,” considering the more lenient climate that had developed nationally since the end of 1952. Even still, Chen could not entirely escape from the changing national circumstances. She acknowledged that the government could do more to better facilitate working conditions among intellectuals, specifically by investing in research opportunities, necessary supplies, and funding.³⁸⁵ Even still, the broad thrust of her speech is clear: intellectuals’ thought reform was far from complete, despite the central government’s desire to move away from the policies of 1952.

Surveys taken in 1954 and 1955 of administrative cadres working in the Shanghai school system reveal similar resentful attitudes, all the way down to the lowest levels of government.

³⁸² For a background on Chen Xiuliang and her husband Sha Wenhan, see *Sha Wenhan Chen Xiuliang nianpu* (Shanghai: Shanghai shehui kexue chubanshe, 2007).

³⁸³ *Shanghai ge dazhuan xuexiao guanche sizhong quanhui jueyi yu zhishifenzi zhengce wenti: Chen Xiuliang zai zhonggong Shanghai gaodeng xuexiao weiyuanhui huiyi shang de fayangao*, November 5, 1954, A26-2-281-31, Chinese Communist Municipal Government of Shanghai Higher Education Committee, SMA.

³⁸⁴ *Ibid.*

³⁸⁵ *Guanche tuanjie gaizao zhishifenzi zhengce wenti: Chen Xiuliang zai zhonggong Shanghai gaodeng xuexiao weiyuanhui huiyi shang de fayangao*, November 5, 1954, A26-2-281-19, Chinese Communist Municipal Government of Shanghai Higher Education Committee, SMA.

Surveys of Yan'an Secondary School, Qixiu Girls' Secondary School, and Weiyu Secondary School suggest significant problems between the administration and the teaching staff were common in Shanghai at this time. The survey of Yan'an Secondary suggested there was a severe lack of mutual understanding between teachers and cadres, with both sides highly suspicious of the other. Although the school administration had made diplomatic overtures to the teachers by inviting them to meetings in order to express their views on working conditions more freely, only 9 teachers showed up—and most of them were affiliated with the CCP.³⁸⁶ Most administrators at the school saw the teaching staff as ideologically backward. Whereas teachers showed little willingness to engage in voluntary political study after the end of the Thought Reform Campaign, the staff saw further rectification as an “urgent requirement” (*paoqie yaoqiu*) given the prevailing political mood at the school. Administrative cadres and teachers were also at odds over the proper role of the school's party branch; cadres saw their main responsibility as investigating problems with the teachers' political histories and beliefs, whereas teachers saw the branch as a conduit for relaying their views to the municipal government.³⁸⁷ The report thus spoke to a fractured working environment at the school, with cadres and intellectuals almost constantly at odds.

The situation was similar at Qixiu Girls' Secondary and Weiyu Secondary. Qixiu in particular occupied a nebulous space within the government's education policy, considering its status as a private school in an era when most institutions had been nationalized. By 1955, there were some signs that the state was in the process of taking over the school. Like other Shanghai institutions, the school had an assigned party branch. Moreover, the school had to follow the

³⁸⁶ *Shanghaishi Yan'an zhongxue guanyu dang he zhishifenzi de lianxi diaocha baogao*, 1955, B105-5-1354-34, Shanghai Municipal Bureau of Education, SMA.

³⁸⁷ *Ibid.*

same regulations (such as the teaching staff's duties during the Thought Reform Campaign) as public schools did. In some ways, however, the ambiguous status of the school may have been bad for the teaching staff. A number of intellectuals expressed concerns about an inability to communicate with the administration. However, overseeing cadres' attitudes made the matter worse; they saw the teaching staff as backwards. In their view, Qixiu teachers could not even wrap their heads around "basic" Marxist concepts like materialism.³⁸⁸ At Weiyu Secondary, the teaching staff won a major concession out of the administration in the form of a newly-formed "teaching and research group" (*jiaoyanzu*). Although the name may not imply it, Weiyu teachers saw the group as a means of bridging the gap between the staff and the administration. However, the party branch would simply ignore or stonewall any of the recommendations the group tried to make.³⁸⁹ Much like at Yan'an Secondary, teachers were sharply divided from the administrative party branch. Any victories the teachers might have won (such as the teaching and research group at Weiyu) were hollow at best.

Although the previous examples highlighted problems within education, cadres in government bureaus that employed intellectuals were equally critical of their new employees. At the Shanghai Sea Shipping Management Office, for example, cadres were skeptical that employed intellectuals had really managed to accomplish any real transformation during Thought Reform. A report from these cadres said that none of their employees had demonstrated any real zeal or enthusiasm for thought rectification. The bureau suggested that its intellectual staff had an overly "aloof" (*qinggao sixiang*) attitude toward politics.³⁹⁰ Similar attitudes could

³⁸⁸ *Shanghaishi sili Qixiu nüzhong guanyu dang he zhishifenzi de guanxi diaocha baogao*, 1955, B105-5-1354-41, Shanghai Municipal Bureau of Education, SMA.

³⁸⁹ *Shanghaishi Weiyu zhongxue guanyu dang he zhishifenzi de guanxi diaocha baogao*, 1955, B105-5-1354-48, Shanghai Municipal Bureau of Education, SMA.

³⁹⁰ *Shanghai haiyun guanli ju zhengzhi bu guanyu gaoji zhishifenzi huafen yuanze ji juti mingdan de tongzhi*, 1955, B7-2-79-1, Shanghai Municipal People's Committee Transportation Office, SMA.

be found in the national Construction and Engineering Department in Beijing, which attributed delays in project timetables to deliberate sabotage on behalf of reactionary “enemies” within the bureau. An investigation revealed that the department was responsible for 200,000 yuan’s worth of waste, although it is hardly clear what role the department’s assigned intellectuals may have played.³⁹¹ One reason for these attitudes may have been an overall decline in wages for government workers, including cadres. In Shanghai, state employees had to pay out-of-pocket for rent, food, and utilities. The highest-paid party official was the director of Public Works, who only made about 2000 yuan per month.³⁹² Concurrently, the national government had begun publicizing its plans at reforming policies toward intellectuals, which would include potential salary increases. Although no municipal workers were well-off at this juncture, low-level cadres may have understandably chafed against what they perceived as the party center’s preferential treatment of intellectuals at their expense.

At the end of 1955, the state had committed itself to a course of action that would treat intellectuals more favorably, going forward. On the ground, however, cadres both in and outside of the education system expressed a general sense of wariness about the new national climate. Several officials in the Shanghai Bureau of Education said that the Thought Reform Campaign had been “neither deep nor penetrative” (*bushen butou*), and had “come in like a lion and left like a lamb” (*hutou shewei*).³⁹³ They feared that the government was simply empowering bourgeois or rightist elements through its reforms. In one of the city’s commerce bureaus, cadres were likewise skeptical. Party officials derided intellectuals for “expecting preferential treatment”

³⁹¹ Zhonggong zhongyang pizhuan jianzhu gongcheng bu 5 ren xiaozu “guanyu zai sheji bumen zong fadong jishuren yuan kaizhan douzheng de baogao”, August 1, 1955, LR-SPP.

³⁹² Shanghai Fortnightly Summary No. 18, June 17-June 30, 1955, CPR10, 38.

³⁹³ Guanyu zhong, xiao xuexiao zhong zhishifenzi wenti de diaocha baogao, December 10, 1955, B105-5-1354-8, Shanghai Municipal Bureau of Education, SMA.

(*lingyan xiangkan*). According to one cadre, “intellectuals are only interested in fame and profit, attach too much importance to skill, possess weak politics, enjoy flattery, fear criticism, and have liberal, lazy attitudes.” It was a common belief among cadres that they worked longer and harder than intellectuals for less pay.³⁹⁴ Reforms had also emboldened intellectuals to criticize their overseeing cadres; within the Shanghai textile industry, 439 out of 2747 technicians had achieved party membership by the end of 1955 (about 16%).³⁹⁵ These technicians would tell cadres, “You have said we have a purely technical point of view; you, on the other hand, have a purely political point of view.” Cadres responded that intellectuals “stressed technical matters but not politics,” and denounced them in the same terms as the PLA did at the start of the period: *jiaobao ziman*.³⁹⁶ Whereas government policy had changed dramatically over the past three years, the attitudes of cadres on the ground had only hardened.

Jeremy Wallace has argued, provocatively, that the PRC government—which won power, essentially, through peasant revolt—has maintained control through an “urban bias,” using policies that favored China’s biggest cities at the expense of the countryside in order to quell urban unrest.³⁹⁷ Although Wallace focuses his analysis on the advent of the household registration (*hukou*) system, his broader analysis reflects an important dynamic in the 1953-1955 years. The state—especially the national government—expressed an early willingness to recalibrate its policies to favor intellectuals, who were by and large an urban population. For cadres, many of whom lacked a formal education, or may have grown up in a village, it would

³⁹⁴ *Shanghaishi diyi shangye ju zhengzhi bu guanyu zhishifenzi qingkuang de huibao*, December 17, 1955, B123-3-36-9, Shanghai Municipal First Bureau of Commerce, SMA.

³⁹⁵ Technicians, much like professors, teachers, engineers, artists, and medical professionals, were considered to be one of the main types of intellectual.

³⁹⁶ *Zhonggong shanghaishi guoying fangzhi gongye weiyuanhui guanyu zhishifenzi gongzuo wenti de qingkuang baogao*, December 31, 1955, A47-1-41-78, Chinese Communist East China State-run Textile Industry Committee, Chinese Communist Shanghai Municipal State-run Textile Industry Committee, SMA.

³⁹⁷ See Jeremy L. Wallace, *Cities and Stability: Urbanization, Redistribution, and Regime Survival in China*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2014.

have been hard to see this as anything other than a betrayal.³⁹⁸ Cadres experienced the same hardships as intellectuals did—rationing, food shortages, long work hours—but whereas the plight of intellectuals had become a cause for national concern, cadres toiled away in the dark. The growth of resentment for intellectuals, from military officials to school administrators to bureau chiefs, was natural. The attitudes of low-level cadres showed little signs of softening; often, it was the opposite. As such, cadres would grow increasingly suspicious of intellectuals after 1955. The sharp divide between the classes would eventually force the government to undergo a second recalibration of policy.

The Lives and Working Conditions of Intellectuals in Academia

Intellectuals who remained in the Chinese school system after 1949—or those who were assigned to work at a school through the nationwide work assignment program—experienced a conflicting set of changes in the early PRC years. 1952 saw the effective dismemberment of the old system of private academies, the advent of party-controlled school administrations, and the imposition of mandatory study sessions and confession-writing. The government seemed to perform a sudden *volte-face* in 1953, calling for an end to cadre excesses on the ground and demonstrating a sincere interest in raising intellectuals' standards of living. Such a shift was no doubt whiplash-inducing. Nonetheless, intellectuals in academia rallied in 1954 and took advantage of the shifting climate. Discussing the role that intellectuals played in seizing upon the national government's new priorities shows that the culture of permissiveness in 1956—most

³⁹⁸ Joel Andreas describes the class differences between cadres and intellectuals at Qinghua University in *Rise of the Red Engineers: The Cultural Revolution and the Origins of China's New Class* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2009), 18-19. At the time of the Communist takeover, 80% of cadres came from a peasant class background, and the overwhelming majority were illiterate. Even the most educated cadres rarely possessed more than a secondary school degree. Xiaoping Cong, meanwhile, covers CCP recruiting of educated peasants in *Teachers' Schools and the Making of the Modern Chinese Nationalist State, 1897-1937* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 2007).

famously, the Hundred Flowers Campaign—did not only come from the whims of the party leadership. Indeed, the advances made by intellectuals during the second half of the decade were hard-fought by intellectuals themselves. Even as the party became further entrenched in the school system and promoted the formation of the *danwei*, intellectuals used these new institutions as conduits for voicing discontent.

An editorial written on July 27, 1954 symbolized the growth of a new boldness among academics. Li Guocai, a chemistry professor at Wuhan University, wrote to Beijing describing conditions for older intellectuals at the university. Li described the growth of professors' working hours, which he described as equivalent to "physical exercise" for those of advanced age.³⁹⁹ Li's report also shows how different departments experienced different rates of work hour growth, based on the extent to which the state prioritized their speciality. The mathematics department at Wuhan, for example, saw an increase of 120% of their workdays, whereas some departments only saw a 30% increase. The new regimen was tough enough on professors that some voluntarily entered a graduated retirement program, accepting salary cuts of 40% just to cut down on working hours.⁴⁰⁰ Over the next few months, more intellectuals became increasingly comfortable with speaking out. In discussions with their supervisors, professors in Shanghai scoffed at the party's ambitions for education reform. "After all," they said, "whom does educational reform rely on for success?" Professors often held concurrent positions inside campus administrations, but few besides party members had any real power—thus engendering one of the more frequent phrases of the period, *youzhi wuquan* (having positions but without much authority).⁴⁰¹

³⁹⁹ *Wuhan daxue jiaoshi dui shixing gaodeng xuexiao jiaoshi gongzuori he jiaoxue gongzuoliang de yijian*, July 27, 1954, LR-SPP.

⁴⁰⁰ *Ibid.*

⁴⁰¹ Shen Chengru, *Shanghaishi ge gaodeng xuexiao zhong dang qun guanxi buhao*, October 16, 1954, LR-SPP.

As discussed earlier in this chapter, the final months of 1954 and the beginning of 1955 saw a series of brief criticism campaigns directed against notable “rightist” or “bourgeois” elements like Hu Shi or Hu Feng. It is thus striking that intellectuals became increasingly comfortable with speaking out during these campaigns, although it also reveals the changed national environment. Even as the government showed a continuing desire to combat “wrongthink” among high-profile intellectuals, everyday intellectuals found their collective voice and will to push for changes. As such, the focus gradually shifted from the famous scholars to the common ones. A *People’s Daily* report in late October 1954 presaged this shift by describing the plight of young intellectuals in rural Shaanxi, where few were able to find job opportunities that allowed them to use the skills and knowledge they picked up in school. Although the *hukou* system had yet to appear in late 1954, there were still clear barriers to geographic mobility; if anything, the net flow of intellectuals was *out from*, rather than into, the cities. This was certainly true in rural Shaanxi, where the most educated youths might hope for was teaching literacy classes to older peasants.⁴⁰² As the dust settled from the early PRC years, the “face” of the Chinese intellectual had changed. The elitist, famous scholars of yesteryear had faded from public. Increasingly, the everyday intellectuals were beginning to demand their own moment in the sun.

Although urban intellectuals no doubt fared far better than their rural counterparts, their lives were not as privileged as the resentful cadres might have imagined. It is true that intellectuals in urban areas tended to earn more in wages than the working class—in Shanghai, for example, reports suggest that intellectuals out-earned workers at a 4:3 ratio⁴⁰³—but they still

⁴⁰² *Nongcun dang zuzhi he qingnian zhishifenzi—zhonggong pingyaoxian beichangbao cun zhibu jiaoyu gaoxiao biyesheng*, October 26, 1954, RR.

⁴⁰³ Shanghai Fortnightly Summary No. 4, November 5-November 18, 1954, CPR9, 548.

nevertheless faced their fair share of hardships. In early 1955, for example, schools had to stomach lower rations for goods like husked rice, cooking oil, and cotton cloth due to production shortages. Some at the school made an effort to support these cutbacks, through big-character posters or other advertisements around campus, but it is unclear if these messages of support reflected the popular will, or whether just the viewpoint of the zealous activist crowd. To be sure, however, progressive students did see the shortages as an opportunity to promote their views to their classmates. One student at Tongji University called on their classmates to “do more laundry” instead of buying more clothes so often.⁴⁰⁴ On the other hand, older professors seemed to chafe under the new rationing quotas, griping that “their family members never had to queue up to buy cloth” in previous eras. Some even compared rationing to the shortages experienced under Guomindang rule.⁴⁰⁵ Around this time, cadres were railing against the inequalities in favor of intellectuals. In a technical sense, the cadres were correct—intellectuals generally received higher wages and worked more comfortable jobs than the working class. But this picture is hardly complete. Intellectuals experienced their fair share of hardships. By 1955, they had gained the confidence to do something about it.

As the central government insisted on better treatment for the intellectual class, municipal education bureaus carried out surveys of local school systems in order to better understand the working and living situations of intellectuals. These surveys were also careful to describe the political situation within the schools. At Yan’an Secondary in Shanghai, for example, levels of fealty to the CCP were relatively low; among teachers, only 8% were party members, while only 6.3% of the student body were Youth League members. On the flip, 26.6% of the school

⁴⁰⁴ *Zhonggong shanghaishi gaodeng xuexiao weiyuanhui xuanchuan bu guanyu Shanghai ge gaodeng xuexiao jinxing “mianbu jihua gongying” xuanchuan jiaoyu qingkuang de zonghe baogao*, 1955, A26-2-398-56, Chinese Communist Municipal Government of Shanghai Higher Education Committee, SMA.

⁴⁰⁵ *Ibid.*

population—faculty and students included—had some sort of ideological problem exposed during the Thought Reform Campaign. 10% on top of that were described as having a “serious problem.”⁴⁰⁶ Individual teachers also expressed a wide array of opinions on their working and living conditions. Ding Guifen, for example, charged the party administration for making empty promises—for example, a consultative committee that had been promised two years earlier, but had never actually been formed. Ding moreover argued that the administration overly prioritized teaching as opposed to research. Yang Yunzhan, meanwhile, expressed frustration at being unable to live with the rest of her family because the housing provided by the Yan’an *danwei* was too small. Ultimately, she and her husband decided to send their children to live with their grandparents in the countryside to receive better full-time care and attention. Jin Chengzhang had hardly been convinced by the CCP’s anti-Western sentiments, favoring French culture and imported products. He argued that the CCP had yet to solve the unemployment crisis fully. Some teachers, like Zhang Rumin, were more supportive of the party, however. Zhang described throwing herself into her work after her only daughter died. Zhang had become politically involved during Thought Reform.⁴⁰⁷

At Qixiu Girl’s School, another secondary school in Shanghai, the political situation was broadly similar; only 6.3% of the teachers were CCP members. 34.75% had been described as political “progressives,” whereas 45.65% were considered “centrists,” 13% “retrogressives,” and 6.5% “reactionaries.”⁴⁰⁸ A number of reforms had left Qixiu teachers better off than their colleagues at Yan’an Secondary; for example, the school had seen across-the-board wage

⁴⁰⁶ *Shanghaishi Yan’an zhongxue guanyu dang he zhishifenzi de lianxi diaocha baogao*, 1955, B105-5-1354-34, Shanghai Municipal Bureau of Education, SMA.

⁴⁰⁷ *Ibid.*

⁴⁰⁸ *Shanghaishi sili Qixiu nüzhong guanyu dang he zhishifenzi de guanxi diaocha baogao*, 1955, B105-5-1354-41, Shanghai Municipal Bureau of Education, SMA.

increases in the months leading up to 1955. Moreover, the Qixiu *danwei* had managed to acquire new housing units, which were distributed on the basis of residence and marital status. Teachers with spouses, in addition to those who were living outside the Shanghai city limits, were the most likely candidates for new, bigger housing closer to campus.⁴⁰⁹ At the same time, other aspects of the working situation at Qixiu were far more problematic for the teaching staff. An average workday tended to last as long as 10 or 11 hours, and most felt compared to work every day of the week. Perhaps due to the strenuous workload, medical problems among the teaching staff were rampant. The school in total employed 46 intellectuals, and a full 10 of them had contracted pulmonary tuberculosis during the first four years of the PRC. Many of the female teachers reported having some sort of gynecological disease, and two women had gone through miscarriages in the fall semester of 1954.⁴¹⁰

Weiyu Secondary School was found to have, again, a political situation consistent with reports from Yan'an Secondary and Qixiu Secondary. 6.6% of the teaching staff at Weiyu were affiliated with the CCP. 36.6% were progressives, 46.4% were centrists, 10.9% were retrogressives, and 6.1% were reactionaries. A number of teachers at this school expressed a particular fear of having to submit confessions during the Thought Reform; many had cooperated with the old Guomindang regime. However, no one had reported any kind of visible punishment for the errors they had confessed to.⁴¹¹ Of the three schools surveyed in Shanghai, Weiyu may have been in the worst spot. Despite wage increases coming through in the others, Weiyu had not

⁴⁰⁹ Ibid.

⁴¹⁰ Ibid.

⁴¹¹ *Shanghaishi Weiyu zhongxue guanyu dang he zhishifenzi de guanxi diaocha baogao*, 1955, B105-5-1354-48, Shanghai Municipal Bureau of Education, SMA. The broad similarity in percentages of teachers of various ideological designations begs the question of whether staff were artificially meting out political labels so as to not deviate too much from the overall national norm. Zhou Enlai himself would later claim that, nationwide, 40% of intellectuals were progressives, 40% were centrists, and 20% were some combination of retrogressives and reactionaries. Considering that Zhou's formula came a full year after these statistics were compiled, I am inclined to believe these surveys. It seems more likely that Zhou's formula was based on the actual realities on the ground.

seen any salary increases. Most monthly stipends were quite low, with some teachers making only 50 yuan per month. Moreover, there were severe imbalances in the wages of newer and older faculty. Medical issues were also highly prevalent, with a full two-thirds of the teaching staff having had some form of serious illness in the fall of 1954. A handful had contracted more than a single serious illness; one teacher was essentially bedridden for the entire semester, having contracted four different serious illnesses.⁴¹² The Shanghai Education Bureau made a number of recommendations for the administration at the school to help improve the intellectuals' working conditions. First, the bureau advised the administration to allot more time for rest and relaxation during the workday. In addition, the bureau recommended giving the Weiyu teaching staff more holiday leave. Since many teachers had expressed frustrations regarding being kept away from their children, the city also suggested that the school consider admitting teachers' offspring as students.⁴¹³ Although the particular situations were different at each school, the overall findings of the surveys in Shanghai paint a reasonably consistent picture. Moreover, they showed an increasing willingness of intellectuals to push for improvements in their livelihoods—albeit through official channels.

Although intellectuals had a number of problems unique to their status, they were also urbanites more generally. As such, they faced the same issues as other middle class city-dwellers. Although some economic reports from the period were positive (see, for example, the discussion about increasing affordability for certain forms of cultural consumption earlier in this chapter), others were less so. Even if goods had become cheaper, quality was not necessarily very high. Around the middle of 1955, urban markets had short supplies of staple foods like meat, vegetables, and noodles—all of which would likely have been important parts of an

⁴¹² Ibid.

⁴¹³ Ibid.

intellectual's diet. The food supplies that existed were often of poor quality.⁴¹⁴ Middle-class Chinese urbanites continued to express disillusionment—if not in public, than privately to the few foreign correspondents still allowed in the PRC—about their standards of living in June of 1955. Some even speculated that the current crop of “rightist,” like Hu Feng, had been emboldened by the struggles the party was facing at helping middle-class families make ends meet.⁴¹⁵ Even as the government had pledged to tread with a lighter step in the school system, intellectuals were facing frustrating conditions in their everyday lives.

For many intellectuals, the answers to their problems was further integration with the CCP—by trying to join their ranks. Historically, the Communist Party was generally skeptical of admitting intellectuals, especially older ones, as members. That changed over the course of 1955, however, as new enrollments from older intellectuals increased dramatically. In Shanghai, for example, 2400 intellectuals had gained party membership during the first half of the year. The majority of these new admittees were not intellectuals teaching or studying at the new people's revolutionary universities, but rather long-established institutions like Fudan, Jiaotong, and Tongji Universities. East China Normal University was a distant fourth in terms of new party admittances.⁴¹⁶ Journalists in Beijing, meanwhile, were quick to publicize new stories of older intellectuals who had managed to gain entrance into the CCP. One profile was published on December 4, describing the successful party application of the professor Liu Xianzhou, who was over 60 years old. His new party membership demonstrated that intellectuals of all ages had political prospects (*zhengzhi shang you qiantu*).⁴¹⁷ Increasingly, intellectuals in the Beijing area

⁴¹⁴ Shanghai Fortnightly Summary No. 12, March 11-March 24, 1955, CPR10, 16.

⁴¹⁵ Shanghai Fortnightly Summary No. 17, June 5-June 16, 1955, CPR10, 33.

⁴¹⁶ *Zhonggong Jiaotong daxue weiyuanhui 1955 niandu diyi xueqi fazhan dang de jihua*, November 16, 1955, A23-2-114-40, Chinese Communist Municipal Government of Shanghai Education and Hygiene Work Bureau, SMA.

⁴¹⁷ Lei Peng, *Daxue jiaoshoumen dui Liu Xianzhou rudang hou de fanxiang*, December 4, 1955, LR-SPP.

began to covet CCP memberships, and turned away from joining the minor parties that used to attract intellectuals, like the CDL. A professor at Beijing Normal University, Zhong Jingwen, argued at the time that older intellectuals' expertise could be as helpful to the state as the energy and vitality of educated youth.⁴¹⁸ To be fair, it is unclear if these new party admittees were able to change much of official policy. They certainly were not able to stop the state's moves against intellectuals in the Anti-Rightist Campaign of 1957. At the same time, the admittance of older intellectuals is an important juncture in the overall story of party-state and scholar, who became increasingly intertwined over the course of the decade. Their influence over other party officials was certainly non-zero. It is telling, for example, that relatively few intellectuals who were admitted in 1955 and 1956 lost memberships as a result of the Anti-Rightist Campaign.

On December 9, various cities and provinces convened conferences between local governments and intellectuals. In Tianjin, intellectuals called for better jobs; for example, they argued that most factory directors had been promoted from the working ranks, rather than trained engineers. Intellectuals with academic training and experience could better stimulate production, in their view. Attending scholars also called for relaxed restrictions on older intellectuals joining the CCP, as well as higher wages and better housing. At the same time, intellectuals noted their continuing loyalty to the CCP and Mao Zedong personally.⁴¹⁹ Intellectuals in Shanghai echoed these concerns, calling for greater assistance from the city in improving their standards of living. They argued that local school administrations had, moreover, largely abandoned anyone labelled as a "retrogressive" (as opposed to a full-fledged reactionary or counterrevolutionary). The city, in their view, should "patiently strive" (*naixin zhengqu*) to help even right-leaning intellectuals,

⁴¹⁸ Ibid.

⁴¹⁹ Shi Jian, *Tianjinshi gaoji zhishifenzi zai zuotanhui shang de fanying*, December 9, 1955, LR-SPP.

demonstrating something of a class solidarity attitude.⁴²⁰ In Hunan Province, intellectuals claimed that the CCP had “many uses for them, but provided comparatively little assistance” (*shiyong duo, bangzhu shao*). Perhaps emboldened by reports of party admittances, Hunan intellectuals criticized the provincial government for not having admitted a single intellectual by that point as a CCP member. Others said that the state had not invested enough into vital research, such as pest control. Many described bleak living conditions, having to take supplemental jobs just to keep their family’s finances afloat. Others found themselves without enough time to take a second job; an electrical engineer named Liu Longshi, for example, said, “For the past few years, almost no Sundays went by without a meeting, such that it is almost like Sunday doesn’t exist in my memories.”⁴²¹ These instances demonstrate the active role played by intellectuals in changing the political atmosphere.

The intellectual-dense city of Shanghai took the lead in continuing to make overtures to local intellectuals. A number of conferences were held after the one on December 9, which allowed the municipal government to get a better sense of the condition of intellectuals in the city. Shanghai had 203 secondary schools at the time, which employed a total 8,168 intellectuals; these numbers were dwarfed by primary schools, which numbered 1,367 and employed 18,656 intellectuals. In sum, Shanghai intellectuals were broken down as 42% progressive, 38% centrist, 14% retrogressive, and 6% reactionary. There were some marginal differences, however, with primary school teachers generally being further left than secondary school teachers. Although the city had undergone a successful campaign to renovate classrooms, both primary and secondary school teachers reported not having enough to eat and struggling with low incomes. The situation

⁴²⁰ *Zhonggong Shanghai shiwei xuexiao gongzuo bu zuotan ke qingshi tongzhi baogao (tuanjie gaizao zhishifenzi wenti) de qingkuang jianbao*, December 9, 1955, A23-2-73-6, Chinese Communist Municipal Government of Shanghai Education and Hygiene Work Bureau, SMA.

⁴²¹ Luo Houren, *Hunansheng zhishifenzi gaizao wenti de qingkuang*, December 9, 1955, LR-SPP.

at private schools had become much worse, moreover; a number of teachers in these institutions had still not received wages for the previous month's work, for example.⁴²² Intellectuals complained about the arbitrary process of meting out political labels; attendees of these conferences described six cases where even intellectuals who had been described as “activists” (*huodongfenzi*) during the Thought Reform Campaign had their applications for CCP membership denied. Meanwhile, there were also cases where intellectuals were labelled “retrogressive” simply because they did not know enough Russian.⁴²³ Although these conferences represented an important shift in the city's policies, they were still fraught with problems. One conference only had five attendees—two progressives, two centrists, and only a single retrogressive.⁴²⁴ It is hardly clear if the small number of attendees could expect to speak for the thousands of intellectuals living and working in Shanghai.

Nonetheless, the city took active steps at offering formal means to rectify intellectuals' living situations. Shanghai set up a Municipal Office for Intellectuals' Problems (*shiwei zhishifenzi wenti bangongshi*), which focused first on housing problems. Intellectuals were allowed to apply for either new housing accommodations or rent reductions on their current units. The Municipal Office collected information on applicants' overall conditions, the state of their living quarters, the number of family members living with them, and how many rooms they would need. In terms of applications for rent reductions, the city made an effort to reduce overall rents by about a third.⁴²⁵ After tackling housing, the Municipal Office's next objective was to offer improvements for intellectuals' means of transport (*jiaotong gongju*) to and from work. At

⁴²² *Guanyu zhong, xiao xuexiao zhong zhishifenzi wenti de diaocha baogao*, December 10, 1955, B105-5-1354-8, Shanghai Municipal Bureau of Education, SMA.

⁴²³ *Shanghai shi diyi shangye ju zhengzhi bu guanyu zhishifenzi qingkuang de huibao*, December 17, 1955, B123-3-36-9, Shanghai Municipal First Bureau of Commerce, SMA.

⁴²⁴ *Ibid.*

⁴²⁵ *Guanyu zhishifenzi wenti cailiao zhunbei de tongzhi*, December 13, 1955, A23-2-73-33, Chinese Communist Municipal Government of Shanghai Education and Hygiene Work Bureau, SMA.

the same time, the specter of political rectification was not completely removed from the process; the bureau also collected information on the intellectuals' party memberships (whether they had belonged to the CCP, a minor democratic party, or had any previous ties to the Guomindang), and asked for their opinions on the political situation at their school.⁴²⁶ At least in Shanghai, intellectual activism had already produced concrete results. These official means of assistance would only increase the following year.

When the central government instituted new policies in 1956 aimed at assisting intellectuals and relaxing restrictions on expressing their opinions, it was a victory for the growing cacophony of intellectual activists who had dared to speak up in the critical 1953-1955 years. Academics were hardly cowed by extent of state penetration into the school system in 1952 during Thought Reform; indeed, many still professed genuine support for the CCP and Mao (if not always for the cadres directly overseeing them). Nevertheless, intellectuals as a whole had become willing to speak out on issues ranging from salaries, to the obstacles they faced in joining the CCP, to housing, to work hours. The state's agenda in the following year was largely set and influenced by intellectuals speaking out. At the same time, the strategies intellectuals used tended to implicitly acknowledge the legitimacy of CCP rule. By attending conferences, working through their *danwei*, and seeking to gain admittance into the party itself, intellectual activists reaffirmed the mechanisms of Communist control.

Outside the Ivory Tower: Intellectuals in the Military, Factories, Hospitals, and Arts

Thanks to the work assignment program, an increasing number of intellectuals found work outside of the school system. Moreover, thanks to the standardization of the CCP concept

⁴²⁶ Ibid.

of what it meant to be an intellectual—essentially, to have any sort of formal education—the number of individuals identified as intellectuals naturally expanded. Educated factory workers, like technicians or engineers, were also considered to be intellectuals, just like nurses, doctors, and anyone involved in the arts. Moreover, thanks to a surge of patriotic enlistments in the PLA for the Korean War (see Chapter 2), a non-insignificant number of intellectuals were employed in military logistics. The story of these intellectuals during the 1953-1955 years diverges from that of academic intellectuals, however, in that they tended to shy away from political activism. They also faced somewhat different problems. Often, intellectuals employed in “critical” industries such as heavy industry enjoyed far better standards of living than others involved in other professions, causing resentment. In general, non-academic intellectuals benefited from the hard-won gains made by academic intellectuals. By the end of 1955, cities and provinces were looking for concrete ways to improve the lives of all intellectuals, both in and outside of academia. As such, the story of the intellectuals during this period would not be complete without a discussion of intellectuals working outside the ivory tower.

Although the state was far more invested in education instructors at the start of 1953, reports occasionally emerged describing the situation of non-academic intellectuals. A survey of hospitals in Shanghai in early 1953 reveals that they had severe issues of workforce shortages. Demand for nursing jobs was drying up, thanks to drastic cuts in benefits; nurse pay had been consistently cut, and many hospitals stopped providing free food for nurses during their shifts (although no cuts were mentioned for feeding doctors). The Shanghai government incentivized hospitals to increase pay for nursing staff by offering to include hospital cadres in the work assignment bureaus, thus giving hospitals a voice in capturing skilled, educated workers.⁴²⁷ The

⁴²⁷ *Shanghaishi renshi ju guanyu shanghaishi weisheng ju zhaoshou shiye zhishifenzi peiyang wei zhuli hushi daiyu wenti de fuhan*, January 14, 1953, B23-4-788-18, Shanghai Municipal Human Affairs Office, SMA.

work assignment program, meanwhile was wrapping up its duties by mid-1953. The last bastion of unemployed intellectuals received increasingly inconvenient posts, such as jobs with urban oceanic trade offices, which could involve long stretches of time spent away from home for meager pay.⁴²⁸ Working for an ocean trade bureau was significantly less lucrative than working for a heavy industrial factory or management office.⁴²⁹ Not everything was bleak, however; the CCP put genuine effort into offering educated women opportunities for good non-academic jobs. The director of the Shanghai Telephone Company was a female intellectual at this juncture, for example.⁴³⁰ Educated, urban women may have found the new era to offer better economic opportunities than had previously existed. In general however, intellectuals outside academia had to deal with low wages, unequal treatment for “non-critical” workers (nurses as opposed to doctors, for example), and inconvenient jobs.

By mid-1953, the military was working to demobilize the intellectuals it had enlisted for the Korean War. As covered previously in this chapter, many in the military were highly suspicious of intellectuals, and felt that they had not performed their duties satisfactorily. Intellectuals in the PLA, however, had their own fair share of complaints about military life. In general, most intellectuals had been employed in the PLA logistical departments, which tended to involve mostly unsatisfying—if less dangerous—clerical work.⁴³¹ Intellectuals in the military

⁴²⁸ *Huadong xingzheng weiyuanhui renshi ju, huadong junzheng weiyuanhui laodong jiuye weiyuanhui guanyu xiezhu zhongyang diyi jixie gongye bu panbo gongye ju zhaoshou sishi ming shiye zhishifenzi de han*, March 4, 1953, B23-4-802-30, Shanghai Municipal Human Affairs Office, SMA.

⁴²⁹ *Shanghai haiyun guanli ju zhengzhi bu guanyu gaoji zhishifenzi huafen yuanze ji juti mingdan de tongzhi*, 1955, B7-2-79-1, Shanghai Municipal People’s Committee Transportation Office, SMA.

⁴³⁰ Shanghai Fortnightly Summary No. 11, February 25-March 10, 1955, CPR10, 13.

⁴³¹ *Zhongguo renmin jiefangjun huadong junqu ganbu bu dui zhixing junwei zong ganbu bu guanyu tiaozheng canjun zhishifenzi zhiwu yu jibie guiding de zhishi*, June 16, 1953, A39-2-220-7, East China Rear Military Command Military Supplies and Political Bureau, Chinese Communist East China Military Supply Production and Administrative Office Committee, Shanghai Municipal Military Supply Industry Union, Chinese Communist Party Shanghai Municipal Military Supply Industry Committee, Youth League of the Shanghai Municipal Military Supply Industry Work Committee, SMA. A small number of intellectuals did get a taste of frontline fighting—occasionally in special forces units (*tezhongbing*).

had a number of complaints. For one, they found that job performance had no bearing on their ability to advance in their careers or be promoted. Poorly-performing intellectual enlistees fared the same as those who had served with distinction. Moreover, intellectuals chafed under the military's demobilization plans, which moved them to the back of list for rehiring. Intellectuals who had left formal job positions were the last to reenter the civilian workforce. Intellectuals serving in Korea during 1952 had not escaped thought rectification work; many educated enlistees were just as busy with political study sessions in the field as their colleagues were back on the mainland.⁴³² The military's insistence on political study may have actually improved these intellectuals' job prospects after they had been demobilized, however—even if it was another source of stress while on deployment.

Over the course of the Korean War, enlisted intellectuals were not stagnant. Because there was so much dissatisfaction with clerical work, the PLA had shifted around its intellectuals to field hospitals, the post which seemed to generate the most job satisfaction. From 1952 to 1953, the number of intellectuals employed in field hospitals had grown from 16% to 46%. The majority of this increase was due to internal “adjustments” (*tiaozheng*) of military personnel as opposed to new enlistments.⁴³³ Despite the willingness of the PLA to adjust their assignments, intellectuals were generally unhappy with military life. Many expressed intense feelings of homesickness, and wished that they had never left their previous jobs or schools to enlist. Others felt that their fellow enlistees who had come from a working-class background looked down on them. A good number of enlisted intellectuals reported “faking a happy attitude” (*pi xiao rou bu*

⁴³² Ibid.

⁴³³ *Zhongguo renmin jiefangjun huadong junqu zhengzhi bu ganbu bu guanyu dui huadong junqu zhishu yiyuan tiaozheng canjun zhishifenzi jibie he zhiwu de qingkuang diaocha*, August 22, 1953, A34-2-220-18, East China Rear Military Command Military Supplies and Political Bureau, Chinese Communist East China Military Supply Production and Administrative Office Committee, Shanghai Municipal Military Supply Industry Union, Chinese Communist Party Shanghai Municipal Military Supply Industry Committee, Youth League of the Shanghai Municipal Military Supply Industry Work Committee, SMA.

xiao) while on the clock, but having negative thoughts in private.⁴³⁴ After being demobilized, intellectuals found that the military had not adequately provided them with transferable skills for work in or outside of academia, since most of their training in the field was ideological as opposed to practical (although, as we have seen, ideological credentials were in fact just as, if not more, important than technical know-how in this period).⁴³⁵ There is little mention in military documents of intellectuals who desired to continue in the military after the end of the conflict, suggesting that the overwhelming majority of educated enlistees were more than happy to be done with the PLA after returning home from Korea.

Unlike academic intellectuals, engineers, technicians, medical personnel, and artisans rarely engaged in political activism over the next few years. Nonetheless, the shifting climate in late 1955 heralded changes for their lives just as much as for their academic brethren. Cities like Shanghai undertook extensive reviews of intellectuals' working and living conditions in state bureaus that oversaw municipal industries, commerce, and arts production. Although the surveys reveal a similar set of a problems as those that plagued academic intellectuals, some were unique to these alternative professions. A survey of the Shanghai First Committee for Light Industry, which employed 116 intellectuals in total, revealed the importance of age. 80 out of those 116 were recent graduates, having graduated within the past two years. An additional 29 on top of that had graduated within the past three or four years, suggesting that the bureau prioritized intellectuals who had received degrees during the PRC Era. Young technicians expressed frustration with the few older intellectuals in the bureau, saying that they thought of themselves

⁴³⁴ Ibid.

⁴³⁵ Ibid.

as superior and refused to engage in joint research projects with their younger colleagues.⁴³⁶ The political situation was not unusual, with 37 out of 116 intellectuals having Youth League membership. Only 9 were full-fledged CCP members. Conservative political opinions, meanwhile, seemed to cross gendered lines. An unnamed female technician had previously been described as a “conservative retrogressive element,” but had improved her standing with the bureau administration by vigorously participating in the study sessions held at the end of the workday.⁴³⁷

Reports from the Third Bureau of Commerce in Shanghai demonstrate some of the unique problems faced by non-academic intellectuals. The bureau employed only 31 intellectuals, with 5 being classified as progressives (1 of which had been accepted into the CCP), 11 as centrists, 9 as retrogressives, and 6 as reactionaries. Dissatisfaction with their work was widespread among all intellectuals, however. “Compared to the rest of my graduating class,” one staff member said, “I advanced in my career much slower than they did and got paid less—all because I work in the Commerce Bureau and they work in the Industrial Bureau.”⁴³⁸ Others said that they felt trapped by a poor performance on the aptitude tests used for work assignment relative to their classmates. Those with the best scores invariably ended up in heavy industry, therefore earning better pay. Like academic intellectuals, however, these bureaucrats remained broadly supportive of the CCP. “The Communist Party genuinely represents the people’s interests,” one said. “Regardless of how the cadres or party members act contrary to our interest,” they added, however.⁴³⁹ Even still, it was difficult for these intellectuals to gain party

⁴³⁶ *Guoying shanghai disan zhiyaochang guanyu yinian lai dui jishuren yuan he zhishifenzi tuan jie jiaoyu gaizao gongzuo zongjie*, December 2, 1955, A49-1-32-37, Chinese Communist Shanghai Municipal First Committee for Light Industry, SMA.

⁴³⁷ *Ibid.*

⁴³⁸ *Zhonggong shanghaishi disan shangye ju weiyuanhui guanyu gaoji zhishifenzi guanxi wenti de baogao*, December 8, 1955, B123-3-199-64, Shanghai Municipal First Bureau of Commerce, SMA.

⁴³⁹ *Ibid.*

membership. At the First Bureau of Commerce, only 1 out of 40 intellectual employees was a CCP member. Many felt that their supervising cadres were exerting a negative impact on their careers, and criticized them for having an overly leftist mentality (*zuo de qingxu*).⁴⁴⁰

Some bureaus, such as the Yangzi Shipping Management Office, had already undertaken wage reforms by late 1955 that led to better pay for intellectual employees. Nevertheless, intellectuals involved in trade and transportation—about 480 in total, in Shanghai—were still dissatisfied with their seeming inability to make successful applications to join the CCP. Although 23 employees were already party members at the time of their hiring, only 2 additional intellectuals had gained party membership during their tenure at the bureau. As such, there was a good deal of frustration about barriers to potential career advancement.⁴⁴¹ The bureau's overseeing cadres, however, told a different story. Only 25% of intellectuals in the Yangzi Shipping Management Office were classified as progressives, which was somewhat lower than the numbers from other bureaus and schools. Moreover, a great deal of intellectual staff members were loathe to participate in political study when it was not mandatory. Many simply said that they were “too busy,” and neglected to attend study sessions.⁴⁴²

A survey of the First Committee for Heavy Industry paints a very different picture, considering the prioritization of heavy industrial production by the new regime. A full half of engineers employed in heavy industry were classified as progressives, which was a decent amount higher than national averages. 37.5% were classified as centrists, while 12.5% were classified as retrogressives. The bureau reported no reactionaries, which was already an anomaly,

⁴⁴⁰ *Shanghaishi diyi shangye ju zhengzhi bu guanyu gaishan dang yu zhishifenzi guanxi wenti de chebu guihua*, December 16, 1955, B123-3-36-1, Shanghai Municipal First Bureau of Commerce, SMA.

⁴⁴¹ *Zhonggong changjiang hangyun guanli ju Shanghai fenju weiyuanhui guanyu tuanjie yu gaizao zhishifenzi he gongcheng jishu ren yuan de guihua*, December 13, 1955, B7-2-79-11, Shanghai Municipal People's Committee Transportation Office, SMA.

⁴⁴² *Ibid.*

and implies that the most privileged positions (in terms of salary) were reserved for those with the best ideological credentials.⁴⁴³ Intellectuals in heavy industry also reported being quite enthusiastic with Communist rule; one said “the government and the party have resolved a number of great difficulties in our lives.” Others were impressed with the dramatic rise of industrial output in just a matter of years after 1949. It appears these engineers had been won over by the return to—and overtaking of—pre-war production levels.⁴⁴⁴ Despite a rosy picture overall, heavy industry engineers still voiced possible areas for improvements in their standards of living. Many were frustrated by a sense of “closed-doorism” (*guanmenzhuyi*) from the CCP, implying that they had difficulty getting membership applications accepted. Others described issues with housing; one reported living in an extremely small housing unit alongside 9 family members. Most had to sleep on the floor (*dadipu shui*) at night.⁴⁴⁵

The Shanghai Literature and Arts Office reported a decent amount of dissatisfaction, on the other hand, among intellectual employees. Many described having a job that they derived little personal satisfaction from (*youye wuwu*). A major source of fatigue among artisan intellectuals were the constant political meetings. Over the course of the past several years, many artisans engaged in passive resistance, claiming to be sick in order to avoid political study sessions. They were hardly ever truly sick—just “sick of meetings!” in the language of an investigative report.⁴⁴⁶ Artisans dealt with a significant number of financial hardships, often having to spend between 30 and 40% of their monthly income on rents. At the same time, some of their financial hardships may have been self-inflicted; it appears that many intellectuals tended

⁴⁴³ *Zhonggong shanghaishi diyi zhonggongye weiyuanhui zuzhi bu guanyu dang dui zhishifenzi guanxi wenti de diaocha jianbao*, December 14, 1955, A43-1-104-1, Shanghai Municipal First Committee for Heavy Industry, SMA.

⁴⁴⁴ *Ibid.*

⁴⁴⁵ *Ibid.*

⁴⁴⁶ *Ge Zhicheng, Jin Zhonghua, Zhou Gucheng deng guanyu shanghaishi gaoji zhishifenzi gongzuo, shenghuo xuexi yixie zhuyao qingkuang de zonghe baogao*, December 25, 1955, B9-2-62-22, Shanghai Municipal People’s Committee Literature and Art Office, SMA.

to favor sending their children to the few private schools that still existed, where tuition costs were a major loss of income.⁴⁴⁷

Although non-academic intellectuals may not have been as active politically as their counterparts, they still struggled from similar issues of meager incomes and inadequate housing assignments. A sort of institutional inequality had settled in, with intellectuals employed in vital industries—like heavy industry—enjoying better standards of living than those involved in commerce or the arts. Intellectuals assigned to the most coveted positions usually performed better on aptitude tests, and also demonstrated more conviction in state ideology than others, suggesting that a combination of deficiencies in skill and politics could hold an intellectual back in their career—even if they had taken steps to improve. As the government moved to address the concerns of intellectuals more forcefully in the coming year, non-academic intellectuals were central to the reform efforts. It is impossible to have a comprehensive understanding of the history of intellectuals in the 1950s without factoring in the experiences of these professionals.

Conclusion

The 1953-1955 years were some of the least dramatic in the grand scope of the first decade of Communist rule. Gone were the fervent mobilization campaigns of the early years, and the epochal strife of the Anti-Rightist Campaign and the cataclysmic Great Leap Forward had not yet come to pass. Nonetheless, the intervening three years exposed the fault lines at the heart of the political drama that bookended them. The government, initially satisfied with its progress at establishing control over the nation's schools in 1952, encouraged cadres to adopt a more lenient approach at the outset of the period. In addition, the state encouraged cadres to be more

⁴⁴⁷ Ibid.

attentive to the issues facing intellectuals—a meaningful, if vague, pronouncement. Even as it targeted individual scholars like Hu Shi, Hu Feng, or Liang Shuming, the national government backed off its policy of focusing on intellectuals collectively. Cadres on the ground, meanwhile, grew resentful of what they perceived as intellectual arrogance and privilege. For cadres, who had undeniably lacked the opportunities afforded many urban, middle-class intellectuals, the national government’s plans to rehabilitate most intellectuals must have felt like a betrayal of its egalitarian objectives. Evidence suggests that intellectuals tended, despite their issues, to enjoy better standards of living than most workers. Intellectuals, meanwhile, grew increasingly willing to complain about poor treatment from cadres, food shortages, low wages, inadequate housing supply, and other issues. These concerns were echoed by intellectuals working outside academia. The national government responded to the growing enmity between cadres and intellectuals with a brief campaign to study Marxist materialism and reject bourgeois idealism, which focused on bringing the two groups together. Nevertheless, the campaign had little effect on cross-class unity.

All three entities therefore had crisscrossing agendas—the government wanted to stabilize the state of China’s education system and promote unity, cadres wanted policies designed to further level the playing field, and intellectuals wanted the state to improve their standards of living. This placed the national government in the unenviable position of having to choose. It ultimately decided to side with the intellectuals, and took further steps to improve intellectuals lives and solicit their opinions in the coming years. This chapter has argued for two crucial conclusions about the path toward pro-intellectual policy. First, intellectuals themselves played a major role in securing better livelihoods for themselves. Although the central government ultimately had decision-making authority, intellectuals—especially in academia—

had become increasingly willing to speak out and demand better working and living conditions. As such, the favorable policies of 1956 were just as much won by intellectuals as they were granted by the state. Second, cadres were considerably unenthused about these changes. An expansion of privileges for intellectuals sounded a lot like institutional inequality to working-class cadres, many of whom had joined the Communist Party out of conviction for its message of egalitarianism. The protests of cadres would ultimately influence the state to turn back against intellectuals in 1957. The 1953-1955 years thus reveal the political logic underlying the rest of the decade.

CHAPTER 5: THE HEYDAY OF THE INTELLECTUALS, 1956

The years leading up to 1956 saw a sharp spike in politicking from below, as intellectuals increasingly grew restless from declining or stagnating standards of living and were inclined to speak up about their hardships. 1956 saw a massive, wide-ranging reckoning with the status of Chinese intellectuals across the country (or at least in urban areas, where most intellectuals tended to congregate). The Communist state had accomplished a sweeping transformation of society by 1956, having taken steps toward the total collectivization of agriculture in the countryside and the near-elimination of private businesses and education in the cities.⁴⁴⁸ The government could now look to a future in which technological progress might be used to build upon the policies laid down in the first half of the decade, helping the country fully realize the socialist dream.⁴⁴⁹ In the government's view, intellectuals were linchpins in the dream of a technologically-advanced, socialist utopia that could exist in a world of nuclear-armed superpowers with ambitions to travel the stars. As such, many trends lined up to produce the energetic reforms of 1956.

I diverge somewhat from the literature on this period. Previous scholars have typically examined 1956 under the lens of the Hundred Flowers Campaign: a mass movement during which the government encouraged its people (especially intellectuals) to criticize government policy in an effort to bolster the state's agenda.⁴⁵⁰ Free speech certainly *was* a pressing issue for

⁴⁴⁸ The final stage in agrarian collectivization—the foundation of advanced cooperatives—had begun at the start of 1956. For a background on the steps the PRC government took to collectivize agricultural production, see Huaiyin Li, *Village China under Socialism and Reform: A Micro-History, 1948-2008* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2009), especially 23-49.

⁴⁴⁹ I am in line with Timothy Cheek's analysis of two strains of Chinese Communist thought: "bureaucratic Maoism" and "faith Maoism." I see the events of 1956 as representing an intertwining of these two strains. See *Propaganda and Culture in Mao's China*, 69-70.

⁴⁵⁰ Roderick MacFarquhar's landmark volume *The Hundred Flowers Campaign and the Chinese Intellectuals* (New York: Frederick A. Praeger, Inc., 1960) places the question of free speech and free criticism of government policy at the heart of his text. Theodore Chen, meanwhile does devote some space to the question of intellectuals' standards

many intellectuals, and paeans to Chinese scholars chafing under the suppression of free speech by the authoritarian CCP have captivated Western audiences for some time, especially during the Cold War. That being said, however, there were numerous other issues at stake for intellectuals, as the previous chapter has shown. In fact, free speech often took a backseat to more practical concerns with housing, salaries, and the ability to gain membership in the CCP. While I do not dispute any of the previous accounts of the critical year of 1956, I instead focus on these practical concerns instead of free speech. As such, I see 1956 as much more than simply the story of the Hundred Flowers Campaign; rather, it was the heyday of the intellectual class more broadly, when their litany of concerns was addressed most comprehensively by the state. Even when the state moved to crack down on intellectuals who used the opportunity to speak out against Communist rule the following year, the improvements in living standards were often there to stay. And it is this issue, perhaps more so than anything any right-leaning intellectual may have said to criticize the CCP, that provoked the ire of the cadres. Moreover, it was unusual for an intellectual to challenge the basic legitimacy of CCP rule; instead, many were content with the reforms undertaken by the government to assist them.

I approach the 1956 heyday with four angles. First and most significantly, intellectuals saw successes in their efforts to improve their standards of living. This process was far from centrally-directed, however; government documents from the era note the long-standing party doctrine of “implementing the most effective policy in accordance with local conditions.”⁴⁵¹ As such, the intellectual-dense city of Shanghai represents one of the best vantage points to view the changes of 1956. I treat the city as a primary case study of broader trends that spread outward

of living (see *Thought Reform of the Chinese Intellectuals*, 104-113), but nevertheless still frames his work around the question of the Hundred Flowers Campaign.

⁴⁵¹ *Zhonggong shanghaishi dong jiaoqu weiyuanhui guanyu zhishifenzi gongzuo wenti de fayangao*, February 23, 1956, A71-2-455-33, Chinese Communist Shanghai Municipal Suburban Work Committee, SMA.

during the year. Even in Shanghai, however, the municipal government oversaw but did not manage the movement to improve intellectuals' lives. Rather, individual *danwei* were most directly in charge of implementing the reforms jointly promulgated by the national government and the city.⁴⁵² As such, the process was messy, chaotic, and plagued by differences. Even as intellectuals had previously complained about inequalities within their professions—for example, those involved in commercial industries feeling less well-off than their colleagues in heavy industry (see Chapter 4)—the usage of *danwei* to implement reforms meant that institutional inequalities often persisted. Moreover, different age groups of intellectuals experienced different types of gains. For example, older intellectuals who were classified as “high-level” (*gaoji*; as opposed to “general,” or *yiban*) saw more significant gains during 1956 than their younger colleagues. Nevertheless, it is possible to draw out a number of universal ways in which Shanghai intellectuals saw livelihood betterments: greater access to food and transportation, better housing accommodations, and higher salaries.

Other ways in which the government responded to intellectuals' concerns reveal my second approach to understanding 1956. One document from the period speaks about the idea of entering a “new era,” marked by the full harnessing of electricity and atomic power.⁴⁵³ The state's plans for the future increasingly relied on the expertise of intellectuals, as politicians envisioned a socialist society based on knowledge capital. As such, cities like Shanghai invested enormous sums in research, libraries, book collections, and scientific materials. Intellectuals were expected to play an active role in the new era by popularizing education to the masses. A

⁴⁵² *Guanyu jiancha gaishan gaoji zhishifenzi gongzuo tiaojian de huibao*, August 16, 1956, B105-5-1643-20, Shanghai Municipal Bureau of Education, SMA.

⁴⁵³ *Zhonggong Shanghai shiwei dangxiao erbu jiaoyanshi guanyu diliuke “dang dui zhishifenzi de fangzhen, zhengce wenti” de baogao zhaiyao*, April 24, 1956, A76-2-253-25, Chinese Communist Shanghai Municipal Committee Party School, SMA.

third facet of the year was the party's opening of its own doors to intellectuals. Whereas some intellectuals had previously managed to gain membership in the CCP, 1956 saw a dramatic expansion of admittances for scholars. Many local bureaus received quotas for party membership applications among intellectual staff members that they had to pass on to superiors. In the wake of all these changes, however, non-intellectuals grew increasingly frustrated at the preferential treatment given by the government to scholars. This represents the fourth and final key aspect of the year: the shift from passive resentment to active resistance to pro-intellectual reforms. Cadres in charge of forwarding intellectuals' party membership applications, for example, might stall out the process. And some *danwei* showed little willingness to actually implement the reform policies proposed by the state. As such, the events of 1956 paved the way for the crackdown of 1957.

From Flower Gardens to Bus Services: Livelihood Improvements for Intellectuals

Shanghai intellectuals experienced across-the-board improvements to their standards of living over the course of 1956. These gains were at least somewhat hard-won, thanks to the activism of especially academic intellectuals during the preceding three years. Beyond that vague generalization, however, it is hard to draw concrete conclusions about how intellectuals' lives changed during 1956. The most common reforms were related to housing issues, salaries, access to food, and better transportation options. Nonetheless, different kinds of intellectuals saw different levels of improvement. Intellectuals in vital economic sectors like heavy industry saw perhaps the most preferential treatment during the year; affiliated *danwei*, for example, went so far as to undertake a beautification project for heavy industry engineers' apartments by planting flowers in a communal plot. For intellectuals in less vital industries, however, reforms might be

limited to just meager salary increases. Moreover, many of these reforms focused mainly on high-level intellectuals, such as tenured professors, advanced engineers, specialized doctors, or famous artists. It is likely that older intellectuals well into their careers thus benefitted disproportionately from many of the state's proposed reforms. Livelihood improvements came from a variety of sources, although they were usually spearheaded by the *danwei*. In some cases, however, municipal governments would step in to provide better health care options for intellectuals. Perhaps one of the most intriguing commonalities, however, was the disregard for intellectuals' political backgrounds when meting out standard-of-living reforms. In general, all intellectuals—progressives, centrists, retrogressives, and even reactionaries—saw improvements over the year. As such, 1956 truly represented a heyday for a wide swath of intellectuals, even if institutional inequalities persisted.

Some of the earliest efforts at reforms for intellectuals came, unsurprisingly, from heavy industry. Even though the iron and steel sector of the Shanghai economy only employed 589 intellectuals in total (3.75% of the total workforce), these intellectuals, primarily technicians, were vital to the city's emerging strength as a steel-manufacturing powerhouse. Public iron and steel companies found that one of the most effective ways of securing more free time for intellectual staff members was to hire assistants. In early 1956, the Shanghai municipal committee overseeing iron and steel made plans to hire 300 students from local schools to assist the overworked technical staff.⁴⁵⁴ Less vital industries, such as textiles, made less ambitious plans. The municipal committee overseeing textile production called for more conferences with industry intellectuals to better solicit their viewpoints. The committee did take concrete steps to encourage individual mills to reduce the “routine responsibilities” (*shiwu xing gongzuo*) that ate

⁴⁵⁴ *Shanghai gangtie gongsi guanyu zhishifenzi de gongzuo guihua*, 1956, A46-1-13-3, Chinese Communist Municipal Government of Shanghai Iron and Steel Industry Committee, SMA.

up intellectuals' working hours.⁴⁵⁵ Moreover, the committee called for need-based wage increases and for longer meal breaks during the workday so that older intellectuals could avoid the “push-and-squeeze queues” (*yongji paidui*) that characterized the lunchtime rush.⁴⁵⁶ These early reforms represent a testament to the uneven nature of the livelihood improvements to follow.

Intellectuals in academia, meanwhile, experienced divergent reforms as well. There is some evidence to suggest that the Shanghai Education Bureau took the city's directives to better care for intellectuals more seriously at the start of the year than non-academic management bureaus. One major effort among universities was to reduce “concurrent administrative work” (*jianren xingzheng gongzuo*) for professors to allow for more spare time. In addition, school administrations agreed to promote and support campus newspapers that might serve as forums for professors to share their research work and solicit feedback.⁴⁵⁷ The Education Bureau called for across-the-board wage increases for teachers and professors, even explicitly stating that intellectuals ought to receive favorable treatment (*youhou daiyu*).⁴⁵⁸ Wage increases came to academic individuals of all political classifications, thanks to the city's initiative to standardize wage criterion (*tongyi gongzi biao zhun*). This did not remove inequalities, however; wage increases were simply applied on top of existing salaries, which tended to favor progressive and sometimes centrist intellectuals at the expense of retrogressive or especially reactionary ones.

⁴⁵⁵ *Zhonggong shanghaishi guoying fangzhi gongye weiyuanhui guanyu Shanghai guoyin, zhongyang heying fangzhi gongye bumen 1956 nian zhishifenzi gongzuo de yaodian*, 1956, A47-1-63-22, Chinese Communist East China State-run Textile Industry Committee, Chinese Communist Shanghai Municipal State-run Textile Industry Committee, SMA.

⁴⁵⁶ *Ibid.*

⁴⁵⁷ *Shanghaishi 1956 nian dao 1957 nian zhishifenzi gongzuo gangyao*, 1956, A47-1-63-6, Chinese Communist East China State-run Textile Industry Committee, Chinese Communist Shanghai Municipal State-run Textile Industry Committee, SMA.

⁴⁵⁸ *1956 nian shanghaishi zhishifenzi gongzuo gangyao*, 1956, B105-5-1643-1, Shanghai Municipal Bureau of Education, SMA.

The city Education Bureau sought to assist intellectuals in saving their wages by expanding benefits, moreover; a full 2500 yuan was allotted in the yearly budget to cover medical procedures specifically for intellectuals, from surgery to therapy.⁴⁵⁹ As such, net increases in individual intellectuals' revenue came from expanded benefits in addition to salary hikes.

Intellectuals naturally greeted these early reform efforts with considerable support. It is important to note that, for many intellectuals, the period probably solidified their support for CCP rule instead of representing an opportunity to speak out as some did during the Hundred Flowers Campaign. A survey of several intellectuals in the First Bureau of Commerce in Shanghai reveals a good deal of resilient support for the government. Liang Zuhou, for example, was a 35-year-old engineer who was employed as a secondary school science teacher before liberation. Thanks to Shanghai's work assignment efforts, he had gotten a more prominent position as a technical engineer. Lu Xin (37 years old) credited the CCP's policies for rising from an assistant engineer position to a full-fledged engineering job after liberation. Zhu Kuai (42 years old) echoed these sentiments; he too saw a promotion shortly after 1949.⁴⁶⁰ Despite their general levels of support for the Communists, they still had suggestions for practical improvements. Liang asked for more standard guidelines and policies on conduction specialized commodity research. He echoed academic intellectuals in calling for a reduction in administrative work. Lu, meanwhile, asked for better transportation means—such as a bus service from the bureau's housing units to the office. Although the bureau administration promised to take these ideas into consideration, the first step taken was a 5-yuan increase to all

⁴⁵⁹ *Shanghaishi 1956 nian dao 1957 nian zhishifenzi gongzuo gangyao*, 1956, A47-1-63-6, Chinese Communist East China State-run Textile Industry Committee, Chinese Communist Shanghai Municipal State-run Textile Industry Committee, SMA.

⁴⁶⁰ *Shanghaishi diyi shangye ju guanyu xiafa gaoji zhishifenzi ji yiban zhishifenzi guihua tigang de tongzhi*, 1956, B123-3-199-3, Shanghai Municipal First Bureau of Commerce, SMA.

intellectual employees' monthly wages.⁴⁶¹ These cases suggest that “speaking out” was not tantamount to rejecting the leadership of the CCP—indeed, anti-party sentiments among intellectuals may have been more of a marginal view at this juncture. Additionally, these cases show that the state was aware of gaps between the treatment of older, high-level intellectuals and younger, “general” intellectuals.

Things were moving much more slowly outside of academia and vital industries. The Motor Transportation Office in Shanghai, for example, had to triage demands for better living accommodations. The office pledged to provide better housing for all intellectuals, but first prioritized its 6 engineers and 69 “most important” technicians.⁴⁶² Within the resource-strapped municipal Ministry of Culture, administrators could do little but acknowledge the problems facing intellectuals. The ministry was divided into a number of sub-department “systems,” such as the Opera System or the Socialist Culture System. More than 200 intellectuals (primarily stage performers) had jobs in these two systems. They complained about a lack of adequate time to fulfill their work responsibilities, much less actually discuss their work with colleagues or the administration. Most reported having to take their work home with them by practicing lines (*beitai*) at home, which interfered with their family life. Performing intellectuals noted that they had to take time away from their spouses and children to work, and rarely got any days off.⁴⁶³ For intellectuals outside of vital industries and academia, it would take months for the reforms to have any real transformative effect on their lives.

⁴⁶¹ Ibid.

⁴⁶² *Shanghaishi qiche yunshu gongsi 1956 nian dao 1967 nian zhishifenzi gongzuo guihua*, 1956, B154-4-223-16, Shanghai Municipal Communication and Transportation Office, SMA.

⁴⁶³ *Zhonggong shanghaishi wenhua ju zongzhi weiyuanhui guanyu baozheng gaoji zhishifenzi you liu fenzhi wu shijian yongyu yewu huodong de yixie qingkuang de fanying*, 1956, B172-1-601-18, Shanghai Municipal Ministry of Culture, SMA.

Medical professionals occupied a strange middle ground during the year. On one hand, doctors and nurses were expected to increase their responsibilities in order to accommodate demand for better health care among other intellectuals. On the other, medical personnel were almost as important for the broader reformist agenda as vital engineers. As such, *danwei* overseeing hospitals and clinics made a strong effort at improving the lives of their staff—except any reduction of working hours. Yili Hospital had already provided better housing units for 19 out of a total 37 intellectual staff members who had reported problems—a rate of 47.22%. The municipal Ministry of Hygiene had also requisitioned an additional 19,000 yuan for the entire year for the purchasing of better medical instruments and the funding of medical research. Hospital administrations made efforts to reduce administrative work, and allotted more time during the workday for rest and relaxation while on the clock (even if overall workday hours stayed consistent).⁴⁶⁴ Shanghai hospitals and clinics took a more methodological approach to disease treatment, investing resources into combatting the diseases most widely seen among other intellectuals, such as haemolysis (*rongxue*). At the same time, hospital administrators were also cognizant of repairing the gap between medical professionals and commoners. Cadres asked that doctors previously trained in Western medicine (*xiyi*) learn traditional Chinese medicine (*zhongyi*) in order to provide the kind of care that commoners were more familiar with. At the First Workers' Hospital in Shanghai, for example, roughly 50% of the staff was in the process of studying traditional Chinese medicine. Each *danwei* affiliated with a hospital or clinic promised to give roughly 30 doctors time to study and learn Chinese medicine.⁴⁶⁵

⁴⁶⁴ *Zhonggong shanghaishi weisheng ju weiyuanhui guanyu zhishifenzi gongzuo de zonghe qingkuang*, 1956, B242-1-875-1, Shanghai Municipal Ministry of Hygiene, SMA.

⁴⁶⁵ *Ibid.*

According to intellectuals, one of the more pressing reforms was increasing state investment in critical research projects. A Shanghai intellectual named Shi Ximin lobbied the municipal government in early 1956 to consider diverting more funds to research. Shi's speech also heaped praise on the city government, however, noting intellectuals' positive reception of the work assignment program.⁴⁶⁶ A report emerged out of the Number Five Cotton Factory, which had experienced successes in promoting production research and offered suggestions to other *danwei*. The factory had started its first small research group in 1953. The group was so successful at increasing outputs that management had expanded the number of research groups to 15 by the start of 1956. The factory also noted that reducing time spent in political study sessions—which were rescheduled so as to not interfere with intellectuals' workdays—improved productivity.⁴⁶⁷ On the surface, the factory was unremarkable despite its record of successes; it employed 82 intellectuals (16 of which were women). Nearly a quarter of these engineers and technicians had previously belonged to a reactionary political organization. However, factory management noted that the political leanings of the staff had shifted, remarkably, after overseeing cadres had improved wages and housing conditions.⁴⁶⁸ The experiences of Number Five Cotton Factory thus served as a pragmatic justification for the overall slate of reforms underway, and provided a strong example of the efficacy of research investments.

Intellectuals outside Shanghai were clearly aware of developments in the city, and had begun seizing upon the reforms underway to put pressure on their own municipal governments.

In Chongqing, for example, older intellectuals complained about the city's focus only on

⁴⁶⁶ *Shi Ximin guanyu shanghaishi 1956 nian dao 1957 nian zhishifenzi gongzuo gangyao de shuoming*, 1956, L1-1-82-59, Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference Shanghai Municipal Committee, SMA.

⁴⁶⁷ *Zhonggong shanghaishi guoying fangzhi gongye weiyuanhui bangongshi guanyu guo mianwuchang zai tuanjie, jiaoyu, gaizao zhishifenzi jishuren yuan zhong qingkuang de zongjie*, January 3, 1956, A47-1-63-96, Chinese Communist East China State-run Textile Industry Committee, Chinese Communist Shanghai Municipal State-run Textile Industry Committee, SMA.

⁴⁶⁸ *Ibid.*

younger scholars as well as the necessity of working on the weekends.⁴⁶⁹ Wuhan intellectuals described a feeling of “panic” (*konghuang*); they felt that the country as a whole had a bright future whereas they had few prospects. Researchers, doctors, and medical school students reported a lack of adequate instruments to provide care and do their jobs properly. Frustrations with low wages were widespread, and there was a prevailing sentiment in Wuhan that local intellectuals were paid less than their colleagues in Beijing or Shanghai.⁴⁷⁰ Intellectuals in Shaanxi Province, meanwhile, complained about a lack of a good working relationship with their overseeing cadres; they were “revered friends” (*weiyou*) to Shaanxi intellectuals, but not “close friends” (*miyou*). Similar supply problems were intense in Shaanxi. One doctor, for example, had to donate some of his own blood to a patient because of a lack of supply. Wages in Shaanxi ranged from 108 yuan to 566 yuan per month.⁴⁷¹ In the province of Yunnan, meanwhile, intellectuals were extremely unhappy with an overly hostile relationship with provincial officials. They described feeling “left behind” by the CCP, and asked for a reduction of administrative duties and more research funding.⁴⁷² These instances demonstrate the geographic scope of the kind of influence that the Shanghai reforms had. Across China, intellectuals felt that a better stake was attainable.

Overall, urbanites' standards of living showed signs of stabilization in early 1956, which would have affected the overall sense of livelihood stability among intellectuals. In the countryside, infrastructure projects such as land reclamation, irrigation, and flood control had done a good deal to ensure a more continuous supply chain of food to the cities, perhaps leading

⁴⁶⁹ *Chongqingshi gaoji zhishifenzi zhuangkuang*, January 9, 1956, LR-SPP.

⁴⁷⁰ Xu Ben, *Wuhan diqu gaoji zhishifenzi de qingkuang*, January 9, 1956, LR-SPP. There is little evidence to suggest that median salaries in hinterland cities like Wuhan were much lower than in the big coastal cities.

⁴⁷¹ Huang Cheng, *Shaanxisheng gaoji zhishifenzi qingkuang*, January 10, 1956, LR-SPP.

⁴⁷² *Yunnansheng gaoji zhishifenzi de qingkuang*, January 10, 1956, LR-SPP.

to some of the food-based reforms cities took regarding intellectuals.⁴⁷³ Many intellectuals felt that the Thought Reform Campaign had never really ended, considering the continuance of political study meetings. Nevertheless, these “rituals” of life in the PRC were rarely as intrusive as during the height of the campaign back in 1952.⁴⁷⁴ On January 23, the Shanghai government announced plans for reductions on land taxes, which was a major source of expenditures for intellectuals (alongside high rents). These tax deductions included privately-owned dwellings that were leased out, which further affected intellectual tenants.⁴⁷⁵ It does seem that rising taxes were a concern for some intellectuals; one Shanghai violinist reported having to sell his instrument just to meet tax hikes.⁴⁷⁶ Although intellectuals experienced a plethora of reforms aimed at them specifically, they also enjoyed modest improvements in overall urban standards of living. In other cases, however, the picture was far from rosy.

By February, a new vocabulary had emerged regarding the intellectuals’ conditions. The national government had identified “bureaucratism” (*guanliao zhuyi*) as a problematic trend, whereby intellectuals were given the run-around by complicated and inaccessible administrations unresponsive to their needs.⁴⁷⁷ In Shanghai, the assistant director of the municipal Ministry of Culture, Chen Yusan, suggested that party bureaucrats showed an erroneous tendency to let intellectuals “be as they please” (*fangren ziliu*). Chen argued that the real focus of the conferences and meetings in 1956 should be to “simplify the bureaucratic process”

⁴⁷³ O’Neill, China: Annual Review for 1955, January 16, 1956, CPR10, 194.

⁴⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, 194-195.

⁴⁷⁵ *Zhonggong Shanghai shiwei caijing gongzuo bu bangongshi guanyu liaojie gaoji zhishifenzi fang juan fudan qingkuang yu zuzhi chunjie gongying shangpin wenti de tongzhi*, January 23, 1956, B123-3-199-67, Shanghai Municipal First Bureau of Commerce, SMA.

⁴⁷⁶ Shanghai Political Summary No. 3, January 27-February 23, 1956, CPR10, 215.

⁴⁷⁷ MacFarquhar discusses bureaucratism in the context of the “three evils” cited by Mao in a speech the following year (the other two being subjectivism and sectarianism). See *The Hundred Flowers Campaign and the Chinese Intellectuals*, 35. Although the government’s specific targeting of these “three evils” may not have occurred until early 1957, cadres and intellectuals on the ground began describing problems with “bureaucratism” a year in advance of Mao’s speech.

(*guanliao zhuyi de jiandanhua*) by engaging intellectuals directly. Chen cited the example of the Shanghai Symphony Orchestra, in which members had tried to file complaints regarding housing for several years. Their overseeing cadres simply stonewalled them.⁴⁷⁸ Cadres overseeing meetings and conferences often tried to express more conciliatory attitudes towards intellectuals; at a meeting during the month in the First Committee for Heavy Industry, for example, one party bureaucrat said that “we would never want to forbid any intellectuals from assisting in the construction of socialism.” The speaker then asked intellectuals for patience, noting that their work was often poorly understood by cadres without a formal education.⁴⁷⁹ For their part, attendees seemed willing to express their views on problems with their standards of living, while still insisting on support for the CCP. At the First Committee for Heavy Industry meeting, for example, engineers generally expressed optimism about the state of national economic construction. One explained that he felt vindicated in his decision to return from living abroad in the US.⁴⁸⁰ Meetings were held in other cities as well, with similar results; at a conference in Beijing, Academy of Sciences president Guo Moruo spoke on behalf of patriotic, older intellectuals in declaring his support for the CCP. Still, Guo argued, China would do well to learn from the rest of the world—not just the Soviet Union.⁴⁸¹

In most cities, the municipal culture ministry was tasked with organizing meetings and conferences for intellectuals. In some cases, non-party intellectuals were even permitted to attend party conferences as non-voting delegates.⁴⁸² Official pronouncements regarding intellectuals’ livelihood reform was usually dispatched to all local organs of government via the culture

⁴⁷⁸ *Shanghaishi wenhua ju fujuzhang Chen Yusun guanyu zhishifenzi wenti de fayangao*, February, 1956, B172-1-601-65, Shanghai Municipal Ministry of Culture, SMA.

⁴⁷⁹ *Zhonggong shanghaishi diyi zhonggongye weiyuanhui guanyu zhishifenzi wenti zuotanhui qingkuang jianbao*, February, 1956, A43-1-29-16, Shanghai Municipal First Committee for Heavy Industry, SMA.

⁴⁸⁰ *Ibid.*

⁴⁸¹ Guo Moruo, *Zai shehuizhuyi geming gaochao zhong zhishifenzi de shiming*, February 1, 1956, RR.

⁴⁸² *Zhonggong zhongyang guanyu zhishifenzi wenti de zhishi*, February 24, 1956, LR-SPP.

ministry, which would then organize a set number of meetings. Individual *danwei* had to nominate between two and five representatives from their intellectual staff to attend. Representatives were expected to give speeches regarding their living and working conditions that could be transcribed by and disseminated within the wider municipal government. Intellectual representatives were asked to keep their remarks to under 2500 characters.⁴⁸³ As in the meetings already held, attendees tended to express a mix of positive and negative feedback regarding CCP governance. At a meeting of the Shanghai First Bureau of Commerce, for example, attendees complained that they had few to no opportunities to learn new skills while on the job, thus further stagnating their future career prospects. They argued that colleagues in other bureaus generally had more opportunities to pick up vocational skills.⁴⁸⁴ It seems that many intellectuals feared that criticism was not welcome, and shied away from speaking out. Cadres argued to the contrary however, citing an example of an engineer who had made several criticisms regarding a lack of efficiency in the production process (*jiagong chengpin*). To the engineer's surprise, his concerns were taken seriously by management, and his factory enjoyed increasing outputs soon afterward.⁴⁸⁵

Not every bureau or industry held formal meetings. The Shanghai Railroad Bureau used a more relaxed setting to connect cadre administrators with intellectual employees: tea parties. At one such gather, intellectuals seemed generally invigorated by the national changes underway. Commenting on Zhou Enlai's remarks regarding intellectuals' issues, one railroad employee said it was as though the Premier's words "could've come from my own heart."⁴⁸⁶ At the same time,

⁴⁸³ *Zhonggong Shanghai shiwei bangongshi guanyu zai dangnei chuanda he guanche zhixing zhongyang zhishifenzi wenti huiyi de tongzhi*, February 16, 1956, B172-1-601-1, Shanghai Municipal Ministry of Culture, SMA.

⁴⁸⁴ *Zhonggong shanghai shi disan shangye ju weiyuanhui guanyu gaoji zhishifenzi guanxi wenti de baogao*, February 21, 1956, B123-3-199-73, Shanghai Municipal First Bureau of Commerce, SMA.

⁴⁸⁵ *Ibid.*

⁴⁸⁶ *Tiedao bu shanghai tielu guanli ju zhengzhi bu xuanchuan bu guanyu zhishifenzi gongzuo de baogao*, May, 1956, B7-2-135-25, Shanghai Municipal People's Committee Transportation Office, SMA.

these intellectuals were discouraged by problems in their living situation. In many cases, intellectuals described living in a single-room housing unit alongside three other adults. They also experienced problems with electrical outages and poor lighting, which affected their ability to study political texts or technical manuals needed for their work.⁴⁸⁷ Whether through letter-writing, formal conferences, or informal tea ceremonies, intellectuals had a wide array of options for communicating with their overseers and expressing their views—both positive and negative—about their situations.

By March, the Shanghai government had therefore collated a good deal of information about intellectuals' livelihoods. The city decided to focus on two key issues: administrative work and health care improvements. The city announced the “one person, one post” principle (*yiren yizhi yuanze*), which was violated when intellectuals were tasked with administrative duties on top of their actual job duties.⁴⁸⁸ This was a highly achievable goal for all professions that employed intellectuals, especially in comparison to expensive reforms such as housing or salary increases. The Shanghai Children's Press, for example, committed to reducing concurrent posts and administrative work for its writers, illustrators, and editors. At the same time, the publishing agency, far from the most “vital” agency in the city, made no mention of wage raises.⁴⁸⁹ The city also focused on health care, promising more treatment options and greater affordability. At the same time, the municipal government managed expectations by noting that reforms would take time; officials said that a full expansion of health care coverage might not be completed for at least two years.⁴⁹⁰ Even heavy industry engineers were frustrated by the lack of concrete wage

⁴⁸⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁸⁸ *Zhonggong shanghaishi diyi shangye ju weiyuanhui guanyu Shanghai 1956 nian dao 1957 nian zhishifenzi gongzuo gangyao*, March, 1956, B123-3-36-22, Shanghai Municipal First Bureau of Commerce, SMA.

⁴⁸⁹ *Shaonian ertong chubanshe guanyu gongzuo, ganbu yu zhishifenzi gongzuo de guihua*, March, 1956, B167-1-130-42, Shanghai Municipal Publishing Office, SMA.

⁴⁹⁰ *Zhonggong shanghaishi diyi shangye ju weiyuanhui guanyu Shanghai 1956 nian dao 1957 nian zhishifenzi gongzuo gangyao*, March, 1956, B123-3-36-22, Shanghai Municipal First Bureau of Commerce, SMA.

increases by March, arguing that they had contributed to production increases to a disproportionate extent compared to compensation.⁴⁹¹

The city sought to discover new ways at promoting channels for intellectuals to air their views in mid-March. The local *Liberation Daily* publishing office launched a new effort to focus on intellectuals outside of heavy industry, which the chief editor described as having been “looked down on” (*qingshi*). In addition, the paper would pay more attention to reporting on the cultural and educational lives of intellectuals, as opposed to just professional successes.⁴⁹² For academic intellectuals that could not attend conferences, moreover, the local Higher Education Bureau encouraged professors to write letters. As of the beginning of the month, the bureau had already received 47 such letters. One such letter came from Liu Yongye, who was living abroad in America during 1949. She stayed in the US until 1952, although illness had prevented her from finding steady employment. Even as she dutifully participated in the mass campaigns, she bounced around from temp job to temp job.⁴⁹³ Another letter came from Zhang Yuanfeng, who had a similar story to Liu. Zhang too was living in America during the revolution, but returned to Beijing shortly after liberation. Zhang dealt with chronic illness that made it difficult to keep a job. His family had ultimately decided to move from Beijing to Shanghai in the hopes that he might find a tenured academic job.⁴⁹⁴ The experiences of Liu and Zhang may have added urgency to the city’s initiatives to improve health care access for intellectuals.

⁴⁹¹ *Zhonggong shanghaishi diyi zhonggongye weiyuanhui xuanchuan bu guanyu zhishifenzi gongzuo de qingkuang jianbao*, March 10, 1956, A43-1-29-26, Shanghai Municipal First Committee for Heavy Industry, SMA.

⁴⁹² *Jiefang ribao she bianji bu feixing jihui huiyi jilu*, March 13, 1956, A73-1-244-7, Liberation Daily Publishing Office, SMA.

⁴⁹³ *Shanghaishi gaodeng jiaoyu guanli ju guanyu 1956 nian 1 yue 5 ri - 2 yue 29 ri renmin laixin zhong zhishifenzi laixin ji chuli qingkuang de baogao*, March 13, 1956, B243-1-73-96, Shanghai Municipal Ministry of Higher Education, SMA.

⁴⁹⁴ *Ibid.*

During the second half of March, bureaus around Shanghai began to submit reports regarding the livelihoods of the intellectuals they employed, giving us a further glimpse into the issues facing the knowledge class. Some industrial engineers registered complaints regarding the importation of Soviet texts and technical manuals, which were often difficult to process for intellectuals not fluent in Russian. To the extent that intellectuals in Shanghai were bilingual, English was by far the most common second language, not Russian.⁴⁹⁵ Cadres from heavy industry were in general more accommodating toward engineers, who cadres saw as being perhaps more diligent in their ideological reform than colleagues in other industries. Heavy industry administrations pledged to try to eliminate the boundaries between them and their engineering and technical staff.⁴⁹⁶ Meanwhile, a report from the Inland Shipping Administrative Office revealed that many employed intellectuals (33 in total; 4 engineers and 29 technicians) were frustrated by a seeming lack of relevance of their duties to their academic training. Many had worked in very different careers before 1949. Few possessed relevant academic degrees. Data on the political leanings of the Inland Shipping staff reveal that they were still at least broadly lukewarm toward CCP rule, however; with 14 progressives, 14 centrists, and only 4 retrogressives.⁴⁹⁷

Perhaps in response to some of these reports praising the genuine ideological reform among intellectuals, various levels of government began to shift to a discourse of praise regarding intellectuals' collective political beliefs. An editorial in *People's Daily* on March 21, for example, extolled the "successes" of intellectuals in undergoing genuine thought

⁴⁹⁵ *Zhonggong shanghai shi diyi zhonggongye weiyuanhui xuanchuan bu guanyu zhishifenzi gongzuo de qingkuang jianbao*, March 10, 1956, A43-1-29-26, Shanghai Municipal First Committee for Heavy Industry, SMA.

⁴⁹⁶ *Zhonggong zhongguo renmin haijun Shanghai xiuzao chuanchang weiyuanhui guanyu zhishifenzi guihua de yijian*, March 17, 1956, A44-2-92-19, Shanghai Municipal Second Committee for Heavy Industry, SMA.

⁴⁹⁷ *Shanghai shi neihe hangyun guanli ju guanyu zhishifenzi guihua de wenjian*, March 17, 1956, B153-2-156-1, Shanghai Municipal Inland Shipping Administrative Office, SMA.

rectification. Even retrogressive elements, according to the author, had come to have a grudging respect for the party's practical accomplishments.⁴⁹⁸ Other papers like *Liberation Daily* continued to try and better capture the lives of intellectual and convey their opinions to a mass audience. At a meeting in the *Liberation Daily* publishing office on March 28, the chief editor suggested that the paper move away from quoting the views of national officials (namely Zhou Enlai) regarding intellectuals, and instead conduct actual interviews of local scholars.⁴⁹⁹ These examples suggest a culture of conciliation promoted by state media, far removed from the skeptical view of the intellectual class that had been promulgated earlier in the decade. The Communist Party was increasingly interested in challenging the portrait of the intellectuals that it had itself created. A more conciliatory national climate built upon policy changes already underway, leading to more tangible benefits for intellectuals. The Shanghai government, for example, had begun seizing foreign-held properties, such as an apartment complex owned by British diplomats. The property owners were told that they had to lease vacant rooms to Chinese intellectuals.⁵⁰⁰

A number of changes in the world of academia in early April brought benefits to scholars in the ivory tower. The Shanghai branch of the Academy of Sciences led the way in promoting healthier work schedules. The academy announced a new policy whereby political study and meetings would only occur on Saturdays, whereas the Monday through Friday workweek would be reserved for actual job duties. Moreover, evening hours every Thursday were cut to allow researchers more free time. The academy proposed to cut the overall time spent in meetings for

⁴⁹⁸ Lin Yushi, *Zhishifenzi sixiang gaizao de daolu*, March 21, 1956, RR.

⁴⁹⁹ *Jiefang ribao she bianji bu feixing jihui huiyi jilu*, March 28, 1956, A73-1-244-9, Liberation Daily Publishing Office, SMA.

⁵⁰⁰ Shanghai Political Summary No. 4, February 24-March 22, 1956, CPR10.

intellectuals from 4-6 hours to 2-4.⁵⁰¹ Moreover, the academy argued that extra administrative work was “a waste of professors’ time,” and pledged to reduce such responsibilities. Perhaps in an effort to improve access to political study materials, the academy also announced funding for a new “Marxist-Leninist Materials Reading Room” in the library.⁵⁰² The municipal government, meanwhile, had been studying the problem of food supply for schools and universities. Many campuses were built far away from food markets, making it difficult for school representatives to purchase an adequate amount of food. The city mandated that a dedicated amount of food at all Shanghai markets be reserved specifically for education institutions.⁵⁰³ Individual intellectuals, meanwhile, could acquire new “purchasing cards” (*goumai zheng*) for their personal food consumption. The Shanghai government announced plans to steadily increase the funds for these cards.⁵⁰⁴ For schools lying further away from downtown Shanghai, the problem was more complex. Teachers in these schools complained that the food they were able to consume in their cafeterias was insufficient, and as such they had to supplement their diets with gruel at home. The city government encouraged its education bureaus to establish better lines with its grain management bureaus in order to ensure that basic foodstuffs could be dispatched in greater amounts to suburban schools.⁵⁰⁵

Thus far, numerous documents mentioned the need to reduce inefficient “administrative work” for intellectuals. A report from the Shanghai Medical Workers’ Union gives an insight

⁵⁰¹ *Zhonggong Shanghai shiwei xuexiao gongzuo bu bangongshi guanyu Shanghai ge gaodeng xuexiao guanche shiwei zhishifenzi gongzuo gangyao de chubu qingkuang baogao*, April 3, 1956, B243-1-73-52, Shanghai Municipal Ministry of Higher Education, SMA.

⁵⁰² *Ibid.*

⁵⁰³ *Guanyu fangang gaoji zhishifenzi fushipin goumai zheng wenti de baogao*, April 3, 1956, B6-1-52-6, Shanghai Municipal People’s Committee Money-Food Trade Office, SMA.

⁵⁰⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵⁰⁵ *Zhonggong shanghaishi dongjiaoqu weiyuanhui wenhua jiaoyu gongzuo bu guanyu yibufen chudeng xuexiao, chuanda zhishifenzi wenti baogao de qingkuang baogao*, June 29, 1956, A71-2-1071-15, Chinese Communist Shanghai Municipal Suburban Work Committee, SMA.

into the kinds of administrative work that intellectuals might be required to do. Technicians in the union were expected to attend a variety of meetings, usually centered around four topics: (1) productivity (*shenchang hui*), quality of service (*yewu zuotanhui*), exchange of experiences (*jingyan jiaoliu hui*), and small group discussions (*xiaozu taolun*). The union pledged to reduce or eliminate these meetings.⁵⁰⁶ In addition, the union took on responsibilities to offer better life-enrichment activities to its intellectual staff. For example, the union promised to arrange for weekend transportation to nearby Suzhou, where many employees had family. The union also announced investment into local “culture clubs,” pending a review of intellectuals’ hobbies and interests to see what kinds of activities would be most suitable.⁵⁰⁷ Other businesses, such as the Shanghai Cement Plant, built off of these reforms and introduced new facilities for free time and relaxation at the work site. The plant administration announced plans for a billiards table, a tennis court, and a volleyball court on-site for intellectual staff members.⁵⁰⁸ Outside academia, bureaus and public corporations began to look at ways to offer new experiences during the workday in addition to broader livelihood reforms.

Problems still existed surrounding intellectuals’ wages, however. A study of differences in compensation between intellectuals and chauffeurs employed by foreign embassies revealed that chauffeurs usually made more than an entire intellectual household; in one case, a professor and his wife were living on 100 yuan per month combined, whereas the chauffeur (working for the British Consulate-General) made 120 per month.⁵⁰⁹ Although 100 yuan per month is probably on the low end of what most intellectuals made around the country, there certainly are

⁵⁰⁶ *Shanghai yiwu gongzuozhe gonghui 1956 dao 1957 nian zhishifenzi gongzuo yaodian*, April 5, 1956, C3-1-72-4, Shanghai Municipal Medical Workers’ Union, SMA.

⁵⁰⁷ *Ibid.*

⁵⁰⁸ *Zhonggong Shanghai disan zhonggongye weiyuanhui guanyu yinfa Shanghai shuinichang dangzongzhi 1956-1957 nian zhishifenzi guihua de tongzhi*, April 6, 1956, A45-1-12-53, Shanghai Municipal Third Committee for Heavy Industry, SMA.

⁵⁰⁹ Shanghai Political Summary No. 5, March 23-April 5, 1956, CPR10, 223.

cases of pitifully low salaries. An art scholar in Beijing, Chen Banding, had to make ends meet on a salary of 80 yuan per month—and he calculated his monthly expenses at 800 yuan! Chen was reliant on selling his own art and leasing out his housing unit to make up the difference.⁵¹⁰ Intellectuals reliant on selling their own work, such as artists or writers, faced difficulties finding publishers who were willing to publish their work for political reasons (or based on the intellectual's age).⁵¹¹ The Shanghai government, building off of its successes with food purchasing cards, instituted a new system for health care cost reimbursements for intellectuals on April 6. Previously, intellectuals were allotted a flat stipend that could be spent on medical expenses. After the new policies, however, intellectuals simply had to write “public expense” (*gongfei*) on their medical receipts, and their treatments would be paid for in full.⁵¹² Even as high costs and low salaries continued to plague scholars, the Shanghai government continued to pursue creative policies to increase the amount of cash in an intellectual's pocket.

Intellectuals with greater reputations had a wider array of strategies available in order to secure higher salaries than the average scholar. In one odd case, a semi-famous opera performer Ge Jiaotian managed to get the Beijing Opera and the Shanghai Opera into a bidding war over his contract, which was ultimately won by the Shanghai Opera. After moving to Shanghai in May, Ge received a salary of 800 yuan per month. Although no data exists regarding the average pay for all intellectuals in Shanghai (much less nationwide) at this point, other documents suggests that Ge's salary was between two and eight times what most intellectuals were making per month.⁵¹³ Later on in June, the director of the Shanghai Historical Documents Library, Gu

⁵¹⁰ Sun Shikai, *Beijing lao xuezhe de xuexi yanjiu he shengkuo qingkuang*, April 6, 1956, LR-SPP.

⁵¹¹ Ibid.

⁵¹² *Guanyu gaoji zhishifenzi yiyaoferi de baoxiao banfa*, April 6, 1956, B6-1-52-3, Shanghai Municipal People's Committee Money-Food Trade Office, SMA.

⁵¹³ *Shanghaishi wenhua ju guanyu zhishifenzi gongzuo de guihua*, May, 1956, B172-1-757-6, Shanghai Municipal Ministry of Culture, SMA.

Yanlong, was able to negotiate a raise. The city's Ministry of Culture oversaw both Ge and Gu's contracts, thus showing a degree of prioritization on behalf of the ministry—most intellectual employees did not see salary increases until later in 1956. For both Ge and Gu, the ministry was more responsive to improving salaries and finding better housing accommodations in part due to their stature.⁵¹⁴ For non-vital agencies, any reforms undertaken during the first half of the year may have exacerbated inequalities among intellectual staff members.

The city followed up new policies regarding food and health care with stipulations regarding work hours. A speech in the municipal Political Consultative Congress called for a new “Five-Sixths Policy” (*liu fenzhi wu zhengce*) which meant that five out of six working days should be reserved for actual job duties as opposed to meetings or political study (thus resembling the new policies at the Shanghai branch of the Academy of Sciences). In addition, the speech called for a standardized 40-hour work week for intellectuals.⁵¹⁵ The government also directed the Municipal Real Estate Management Office to help find space around Shanghai for the construction of scientific laboratories, and approved the construction of 500 new housing units. Intellectuals would be given priority when assigning new housing. The speech also encouraged local scholars to pursue study abroad options in “friendly” countries (*xiongdì guojia*)—presumably, those in the socialist bloc.⁵¹⁶ In order to facilitate better “recuperation”

⁵¹⁴ *Zhonggong shanghaishi wenhua ju dangzu guanyu jiaqiang zhishifenzi gongzuo qingkuang de huibao*, June 18, 1956, B172-1-601-34, Shanghai Municipal Ministry of Culture, SMA.

⁵¹⁵ *Zhonggong Shanghai shiwei guanyu shanghaishi 1956 nian dao 1957 nian zhishifenzi gongzuo de gangyao*, April 6, 1956, L1-1-82-49, Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference Shanghai Municipal Committee, SMA. Later documents echo the Five-Sixths Policy; in practice, this meant that Mondays through Fridays were to be spent on work, while Saturdays were reserved for meetings and study sessions. However, there is little documentation regarding the implementation of a 40-hour work week. It seems likely that intellectuals continued to work long hours even during 1956.

⁵¹⁶ *Ibid.*

(*liaoyang*) during work hours, the city also approved the delivery of 31 bed units to local schools, hospitals, and bureaus for intellectuals to take naps while at work.⁵¹⁷

In mid-April, heavy industry factories began leading the way in providing more benefits in response to intellectual employees' needs. Affiliated bureaus would haphazardly conduct surveys of employed intellectuals, which included their political histories, the quality and quantity of their work, and their living situations outside of work. In heavy industry factories, the most common reported problems were related to diet, means of transportation, and housing.⁵¹⁸ For diets, many factories had begun a new regimen whereby a corner table was reserved in the factor mess hall specifically for intellectuals, who could "come and eat as they please" (*sui dao sui chi*) at any point during the workday. This policy proved highly popular among surveyed engineers. For transportation, the factory *danwei* commissioned a number of bus shuttles to travel between the *danwei* residencies and the factory. In some specific industries, intellectuals experienced better transportation accommodations while on the job. At the Post and Telecommunications Company, for instance, part of intellectuals' jobs was to inspect various sites around Shanghai to ensure proper flow of both electricity and mail. Often, the distances between sites were so great that inspectors could only visit two sites per day. However, their overseeing *danwei* announced plans for a bus service to shuttle inspectors from site to site, allowing for two sites to be visited every three hours.⁵¹⁹ Although the report promised to provide better accommodations for intellectuals living in cramped quarters, affiliated *danwei* also focused on housing beautification. One engineer, Zhang Jueya, had complained about a generally

⁵¹⁷ *Shanghaishi gonghui lianhehui laodong baoxian bu guanyu songshang jiaoyu, yiwu, wenyi chanye gaoji zhishifenzi fang'an de han*, April 12, 1956, C8-1-175-2, Shanghai Culture and Arts Workers' Association Arrangement Department, Shanghai News Publishing Association, SMA.

⁵¹⁸ *Zhonggong shanghaishi diyi zhonggongye weiyuanhui bangongshi guanyu gaoji zhishifenzi gongzuo de qingkuang baogao*, April 13, 1956, A43-1-29-36, Shanghai Municipal First Committee for Heavy Industry, SMA.

⁵¹⁹ *Zhonggong shanghaishi youdian weiyuanhui guanyu zhishifenzi guihua zhixing qingkuang de zonghe baogao*, June 8, 1956, B7-2-135-32, Shanghai Municipal People's Committee Transportation Office, SMA.

unattractive living environment. As such, the factory management planted a new flower garden outside of his house.⁵²⁰ From flower gardens to bus services, intellectuals were seeing their livelihoods improve in a multitude of ways.

Although the majority of the reforms underway at this point benefitted older intellectuals, the CCP did not abandon its hope for a generational change within the scholarly community. The government maintained its interest in fostering a communist ethos among rising intellectual youth. The national government had established May 4 as “Youth Day,” commemorating the May Fourth Movement of 1919. Municipal governments in Beijing, Tianjin, Shenyang, and Shanghai all held extravagant festivals to commemorate Youth Day and the May Fourth anniversary in 1956. The events, which included movie screenings and competitive athletic events, catered to current students.⁵²¹ In Shanghai, the municipal government went a step further by holding a young intellectuals’ representative conference (*qingnian zhishifenzi daibiao huiyi*) shortly after May 4, which was attended by about 1900 young scholars. Overall, young scholars represented a growing percentage of the intellectual workforce in Shanghai, with 60% of scientific researchers and about half of educators being considered “young” (usually, this meant 35 or younger).⁵²² These events show that the Communist Party never moved away from its vision of a future generation of ideologically-committed experts. The slate of reforms for older, more experienced intellectuals represented a shift in tactics but not overall strategy.

In July, the Shanghai Municipal Government began taking more active steps at improving local intellectuals’ lives. The government called on all *danwei* employing intellectuals

⁵²⁰ *Zhonggong shanghaishi diyi zhonggongye weiyuanhui bangongshi guanyu gaoji zhishifenzi gongzuo de qingkuang baogao*, April 13, 1956, A43-1-29-36, Shanghai Municipal First Committee for Heavy Industry, SMA.

⁵²¹ *Beijing, Tianjin, Shenyang qingnian huandu qingnianjie: Shanghai zhaokai qingnian zhishifenzi daibiao huiyi*, May 5, 1956, RR.

⁵²² *Ibid.*

to supply more consultation materials like books or scientific instruments for their staff. For intellectuals who may have had older degrees, *danwei* were encouraged to facilitate them taking “refresher courses” (*jinxiu*) at local universities to improve their job performance. The city also called on *danwei* to invest more resources into hiring research assistants and offered the services of the city’s zoning committee to find housing spaces for *danwei* seeking to improve the living situation of its intellectuals.⁵²³ The Shanghai government acknowledged that many intellectuals still had not seen improvements, only slogans (*kouhao*). The city attempted to rationalize the process by submitting the following questionnaire to all intellectual-employing *danwei*:

- a. How many intellectuals were employed in the *danwei*, and what were their work conditions like—i.e., how many were Party members, what was their pay, what were their ideological backgrounds, etc.?
- b. What steps had been taken to identify and reduce administrative work?
- c. In what ways have the *danwei* provided the necessary supplies—books, instruments, and facilities—for research?
- d. Have *danwei* provided an adequate number of assistants (*fuzhu ren yuan*) to assist intellectuals in their numerous duties?
- e. What have the *danwei* done to improve the transportation and living situations facing intellectuals?
- f. Are there any ways in which the Real Estate Management Bureau could assist companies and/or schools in providing research facilities, student/teacher housing, or other necessary buildings?

⁵²³ *Shanghaishi renmin weiyuanhui guanyu gaishan gaoji zhishifenzi gongzuo tiaojian de jiancha tigang*, July 3, 1956, A46-1-13-1, Chinese Communist Municipal Government of Shanghai Iron and Steel Industry Committee, SMA.

- g. Had libraries, museums, cultural sites, and archives made themselves more accessible to intellectuals, providing better service and improving material quantity and access?
- h. What other steps have been taken to improve the lives of intellectuals?⁵²⁴

The form, which *danwei* had to fill out and submit to the city government, helped to rationalize what had hitherto been a chaotic and uneven process.

The result of the city's intervention was that many of the haphazard reforms underway—such as the Five-Sixths Policy, for instance—became standardized. During the second half of the year, most intellectuals in the city saw their standards of living increase substantially. At the Harbor Administration, intellectuals saw a reduction of working hours and an increase in salaries. In addition, the administration agreed to purchase a series of Japanese medical texts that were especially sought-after among the medical personnel employed in the agency.⁵²⁵ Medical personnel more generally saw a dramatic improvement in their livelihoods by August, with almost two-thirds of their housing problems having been fixed. In addition, the city had set up 99 new “culture clubs” (*wenhua julebu*) to provide entertainment for the educated. Many hospitals had set up “relaxation rooms” (*xiuxishi*) for doctors to take short breaks during the workday.⁵²⁶ Intellectuals in the Shanghai Film Studio were given the ability to move into new housing units outfitted with stages or other rehearsal venues that allowed them to work from home.⁵²⁷ Intellectuals in the school system were allotted a “rice fund” (*mi kuan*), where rice markets

⁵²⁴ *Shanghaishi renmin weiyuanhui guanyu jiancha gaishan gaoji zhishifenzi gongzuo tiaojian de tongzhi*, July 3, 1956, A73-1-260-1, Liberation Daily Publishing Office, SMA.

⁵²⁵ *Shanghaiqu gangwu guanli ju guanyu gaishan zhishifenzi gongzuo tiaojian de jiancha baogao*, July 26, 1956, B7-2-135-23, Shanghai Municipal People's Committee Transportation Office, SMA.

⁵²⁶ *Shanghaishi weisheng ju guanyu zhishifenzi gongzuo qingkuang huibao*, August, 1956, B242-1-890-1, Shanghai Municipal Ministry of Hygiene, SMA.

⁵²⁷ *Shanghai dianying zhipianchang guanyu jiancha gaoji zhishifenzi gongzuo tiaojian de baogao*, August 2, 1956, B9-2-62-7, Shanghai Municipal People's Committee Literature and Art Office, SMA.

would sell a larger amount of rice to housing units where intellectuals tended to live at the beginning of the month; this amounted, essentially, to an advance fund (*dianfu*). The city would pay for the increased rice procurement at the end of the month.⁵²⁸ Intellectuals in Shanghai's burgeoning pharmaceutical industry saw increased procurements of good-quality instruments and better support for medical research.⁵²⁹ Despite the uneven nature of the reform efforts during the first half of the year, intellectuals from all sectors of the economy saw livelihood improvements in the second half. The heyday had arrived for all.

Housing was one of the issues that probably showed the least amount of general improvement, although this is perhaps due to the structure nature of the problem. *Danwei* were assigned various numbers of housing units around the city, although the number of assigned units varied significantly based on the number of intellectuals employed and the perceived importance of the industry; the Literature and Art Office, for example, only had 15 housing units around the city.⁵³⁰ Without more supply, the *danwei*'s hands were tied. The city tried to rectify this problem by constructing a total of 4500 new housing units in 1956, with another 2000 planned for construction in 1957; however, financing the construction often required that official rent reductions for intellectuals were more temporary than permanent.⁵³¹ Fixing the housing situation put an enormous strain on the Public Works Office, which was flooded with requests from agencies, workplaces, and schools to improve housing during the second half of 1956. This made the lives of the 29 intellectuals working for Public Works considerably more stressful. All

⁵²⁸ *Guanyu gaishan gaoji zhishifenzi gongzuo tiaojian qingkuang de baogao*, August 8, 1956, B105-5-1643-27, Shanghai Municipal Bureau of Education, SMA.

⁵²⁹ *Guoying Shanghai yiyao gongye gongsi guanyu gaishan gaoji zhishifenzi gongzuo tiaojian de jiancha baogao*, August 20, 1956, B88-1-187-1, State-run Shanghai Medical Industry Company, SMA.

⁵³⁰ *Shanghaishi renmin weiyuanhui wenyi bangongshi guanyu gaishan gaoji zhishifenzi gongzuo tiaojian de qingkuang baogao*, October 15, 1956, B9-2-62-32, Shanghai Municipal People's Committee Literature and Art Office, SMA.

⁵³¹ Shanghai Political and Economic Summary No. 11, August 17-September 15, 1956, CPR10, 256.

of them, ironically, dealt with housing problems of their own; 22 had issues with the environment and/or location of their homes, while 8 complained about their long commutes (over 7 kilometers). All lived in housing units of 4 to 9 residents total, while the average number of rooms in any given Shanghai housing unit ranged from 2 to 4.⁵³² The housing problem was only partially corrected, meaning that many intellectuals continued to face problems. A surgeon at the Shanghai Children's Hospital, Ma Anquan, complained that his wife and children had to live in nearby Suzhou because his apartment was not big enough to accommodate all of them, for example.⁵³³ Even by November, some intellectuals were having to send sick children to live with their grandparents because of cramped living conditions that were both uncondusive to children's recover and conducive to the rapid spreading of disease.⁵³⁴

Intellectuals experienced real changes to their lives over the course of the year. The vast majority saw salary increases, some improvements to their housing situations, better access to necessary materials for research and study, better accommodations for rest and relaxation while on the job, reduced time spent in meetings or on administrative work, improved access to health care, and more opportunities to pursue interesting hobbies outside of work. These improvements are a testament to the energy of intellectuals over the previous several years, demanding that the government carry out many of these very changes. Even despite these advancements, however, ambiguities persisted. Limited supply meant that many intellectuals still went without better housing, and some benefits—such as transportation—only went to those privileged to work for a vital economic sector, like heavy industry. All intellectuals continued to work long hours under

⁵³² *Shanghaishi shizheng gongcheng ju guanyu yaoqiu peibo zhishifenzi fangshi de han*, July 13, 1956, B7-2-135-56, Shanghai Municipal People's Committee Transportation Office, SMA.

⁵³³ *Shanghaishi weisheng ju guanyu zhishifenzi gongzuo qingkuang huibao*, August, 1956, B242-1-890-1, Shanghai Municipal Ministry of Hygiene, SMA.

⁵³⁴ *Zhonggong shanghaishi wenhua ju dangzu guanyu zhixing dui "zhishifenzi" zhengce de qingkuang cunzai wenti de baogao*, November, 1956, B172-1-601-68, Shanghai Municipal Ministry of Culture, SMA.

considerable stress. The case of the actor Zhou Xiaofang illustrates the continuing ambiguities surrounding intellectuals' lives. Zhou was hard-pressed for funds, having to pay for bus fare to get to work instead of relying on a shuttle service from his overseeing *danwei*. Moreover, he lived in cramped housing quarters alongside several other performers. Suffering from a urinary infection, Zhou began peeing blood (*xiaobian chuxue*) during a performance on December 15. Despite his pleas to stop the show, his bosses forced him to continue to perform. Over the course of the show, Zhou continued to visibly lose blood on stage until the entire performance had to be cancelled. Attendance was down dramatically at future events.⁵³⁵ For Zhou and many other intellectuals, the changes of the year were welcome but fell short of everything they may have wanted.

A Socialist State Built on Knowledge Capital

The People's Republic of China was never just a revolutionary state. The CCP's vision for China included both collectivization and practical development. The production gains throughout the first decade of Communist rule are a testament to the focus on the latter. As the first Five-Year Plan was winding down throughout 1956, the government began to envision how to best continue and solidify the gains of the previous five years. In addition, the state had managed to survive a litany of existential threats. Politicians could now turn to imagining how China might fit in a world of competing nuclear superpowers and plenty of non-aligned nations desiring to stay out of the conflict. The first steps in humanity's reach for the stars had begun; only a year later, the Soviet satellite Sputnik would successfully orbit Earth. For the PRC to adapt to both a more secure internal environment as well as transformations in the external

⁵³⁵ *Shanghaishi wenhua ju dui gaoji zhishifenzi daibiao renwu guihua yijian*, December 15, 1956, B172-1-601-29, Shanghai Municipal Ministry of Culture, SMA.

world, the government realized that knowledge capital was essential to the continued growth of the socialist state. This meant a change in the discourse of intellectuals, as state media increasingly lauded the contributions of intellectuals to national economic growth. Although previous criticisms of intellectuals as elitist or out-of-touch did not disappear, this notion only became one element of the broader national conversation regarding intellectuals. In addition, the government invested in more facilities and supplies needed by intellectuals for research, recruited more knowledge-workers, and laid plans to use intellectuals to expand popular knowledge.

Several changes at the start of 1956 heralded the beginning of a new age in the imagination of state planners. Party documents began to refer to intellectuals' duties, collectively, as representing a "vital mission" (*zhuyao renwu*) within the broader scheme of national construction. The government's plans to surpass the steel production of Britain and match that of America, for example, could only be accomplished through the exploitation of expertise.⁵³⁶ In order to get full use out of China's intellectual class, however, they would have to be outfitted with better materials than Chinese factories could turn out at this juncture. In early 1956, the national Trade Ministry announced that it would begin negotiating a series of trade deals with foreign countries in order to requisition a better supply of the latest scientific technology.⁵³⁷ Although the hard sciences certainly received priority, the state was interested in all levels of academic production. The Shanghai government directed local research institutions to establish social science research teams, made up of experts in philosophy, economics, history,

⁵³⁶ *Zhonggong shanghaishi guoying fangzhi gongye weiyuanhui guanyu Shanghai guoyin, zhongyang heying fangzhi gongye bumen 1956 nian zhishifenzi gongzuo de yaodian*, 1956, A47-1-63-22, Chinese Communist East China State-run Textile Industry Committee, Chinese Communist Shanghai Municipal State-run Textile Industry Committee, SMA.

⁵³⁷ *Shanghaishi 1956 nian dao 1957 nian zhishifenzi gongzuo gangyao*, 1956, A47-1-63-6, Chinese Communist East China State-run Textile Industry Committee, Chinese Communist Shanghai Municipal State-run Textile Industry Committee, SMA.

education, and language and literature. The city also planned to expand its intellectual workforce by 2200 in three years, which included 200 new scientists, 500 university professors, 500 medical professionals, 750 engineers, and 200 arts and literature specialists.⁵³⁸ Even still, Shanghai did not lose sight of the ultimate goal of harmonizing cross-class relations between intellectuals and the masses. The municipal government also announced plans for a monthly lecture series, whereby a scientific expert would deliver an oral primer on the latest developments in the world of Chinese science for interested cadres and workers.⁵³⁹ Especially for cadres, these lectures might help them better understand and appreciate the work of the intellectuals they oversaw.

The plans to recruit more knowledge-workers built upon existing trends, whereby intellectuals' professions were something of a growth field. At just a single heavy industry—Tianyuanhua Factory—the staff of engineers had expanded from 68 to 204 from 1949 to 1955.⁵⁴⁰ And in the second fiscal quarter of 1956 alone, the government offered jobs for 315 new medical professionals.⁵⁴¹ As previous chapters have shown, the education system across the country had expanded significantly over the previous few years. In Shanghai, the school system expanded incredibly quickly; enrollments in higher education doubled between 1954 and 1956.⁵⁴² Across the nation, more students were going to school and completing their degrees than ever before. Potential problems might have arisen if this influx of young people into the education system could not find work relevant to their degrees, as many scholars from the first few decades of the

⁵³⁸ *1956 nian shanghai shi zhishifenzi gongzuo gangyao*, 1956, B105-5-1643-1, Shanghai Municipal Bureau of Education, SMA.

⁵³⁹ *Ibid.*

⁵⁴⁰ *Zhonggong tianyuanhua gongchang weiyuanhui guanyu zhishifenzi wenti de jiancha baogao*, January 3, 1956, A44-2-85-79, Shanghai Municipal Second Committee for Heavy Industry, SMA.

⁵⁴¹ *Zhonggong shanghai shi weisheng ju weiyuanhui guanyu zhishifenzi gongzuo de zonghe qingkuang*, 1956, B242-1-875-1, Shanghai Municipal Ministry of Hygiene, SMA.

⁵⁴² Shanghai Political and Economic Summary No. 10, July 13-August 15, 1956, CPR10, 243.

twentieth century experienced. It seems that the PRC had managed to avoid this potential pitfall through expanding the scale of knowledge work in line with enrollment increases. Even for recent graduates who were not assigned as medical professionals or engineers, they could still find work through new institutions of knowledge. The Shanghai government established new medical libraries in early 1956 to accommodate medical research, for example.⁵⁴³ Nationwide, the Central Committee called for investments in new bookstores, libraries, and museums.⁵⁴⁴ Staffing these new institutes provided yet another job outlet for new graduates.

The new national zeitgeist of triumphalism was reflected in a pair of *People's Daily* editorials in mid-January. On January 13, Ji Xianlin, chair of the Eastern Languages and Culture Department at Beijing University, reflected on his experiences during the first half-decade of the PRC. Ji declared near-universal support for the CCP among intellectuals, noting that the Communists had been able to transform China into a burgeoning world power after decades of perceived failure from previous regimes. Although Ji acknowledged the oft-repeated criticism that intellectuals needed to learn both humility and how to work in the service of the masses as a whole, he also defended the older generations of intellectuals, noting that they could not be blamed for reflecting the views and behaviors from when they grew up.⁵⁴⁵ Although Ji's editorial no doubt exaggerated on several points—it seems unlikely that support for the party-state was almost *universal* among intellectuals—it reflects a new spirit of triumphalism among the educated and a belief that older intellectuals had found a way to channel their expertise in productive ways. Zhang Wei, chair of the Civil Engineering Department at Qinghua University, echoed this triumphalist spirit in a January 18 editorial describing his and his colleagues'

⁵⁴³ *Zhonggong shanghaishi weisheng ju weiyuanhui guanyu zhishifenzi gongzuo de zonghe qingkuang*, 1956, B242-1-875-1, Shanghai Municipal Ministry of Hygiene, SMA.

⁵⁴⁴ *Zhonggong zhongyang guanyu zhishifenzi wenti de zhishi caoan*, January, 1956, LR-SPP.

⁵⁴⁵ Ji Xianlin, *Wo dui zhishifenzi wenti de yixie kanfa*, January 13, 1956, RR.

research into new types of construction materials—steel, wood, and cement—that would render a more traditional focus on bamboo construction obsolete.⁵⁴⁶ Like Ji, Zhang focused on the “vital role” of older intellectuals vis-a-vis national construction. For these professors, and perhaps for many of their readers, the future represented a period of promise, where cadres, intellectuals, and the state could work in harmony to achieve national greatness.

Partially exemplified by supply requisitions, the necessity of expanding knowledge capital meant increased contacts with a global scholarly community. Along with new domestic duties, intellectuals saw a rise in supplemental work duties. Cities receiving foreign scholars would sometimes call on local intellectuals to entertain these guests. In Shanghai, a delegation of foreign experts (the country or countries of origin was/were not named) was set to arrive in March 1956. Intellectuals were expected to “entertain” (*zhaodai*) them while they were not in meetings or conferences. However, in an effort to preserve Chinese intellectuals’ time, the city instituted a policy whereby a single individual would be capped at six guest assignments per year.⁵⁴⁷ Meanwhile, the city clarified previous plans for periodic lecture series. For the purpose of “advancing scientific and cultural activity” (*jinxing kexue wenhua huodong*), scientists and professors of science had to deliver periodic lectures around local “clubs” (*julebu*).⁵⁴⁸ At the beginning of April, lecture responsibilities expanded to include technicians and engineers. These intellectuals were tasked with taking time off from the factory to visit Shanghai universities in order to give a practical perspective on the possibilities offered by the sciences.⁵⁴⁹ Even as intellectuals saw reductions in administrative work, meetings, and political study sessions, these

⁵⁴⁶ Zhang Wei, *Zai xin de xingshi xia kan zhishifenzi wenti*, January 18, 1956, RR.

⁵⁴⁷ *Zhonggong shanghai shi diyi shangye ju weiyuanhui guanyu Shanghai 1956 nian dao 1957 nian zhishifenzi gongzuo gangyao*, March, 1956, B123-3-36-22, Shanghai Municipal First Bureau of Commerce, SMA.

⁵⁴⁸ *Ibid.*

⁵⁴⁹ *Zhonggong Shanghai disan zhonggongye weiyuanhui guanyu yinfa Shanghai shuiniichang dangzongzhi 1956-1957 nian zhishifenzi guihua de tongzhi*, April 6, 1956, A45-1-12-53, Shanghai Municipal Third Committee for Heavy Industry, SMA.

gains may have been offset by new expectations of entertaining foreign scholars and delivering lectures for the masses.

Signs emerged around the same time of an overall increase in intellectual productivity, even outside vital economic sectors. The Shanghai Children's Press had increased publishing output to a rate of about 500 books per year, with (non-specific) increases announced for the following year.⁵⁵⁰ Similarly, the Shanghai Tea Leaf Company had experienced rising rates of production, with future increases to be expected due to high demand from other countries.

Although no specific figures were given in a report to the municipal government, one technician working for the company suggested that their instruments would have to be updated in order to meet production quotas.⁵⁵¹

Although a number of specialized libraries had been established by this point, the city established the Library of Science and Technology on February 19. New urban museums, like the Shanghai Natural Museum, were slated for construction. The Shanghai Library also made available a greater number of ancient texts and collections for public viewing. This massive undertaking involved a flurry of new hirings for intellectuals with expertise in classical literature, painting, calligraphy, and relics; as such, the height of the intellectuals' heyday corresponded to a flourishing of classical Chinese culture.⁵⁵² The citywide library system saw a budgetary increase of about 50% for 1956 to accommodate the planned expansions. Not all expansions of intellectuals' facilities occurred at the municipal level, however, with the construction of over

⁵⁵⁰ *Shaonian ertong chubanshe guanyu gongzuo, ganbu yu zhishifenzi gongzuo de guihua*, March, 1956, B167-1-130-42, Shanghai Municipal Publishing Office, SMA.

⁵⁵¹ *Shanghaishi duiwai maoyi ju guanyu zhishifenzi de baogao ji waimao xitong youguan zhishifenzi gongzuo de ernian guihua*, March 6, 1956, B170-2-296-9, Shanghai Municipal Foreign Trade Office, SMA.

⁵⁵² *Shanghaishi wenhua ju guanyu zhishifenzi gongzuo qingkuang huibao*, March 29, 1956, B172-1-601-9, Shanghai Municipal Ministry of Culture, SMA.

25,000 square meters' worth of laboratory space between six local universities by April.⁵⁵³ In May, plans to increase library collections were given concrete numbers. The local Ministry of Culture announced a plan to requisition a total of 700,000 new materials in total across all municipal libraries, while 60,000 older texts would be made available to the public.⁵⁵⁴ Interestingly, the local Literature and Art Office was placed in charge of new procurements for all materials—scientific, medical, or cultural.⁵⁵⁵ This may exemplify the science bias of the CCP; the workload for improving scientists' access to necessary materials was disproportionately shouldered by cultural specialists. Overall, collection expansions and new construction on institutions of knowledge made visible the broader changes underway regarding the status of intellectuals.

Changes during the second half of the year reflected a growing sense of security from the state in a tumultuous world. The Chinese Academy of Sciences had been increasing its procurements steadily over the course of the year; supplies increased by 58% in the first quarter of 1956, 46% in the second quarter, and 34% in the third. Many of the purchases for new equipment went to capitalist countries, despite China's general preference for the socialist bloc or the non-aligned movement. Even still, the state encouraged the academy to purchase as many supplies as possible from Chinese sources. In Shanghai, this meant that three local firms (one focusing on telegraphs, two focusing on scientific instruments) took over the contracts for the local branch of the Academy.⁵⁵⁶ Chinese engineers and technicians no doubt benefitted from the

⁵⁵³ *Zhonggong Shanghai shiwei zhishifenzi wenti bangongshi bianyin de "jianbao" 1956 nian dijiuqi*, April 7, 1956, B123-3-36-26, Shanghai Municipal First Bureau of Commerce, SMA.

⁵⁵⁴ *Shanghaishi wenhua ju guanyu zhishifenzi gongzuo de guihua*, May, 1956, B172-1-757-6, Shanghai Municipal Ministry of Culture, SMA.

⁵⁵⁵ *Shanghaishi renmin weiyuanhui wenyi bangongshi guanyu gaishan gaoji zhishifenzi gongzuo tiaojian de qingkuang baogao*, October 15, 1956, B9-2-62-32, Shanghai Municipal People's Committee Literature and Art Office, SMA.

⁵⁵⁶ *Guanyu jiancha gaishan gaoji zhishifenzi gongzuo tiaojian de huibao*, August 16, 1956, B105-5-1643-20, Shanghai Municipal Bureau of Education, SMA.

switch. Meanwhile, the CCP continued to maintain its rhetoric on the value of intellectuals—even older ones. In late August, officials suggested that “academic and scientific research can only strengthen the leadership of the party” in response to questions about admitting older intellectuals as party members.⁵⁵⁷ Internal reports criticized tendencies toward “empiricism” or “formalism” within the ranks of the party, blaming these errors for an “unsoundness” in the party’s “democratic life.” Most significantly, the national government changed its tune regarding the Soviet Union; officials suggested that Chinese intellectuals could learn by studying foreign scholars from all over the world, not exclusively Soviet intellectuals.⁵⁵⁸ Even during the later months of the year, the party showed no sounds of reversing course. If anything, it showed an increasing willingness to question old dogmas to support the work of China’s intellectual community.

By the end of the year, intellectuals inhabited a very different world than that of previous years. Libraries, museums, and laboratories had either already been constructed or were in the process of being built all around them. The traditional primacy given to manuals and texts from the Soviet Union had been replaced by a new willingness from the state to purchase supplies from across the world—even from capitalist countries. Researchers engaged in lively dialogues with foreign scholars traveling to China, and had opportunities to get more Chinese interested in intellectual pursuits through periodic public lectures. University enrollments were increasing, as were available jobs for knowledge-workers. In nearly every way, the Chinese government

⁵⁵⁷ *Zhonggong Shanghai shiwei gaodeng jiaoyu kexue gongzuo bu guanyu dui shanghaishi gaodeng xuexiao, zhongdeng zhuanke xuexiao ji zhongguo kexueyuan Shanghai banshichu 1956 nian diyi xueqi zuzhi gongzuo de jidian yijian*, August 31, 1956, A23-2-114-1, Chinese Communist Municipal Government of Shanghai Education and Hygiene Work Bureau, SMA.

⁵⁵⁸ *Ibid.*

demonstrated its understanding of the role that intellect could play in the construction of Chinese socialism.

Opening the Gates: Party Admittances for Intellectuals

One of the most common complaints leveled by intellectuals against the CCP was the party's "closed-doorism" (*guanmenzhuyi*); that is, it was significantly more difficult for older intellectuals who had received degrees before 1949 to successfully gain admission into the party. Things had changed somewhat over the previous three years (see Chapter 4), although famous cases of senior intellectuals gaining party membership were the exception rather than the norm. Things changed in 1956. Across China, cadres were expected to dutifully put forward greatly expanded lists of recommendations for party admittance among their intellectual staff members. This was a nationwide phenomenon, with *People's Daily* articles describing hundreds of admissions for intellectuals from all corners of the nation. In Shanghai, over a thousand intellectuals made successful applications to join the CCP, with plans to expand that number by a factor of six made for the future. Over the course of the year, however, the Communist Party had to respond to critics that the government was not exercising due diligence in admitting so many older scholars. As such, the year also saw the emergence of a more formalized set of guidelines for gaining party membership.

In Shanghai, the city government began the year without a real sense of how many local intellectuals had gained admission into the ranks of the CCP. The municipal government estimated that 7% of local "high-level" intellectuals (*gaoji zhishifenzi*, as opposed to "general" intellectuals, or *yiban zhishifenzi*) were CCP members at the start of the year. The municipal

government hoped to see that number increase to 11% by the end of the year.⁵⁵⁹ The first few weeks of the year represented a period in flux, where *danwei* were tasked with submitting names for possible party membership—significantly more than before—without a firm understanding of proper criteria for admission. As such, the municipal government circulated a series of qualifications developed by the First Bureau of Commerce, which forward intellectuals’ applications if they (1) had a university degree, (2) several years (unspecified) of work experience, (3) showed the ability to work independently, (4) had assisted in some form of research project. An intellectual’s political background, of course, also played a major role in whether they had their applications submitted or not.⁵⁶⁰ It seems that Shanghai intellectuals were keen on submitting party membership applications; at Shanghai Fifth Hospital, for instance, over 77% of medical personnel submitted applications. Only about 30 individuals ultimately had their applications accepted, however.⁵⁶¹ Although Shanghai, with its high population of intellectuals, was naturally the epicenter of the rush to apply for CCP membership, other cities followed suit. In Chongqing, the city government had already approved 142 new party membership applications from intellectuals by January 9.⁵⁶²

⁵⁵⁹ *Shanghaishi 1956 nian dao 1957 nian zhishifenzi gongzuo gangyao*, 1956, A47-1-63-6, Chinese Communist East China State-run Textile Industry Committee, Chinese Communist Shanghai Municipal State-run Textile Industry Committee, SMA. These numbers were imprecise but not terribly wrong; later documents reveal that the actual rate of party membership among high-level intellectuals was closer to 5% in the city. However, Shanghai did mostly hit its goal of 11% membership.

⁵⁶⁰ *Zhonggong shanghaishi disan shangye ju weiyuanhui xuanchuan bu guanyu xiafa woju xitong gaoji zhishifenzi mingdan de tongzhi*, 1956, B123-3-199-63, Shanghai Municipal First Bureau of Commerce, SMA.

⁵⁶¹ *Zhonggong shanghaishi weisheng ju weiyuanhui guanyu zhishifenzi gongzuo de zonghe qingkuang*, 1956, B242-1-875-1, Shanghai Municipal Ministry of Hygiene, SMA. Frustratingly, it is unclear exactly how many total intellectuals were employed at the hospital, meaning that the 30 successful applications cannot be compared against the 77% of staff submitting applications.

⁵⁶² *Chongqingshi gaoji zhishifenzi zhuangkuang*, January 9, 1956, LR-SPP.

The haphazard process in January called for a more rigorous plan for admissions. As such, the Shanghai city government published a chart of admissions targets for all local intellectuals (calculated at 92,678 persons by this point) over the next several years in February:

	Total Number of Individuals	Current Party Members		New Accepted Party Members, 1956-1957		Estimated Accepted Party Members, post-1957	
		Individuals	Percentage	Individuals	Percentage	Individuals	Percentage
Grand Total	92,678	5,493	5.9	6,596	7.0	12,089	13.0
High-level	9,794	477	4.9	1,117	11.0	1,590	16.0
General	82,884	5,016	6.0	5,479	6.5	10,499	12.5
(1) Scientific Research Personnel	732	49	6.7	75	10.0	124	17.0
High-level	129	4	3.1	20	15.0	24	18.0
General	603	45	7.4	55	9.0	100	16.0
(2) Education Personnel	37,526	2,385	6.4	2,900	7.7	5,285	14.0
High-level	2,316	112	4.8	352	15.0	464	20.0
General	35,210	2,273	6.5	2,548	7.0	4,821	13.5
(3) Medical Personnel	23,286	333	1.4	745	3.0	1,078	4.6
High-level	2,213	21	1.0	132	6.0	153	7.0
General	21,073	312	1.5	613	3.0	925	4.5
(4) Technical/Engineering Personnel	16,545	1,435	8.7	1,870	11.0	3,305	20.0
High-level	3,653	191	5.2	435	11.8	626	17.0
General	12,892	1,244	9.7	1,435	11.0	2,679	20.7
(5) Cultural/Artistic Personnel	14,589	1,291	8.9	1,006	6.9	2,297	15.8
High-level	1,483	149	10.0	178	12.0	327	22.0

General	13,106	1,142	8.7	828	6.0	1,970	14.7 ⁵⁶³
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These guidelines provided a useful tool for *danwei* in Shanghai. The targets also demonstrate the continuing emphasis on science and engineering, as well as a surprising hesitancy to admit medical personnel into the party. Most significantly, these plans show an awareness of inequalities between high-level and general intellectuals, and show that the government was interested in rectifying these inequalities in favor of general intellectuals. Admitting general intellectuals into the party apparatus was one way of securing educated youth's loyalty to the CCP as they embarked on their careers.

Although these numbers represented a general guide, the city was more than willing to increase them—especially for specific, prestigious institutions. In the later part of February, the Shanghai government actively began soliciting the most prestigious universities—schools like Fudan, Tongji, or Jiaotong Universities—for recommendations. Schools were expected to distinguish between “high-level” intellectuals, which tended to mean tenured professors, and general intellectuals, which referred to assistant professors, teaching assistants, students, and in some cases even campus workers.⁵⁶⁴ One of the most important factors in whether an intellectual's membership application might be forwarded to the city or not was how they had performed during the Thought Reform Campaign; those who were designated with the label “activist” (*jijifenzi*) were naturally much more likely to have their materials forwarded. Jiaotong University nominated 516 of these activists for party membership, which included 353 students,

⁵⁶³ The statistics in this chart appear in *Zhonggong Shanghai shiwei bangongting guanyu 1956 nian-1957 nian zai zhishifenzi zhong fazhan xin dangyuan de guihua*, February, 1956, A47-1-63-14, Chinese Communist East China State-run Textile Industry Committee, Chinese Communist Shanghai Municipal State-run Textile Industry Committee, SMA.

⁵⁶⁴ *Zhonggong Shanghai shiwei xuexiao gongzuo bu bangongshi guanyu shanghaishi gaodeng xuexiao, zhongdeng zhuanye xuexiao ji zhongguo kexueyuan Shanghai banshichu fazhan dangyuan de qingkuang he dui jinhou fazhan dangyuan gongzuo de yijian*, February 22, 1956, A23-2-114-43, Chinese Communist Municipal Government of Shanghai Education and Hygiene Work Bureau, SMA.

103 professors, 32 administrators, and 28 campus workers. In general, universities classified nominees into three political categories: (1) those whose political histories did not have any serious problems, (2) those whose political histories did not have any serious problems, but were generally short and may require more thorough inspection, and (3) those with “complicated” political histories that may require further background checks. Unsurprisingly, the overwhelming number of nominees were in the first category, although presumably some intellectuals in the second two categories also had their applications forwarded.⁵⁶⁵ Among these top-level universities, the municipal government to increase party membership dramatically: from 4.98% to 25.1% among professors, from 12.5% to 32.8% among assistant professors, from 29.3% to 39.5% among administrators, from 4.6% to 16.4% among students, from 9% to 19% among recent graduates, and from 8.8% to 16.5% among others (which included campus workers, for example).⁵⁶⁶ Given that these percentages were much higher than for educational personnel as a whole, it appears that a good deal of favoritism was in play.

Although the number of admittances elsewhere in the country were not as high as in Shanghai, other cities and provinces continued admitting intellectuals into the CCP over the course of the year. A *People's Daily* report on March 12 noted that 77 intellectuals in Gansu Province, 44 in Guangdong Province (22 of those coming from the city of Guangzhou), and 23 in Chongqing had recently been accepted into the CCP. In many of these cases, new admittees tended to be older intellectuals who had participated vigorously in Thought Reform.⁵⁶⁷ The province of Heilongjiang continued the trend by admitting 50 intellectuals on March 27.⁵⁶⁸ On

⁵⁶⁵ Ibid.

⁵⁶⁶ Ibid.

⁵⁶⁷ *Gansu, Guangdong, Tianjin, Wuhan deng sheng shi yipi gaoji zhishifenzi jiaru zhongguo gongchandang*, March 12, 1956, RR.

⁵⁶⁸ *Haerbin wushi ming zhishifenzi rudang*, March 27, 1956, RR.

April 2, the city of Xi'an announced 114 new admissions for intellectuals, while Shenyang announced 30, Changchun 228, and Nanjing 198. For some of these newly-admitted intellectuals, admittance was predicated on successful completion of courses of study ranging from Pavlovian Theory to Marxism-Leninism to even Russian.⁵⁶⁹ Others ended up having to move as a result of their successful applications; in Chongqing, for example, 140 intellectuals moved to Chengdu to accept positions working in the Chengdu Municipal Government.⁵⁷⁰ These heady rates of admission did not necessarily translate over the entire country. In Yunnan Province, intellectuals and cadres had a particularly strained relationship. No professors at Yunnan University made any attempt at joining the CCP, citing concerns about adding too much to their workload and falling behind in their studies. There were only 13 party members in total at Yunnan University, all of whom were teaching assistants or low-level lecturers rather than tenured professors.⁵⁷¹ It is reasonable to conclude that most cities and provinces were following Shanghai's lead, although not always at the same scale as in Shanghai. Moreover, exceptions like Yunnan certainly existed.

The national government did not step in directly until mid-April, at which point the Central Committee issued a report on the state of intellectual admittances around China. The government estimated that there were almost 4 million individuals who were classified as intellectuals by that time. Party membership was quite low, however—usually hovering around 4-5%.⁵⁷² An internal investigation revealed that lower-level party members were sometimes responsible for holding up the application materials of intellectuals under their purview; the

⁵⁶⁹ *Xi'an, Shenyang, Changchun, Nanjing deng shi he Guizhou sheng: yipi zhishifenzi bei pizhun canjia zhongguo gongchandang*, April 2, 1956, RR.

⁵⁷⁰ *Chongqing yipi gaoji zhishifenzi rudang*, February 3, 1956, RR.

⁵⁷¹ Yan Gan, *Yunnan daxue gaoji zhishifenzi dui rudang wenti de gulü*, April 6, 1956, LR-SPP.

⁵⁷² *Zhonggong zhongyang pizhun zhongyang zuzhi bu guanyu zai zhishifenzi zhong fazhan dangyuan jihua de baogao*, April 14, 1956, LR-SPP.

Central Committee called for an end to this practice as well as the party's general "closed-door" tendencies more broadly. The government estimated that the rate of party membership for intellectuals would rise to about 5.6% over the course of 1956, and urged local branches to increase that to a full 10% by the end of 1957 (which would include a 17% rate of admittance for high-level intellectuals). Although the events of the following year represented a significant policy reversal, the Central Committee envisioned a future of steadily increasing party membership well into the next decade. The report proposed a 20% admittance target for intellectuals by 1962, which would include 30-35% of high-level intellectuals.⁵⁷³ The national government added considerable legitimacy to the process of admitting intellectuals into the party—and further frustrated cadres who were skeptical of the whole process.

In Shanghai, an enthusiasm for accepting intellectuals' membership applications led to much higher rates of admission than expected. The February plan suggested increasing the total number of party intellectuals in Shanghai from 5,493 to 6,596—a modest increase of 1,103 intellectuals. This goal had been eclipsed by more than double, however, with 2,339 new intellectuals having been admitted by mid-October. 1,812 of these were students, suggesting that gaining admission into the CCP was particularly coveted among young scholars, who may have understood the career benefits of CCP membership. Overall, however, students were slightly less likely to be party members than their professors. At Shanghai universities, 13.24% of administrators and staff were party members, followed by 12.06% of faculty, and finally 10.2% of students.⁵⁷⁴ Amusingly, a non-insignificant number of applications were denied not because of a lack of expertise or improper ideological credentials, but instead because the applicant had not

⁵⁷³ Ibid.

⁵⁷⁴ *Shanghaishi gaodeng xuexiao, zhongdeng zhuanke xuexiao ji zhongguo kexueyuan Shanghai banshichu fazhan dangyuan de jidian tihui yu yijian*, October 18, 1956, A23-2-114-15, Chinese Communist Municipal Government of Shanghai Education and Hygiene Work Bureau, SMA.

followed the proper submission guidelines (*bufuhe guiding de zuofa*). The Shanghai government issued a blistering condemnation of cadres for their resistance to the process, suggesting that “many of our comrades are unwilling to engage or fear intellectuals. They do not understand their thoughts, their work, or their lives.”⁵⁷⁵

The first step in a membership application was to check any confession materials the intellectual submitted during Thought Reform. Although the overwhelming majority of intellectuals did submit confessions (see Chapter 3), there were some cases where intellectuals managed to avoid doing so. If the intellectual had been “honest and forthcoming” regarding previous ideological errors, they usually passed this first round of inspection. If a review of their confession materials raised any suspicions, party officials were generally discouraged from confronting the intellectual directly so as to “avoid causing unnecessary apprehensions.” In cases where a review of confession documents proved inconclusive, investigators would instead turn to cadres overseeing the intellectual applicant and seek out supplementary information about the candidate’s work and political history. A good number of applicants had their applications denied for having contacts with others under suspicion; for example, known rightist intellectuals or foreigners.⁵⁷⁶ This meant that intellectuals who had returned to China from overseas at the outset of the Communist period may have faced additional, and perhaps undue, scrutiny. Although intellectuals certainly had to pass through a number of hurdles in order to be accepted into the ranks of the Communist Party, statistics suggest that the rate of admissions went far beyond what the Shanghai government had originally envisioned.

It is not clear whether other cities and provinces matched up with the rates of successful applications in Shanghai. Nonetheless, many intellectuals were able to gain admittance into the

⁵⁷⁵ Ibid.

⁵⁷⁶ Ibid.

CCP over the course of the year. On one hand, this may have weakened the traditional strength of the minor democratic parties, such as the Democratic League, among the intellectual community. On the other, the trend was no doubt highly beneficial for individual intellectuals. Those who gained party membership had better life prospects, could make valuable connections with government officials, and could expect to exercise at least some influence over local policy. When winds shifted from favoring intellectuals to a new wave of intense scrutiny during the Anti-Rightist Campaign, party memberships proved enduring. As the following chapter will show, relatively few intellectuals lost their party memberships during the course of the Anti-Rightist Campaign. As such, party admissions were one of the best ways of institutionalizing the gains made by intellectuals during their heyday.

From Resentment to Resistance among the Cadres

As the previous chapter showed, low-level cadres had grown increasingly resentful of intellectuals, their “privileged” status, and their supposed arrogant attitudes. As such, nationwide efforts to improve the lives of intellectuals, and even admit them into the CCP (thus making them comrades of the cadres) provoked a backlash among these low-ranking party members. Even as the national government, in addition to many municipal and provincial governments, promoted new policies to favor intellectuals, the state was still reliant on cadres to actually implement policy. As such, cadres possessed a good deal of agency in how to actually met out benefits for intellectuals. In some areas, cadres were able to hold up the reform efforts indefinitely—often provoking rebukes from the municipality overseeing them. Over the course of the year, the national government ultimately calculated that it could not afford to totally ignore the criticisms from the cadre class. Moreover, it is likely that some of the concerns raised by

cadres—such as the rushed process by which thousands of intellectuals were admitted into the party—were actually taken seriously by the state. As such, both national and sub-national governments began to emphasize the continuing importance of thought rectification during the second half of the year. Cadre resistance was ultimately effective at dampening the reform movement.

At the beginning of 1955, cadres had participated in a brief national campaign to study Marxist materialism and reject bourgeois idealism (see Chapter 4). This represented a sea change in which cadres, alongside intellectuals, became targets of thought rectification work. There were signs in early 1956 that signalled that such a trend might continue; for example, a set of instructions from the Shanghai Textile Industry Committee called for cadre investigations (*shen gan*) alongside the usual work of rooting out counterrevolutionaries.⁵⁷⁷ The idea that cadres might be under suspicion—alongside the hated counterrevolutionaries, even—appears to have emerged from the changed national climate in 1956. The Shanghai Education Bureau offered a similar injunction to cadres employed in the schools and universities, noting that they would now be required to participate in political study sessions alongside intellectuals.⁵⁷⁸ It is unclear how these new policies would be carried out, given that the city was reliant on cadres themselves for policy implementation. A speech by Chen Yusan, assistant director of the city’s Ministry of Culture, however, gives clues. Chen noted that there was a growing divide between “administrative” cadres (*xingzheng ganbu*) and “vocational” cadres (*yewu ganbu*), suggesting

⁵⁷⁷ *Zhonggong shanghaishi guoying fangzhi gongye weiyuanhui guanyu Shanghai guoyin, zhongyang heying fangzhi gongye bumen 1956 nian zhishifenzi gongzuo de yaodian*, 1956, A47-1-63-22, Chinese Communist East China State-run Textile Industry Committee, Chinese Communist Shanghai Municipal State-run Textile Industry Committee, SMA.

⁵⁷⁸ *1956 nian shanghaishi zhishifenzi gongzuo gangyao*, 1956, B105-5-1643-1, Shanghai Municipal Bureau of Education, SMA.

that lower-tier cadres may have been punished by ranking officials within the *danwei*.⁵⁷⁹ It appears that the Shanghai government, at least, had become increasingly frustrated by low-level cadres, and was willing to pass more policies designed to humble them.

The situation outside of the city was quite different. The suburbs of Shanghai nominally reported to the municipal government, but it appears that suburban cadres enjoyed considerably more flexibility in implementing policy—as well as more independence from the city in general. As such, suburban cadres around Shanghai represent an early sign of growing resistance to intellectual reforms. A report from the Suburban Work Committee acknowledged that China’s level of scientific achievement was low, but blames it on “the insufficient work of the intellectuals” rather than a lack of support from the government. The report continued to criticize suburban intellectuals, bemoaning their laziness in continuing their political education. These suburban cadres were aware that they themselves had a “low level of culture,” but resented intellectuals for being highly sought-after (*chidekai*).⁵⁸⁰ The assistant secretary of the Suburban Work Committee, Wan Jingliang, captured the resentment of cadres in a speech about national politics: “After Comrade Zhou Enlai’s speech, ‘A Report Concerning the Issues Facing Intellectuals,’ many of my comrades believed that Shanghai remained a city that focused mostly on intellectuals.”⁵⁸¹ It appears that resentment for intellectuals was frequently expressed in person; another report from the northern suburbs said that “many comrades see intellectuals and

⁵⁷⁹ *Shanghaishi wenhua ju fujuzhang Chen Yusun guanyu zhishifenzi wenti de fayangao*, February, 1956, B172-1-601-65, Shanghai Municipal Ministry of Culture, SMA.

⁵⁸⁰ *Zhonggong shanghaishi jiaoqu gongzuo weiyuanhui guanyu guanche zhonggong zhongyang ji zhonggong Shanghai shiwei zhishifenzi gongzuo wenti huiyi de qingkuang baogao*, 1956, A71-2-455-10, Chinese Communist Shanghai Municipal Suburban Work Committee, SMA.

⁵⁸¹ *Zhonggong shanghaishi jiaoqu gongzuo weiyuanhui fushuji wan jingliang de guanyu guanche zhonggong zhongyang ji zhonggong Shanghai shiwei zhishifenzi gongzuo wenti huiyi jingshen de fayangao*, 1956, A71-2-455-14, Chinese Communist Shanghai Municipal Suburban Work Committee, SMA.

do not treat them with kindness—on the contrary.”⁵⁸² Even at the local level, changing municipal policies only meant so much when cadres outside the city limits remained steadfast in their opposition to intellectuals.

Frustration with intellectuals as well as policies designed to benefit them extended well beyond the suburbs of Shanghai. Most famously, provincial officials in Yunnan were extremely frustrated with intellectuals in their area. A report from January 10 to the national government blasted local intellectuals, more than a third of whom the provincial government regarded as retrogressive or reactionary. Only about 5% of Yunnan intellectuals had even applied to join the CCP. Meanwhile, doctors in Yunnan were recalcitrant in refusing to study traditional Chinese medicine.⁵⁸³ The provincial government of Guangdong too expressed its frustration with intellectuals, describing them as “irritable” (*jizao*) and “rough” (*cubao*), and frequent violators of the government’s policies.⁵⁸⁴ The Guangdong Provincial Government had developed a punitive set of measures toward intellectuals, whereby the local Public Security Bureau would submit a list of names of intellectuals with most “erroneous” political views each week. The Guangdong government then forced these intellectuals into extra study sessions. The punitive actions taken by the province were often unfair; in one instant, a university professor named Lin Shukui had been detained for several days simply because of an anonymous reactionary tract that had been published from someone at his school. An investigation revealed that Lin had never participated in counterrevolutionary activities or joined a reactionary political party. After Lin was released from prison, however, his salary was cut by a third without any reason given.⁵⁸⁵

⁵⁸² *Zhonggong shanghai shi bei jiaoqu weiyuanhui guanyu zhishifenzi gongzuo wenti de yijian*, 1956, A71-2-455-43, Chinese Communist Shanghai Municipal Suburban Work Committee, SMA.

⁵⁸³ *Yunnansheng gaoji zhishifenzi de qingkuang*, January 10, 1956, LR-SPP.

⁵⁸⁴ Liu Suwen, *Guangdongsheng zhishifenzi qingkuang*, January 15, 1965, LR-SPP.

⁵⁸⁵ *Ibid.*

It is likely that provincial governments were more antagonistic toward intellectuals than either municipal governments or that national government (at this time). This may be due to the fact that provinces represented not just cities, where intellectuals congregated, but a considerable amount of rural territory where anti-intellectual resentment may have been higher. The PRC state commissioned a report on the treatment of intellectuals around the country in late January, revealing a number of problematic behaviors in the provinces. In Liaoning Province, for example, cadres had refused to appoint intellectuals to management positions in factories or mining companies. Cadres in Henan Province criticized intellectuals for the “rushed and muddled” (*mangluan*) process by which they underwent thought rectification. And in Anhui Province, cadres had held up government funds to assist intellectuals’ research projects. One cadre described all older professors as “corrupt.”⁵⁸⁶ The only city mentioned in the report was Tianjin, where cadres from a working-class background frequently snubbed intellectuals. Cadres “would shake [intellectuals’] hands,” the report said, “but would not have a deep discussion with them.” Even outside the provincial governments, many cadres nationwide expressed some degree of contempt for intellectuals. A frequent attitude was that “intellectuals may know their ABCs, but what practical use does that have?”⁵⁸⁷ Resentment for intellectuals had turned, in some cases, to outright resistance (such as holding up assistance funds for intellectuals)—a practice that had spread nationwide.

As Shanghai moved to convene public conferences to focus on the issues troubling intellectuals, cadres occasionally used these meetings as opportunities to voice their own frustration. At a conference in early March, for example, cadres in heavy industry brought in a number of factory workers who complained about the easy lives of the engineering staff. The

⁵⁸⁶ Xu Xiao, *Gedi zhishifenzi gongzuo zhong de wenti*, January 21, 1956, LR-SPP.

⁵⁸⁷ *Ibid.*

workers said that engineers could sit and enjoy the breeze during the summer, or warm themselves by a fire in the winter—meanwhile, they had to labor on the factory floor in significantly worse conditions.⁵⁸⁸ In many cases, cadres refused to eat with intellectuals at meal breaks during conferences.⁵⁸⁹ The Shanghai government was well aware of the problem, and focused on changing attitudes among rising cadres at the local party school. Administrators at the school cited a common attitude among cadres, saying “you can’t speak to intellectuals because they’re extremely unapproachable. We should just cast them aside.” Instead, school administrators said, cadres should learn to trust intellectuals and understand that they were capable of transformation.⁵⁹⁰ It is unclear how cadres perceived these rebukes from the municipal government, but if anything it may have hardened anti-intellectual sentiments.

In the suburbs of Shanghai, cadres continued to attempt to halt the reform movement in its tracks. Suburban cadres were frustrated by intellectuals’ seeming apathy toward political study; intellectuals saw thought rectification as “a mere formality” at this time.⁵⁹¹ Cadres around Shanghai also reported that their primary duty was to “work earnestly to provide ideological education to both the masses and party members,” implying that they saw little need to ease up on the pace of political study efforts. Moreover, it appears that suburban cadres rarely read the instructions from the city on improving intellectuals’ livelihoods, and therefore were completely

⁵⁸⁸ *Zhonggong shanghaishi diyi zhonggongye weiyuanhui xuanchuan bu guanyu zhishifenzi gongzuo de qingkuang jianbao*, March 10, 1956, A43-1-29-26, Shanghai Municipal First Committee for Heavy Industry, SMA.

⁵⁸⁹ *Zhonggong Shanghai shiwei tongzhan bu bangongshi guanyu ge minzhu dangpai he zhishifenzi de shi renmin daibiao dui zhaokai zheci shanghaishi renmin daibiao dahui de yixie fanying de qingkuang huibao*, August 1, 1956, B7-2-139-132, Shanghai Municipal People’s Committee Transportation Office, SMA.

⁵⁹⁰ *Zhonggong Shanghai shiwei dangxiao erbu jiaoyanshi guanyu diliuke “dang dui zhishifenzi de fangzhen, zhengce wenti” de baogao zhaiyao*, April 24, 1956, A76-2-253-25, Chinese Communist Shanghai Municipal Committee Party School, SMA.

⁵⁹¹ *Zhonggong shanghaishi dongjiaoqu weiyuanhui wenhua jiaoyu gongzuo bu guanyu yibufen chudeng xuexiao, chuanda zhishifenzi wenti baogao de qingkuang baogao*, June 29, 1956, A71-2-1071-15, Chinese Communist Shanghai Municipal Suburban Work Committee, SMA.

in the dark about what changes were expected.⁵⁹² The Suburban Work Committee thus revealed a potentially effective strategy to halt reforms: simply ignoring them. It is unclear how widespread these practices may have been, although an investigation from the national government from mid-April revealed that a common practice across China was for cadres to refuse to forward the application materials from intellectuals under their purview to higher authorities for possible party membership (see the previous section of this chapter). As such, it was clearly not uncommon for cadres to take active steps at resisting changes in national or municipal policy.

During the middle months of 1956, cadres tried directly petitioning the national government to consider revising its policies toward intellectuals. An anonymous letter from May 21 argued against the tendency to accept intellectuals into the party so quickly; the author claimed that intellectuals had yet to demonstrate an earnest devotion to political study. The author noted that over 1000 intellectuals across China had joined the CCP during the previous three months, and that appropriate background checks had rarely made into these new party members' political beliefs.⁵⁹³ A Beijing cadre, Wen Yueqiao, penned an editorial in *People's Daily* on May 29 that echoed the anonymous report from May 21. Wen criticized the “rushed” (*cangcu*) process by which intellectuals were given party membership, noting that local governments frequently failed to follow standard procedures of admission and completely neglected ideological background checks.⁵⁹⁴ Another *People's Daily* editorial on June 22, this one from a cadre working the Harbin Municipal State-run Food Industry named Liu Peizhi,

⁵⁹² Zhonggong shanghai shi jiaoku gongzuo weiyuanhui guanyu guan che he zhixing gonggong Shanghai shiwei de “shanghai shi 1956 nian dao 1957 nian zhishifenzi gongzuo gangyao” de yijian, April 17, 1956, A71-2-455-1, Chinese Communist Shanghai Municipal Suburban Work Committee, SMA.

⁵⁹³ Zhongyang zhuanfa zhongyang zuzhi bu “guanyu gaoji zhishifenzi rudang qingkuang de baogao”, May 21, 1956, LR-SPP.

⁵⁹⁴ Wen Yueqiao, *Jiji shenzhong de xishou zhishifenzi rudang: dangyuan laixin*, May 29, 1956, RR.

criticized both the few surviving private businesses and intellectuals from Harbin. Liu noted that both were driven by “fame and profit” (*mingli*), and called for a deepening of thought rectification work.⁵⁹⁵ As such, cadres became increasingly bold in airing their criticisms of intellectuals. They believed that appealing to the public might ultimately force the government to change course—a correct calculation, as it turned out.

Although the Anti-Rightist Campaign did not begin until the following year, the cadres’ protests did have some effect on policy. In Shanghai, instructions from the city increasingly emphasized the continuing importance of thought rectification during the second half of the year. A municipal report from late August reiterated the importance of improving intellectuals’ livelihoods, but also urged cadres to “continue carrying out political thought work,” noting the necessity of promoting Marxism-Leninism. Indeed, the city included five new political documents that it expected local intellectuals to study.⁵⁹⁶ These moves may have emboldened cadres. Although cadres had to submit reports on intellectuals’ living and working conditions in their *danwei* (see the first section of this chapter), some began using these reports as spaces to express frustration about their intellectual staff members. Cadres in the 501 Factory complained that their engineers were mostly ex-Guomindang members who had made plans to escape to Taiwan...until they missed their boat (*yinwei ban kai diao le*). Cadres from the 736 Factory stated that “before liberation, our [engineers] stood on the heads of the workers and oppressed them.” One cadre argued that most intellectuals came from a landlord family, and as such had “exploited

⁵⁹⁵ *Gaohao dui zibenjia de sixiang gaizao gongzuo: Liu Peizhi daibiao de fayan*, June 22, 1956, RR.

⁵⁹⁶ *Zhonggong Shanghai shiwei gaodeng jiaoyu kexue gongzuo bu guanyu dui shanghaishi gaodeng xuexiao, zhongdeng zhuanke xuexiao ji zhongguo kexueyuan Shanghai banshichu 1956 nian diyi xueqi zuzhi gongzuo de jidian yijian*, August 31, 1956, A23-2-114-1, Chinese Communist Municipal Government of Shanghai Education and Hygiene Work Bureau, SMA.

the blood and sweat of the poor” to fund their education.⁵⁹⁷ Cadres also complained that it was relatively easy for intellectual to avoid submitting confessions back during the Thought Reform Campaign. And for those who did, few had received penalties for lying. Other cadres argued that intellectuals had become a “favored” class, due to the accumulation of benefits and funding for scientific research and new supplies—all while cadres’ own standards of living had stagnated. One cadre focused on the problem of generational privilege, noting that one of the engineers in their factory was the child of a famous science professor at Shanghai University.⁵⁹⁸

The Anti-Rightist Campaign began due to changes in national government policy, to be sure. However, the role that low-ranking cadres’ protests and resistance played in forcing the government to recalculate is an important and under-acknowledged factor behind the start of the campaign. For cadres, who had remained steadfastly loyal to the Communist Party for years, it was incendiary to see intellectuals gain a wealth of new privileges while they themselves felt no better off at the end of 1956 than at the beginning. The CCP had come to power via its promises to tackle the inequalities that underlay Chinese society—inequalities that were inextricably intertwined with the formation of the intellectual class (see Chapter 1). Cadres had clearly become more, not less, resentful of intellectuals during the course of the decade. In 1956, that resentment translated to outright resistance to the reform efforts from above. Cadres could hold up funds for intellectuals as well as intellectuals’ applications for party membership. Although the state and local governments were clear in mandating improvements to intellectuals’ standards of living, cadres could just as easily ignore these mandates and deny intellectuals any new livelihood advancements.

⁵⁹⁷ *Zhonggong shanghaishi dier zhonggongye weiyuanhui xuanchuan bu guanyu “zhishifenzi wenti” dangnei chuanda taolun hou de sixiang qingkuang huibao*, December 9, 1956, A44-2-83-18, Shanghai Municipal Second Committee for Heavy Industry, SMA.

⁵⁹⁸ *Ibid.*

Conclusion

Chinese intellectuals' collective status reached its zenith during the decade in 1956. All levels of government, having listened to intellectuals' activism in previous years, turned their attention to improving the livelihoods of the scholarly community. Intellectuals saw salary increases, a reduction in working hours (including new stipulations about the maximum amount of time that could be spent on political study or meetings during the work week), new transportation services, housing upgrades, and improved access to food and health care. For overworked and underappreciated intellectuals, these reforms represented a breath of fresh air. The Chinese government furthermore offered an expansive vision for the promise of knowledge capital, investing in new bookstores, libraries, museums, and scientific laboratories. The state encouraged intellectuals to make new contacts with foreign researchers from across the globe—not just those in socialist countries. And the CCP finally opened its doors to intellectuals by admitting thousands into the party; it is likely that roughly 1 out of every 10 intellectuals was a party member by the end of the year. All these changes only inflamed dormant feelings of resentment for intellectuals that had been rising among the cadre class, however. Cadres became bolder in expressing their criticism of intellectuals, often focusing on uncertainties regarding scholars' ideological beliefs. Cadres also ignored directives to improve intellectuals' livelihoods, held up funds for research, and refused to pass on party membership applications. Although the state and local governments reprimanded such behavior, they showed some signs of recalculation by the end of the year. Documents from later 1956, reflecting cadres' criticism, called for a renewed focus on studying Marxism-Leninism.

This chapter has ignored the issue of free speech that has tantalized previous scholars of the period, instead focusing on practical issues such as livelihood improvements and party membership. A shift in focus helps to better reveal the logic beneath the dramatic shift in government policy the following year. Even though the state, and Mao Zedong, were no doubt concerned about the prevalence of stringent critiques of the CCP and its leadership among some intellectuals, cadre resentment was equally problematic. Moreover, it is not clear at all what issue free speech may have played in provoking such a backlash. Instead, the causes of cadre resistance were more related to the livelihood improvements and practical advantages accrued by intellectuals during 1956. Whereas a relatively small minority of intellectuals actually spoke out against CCP rule, these improvements in standards of living were widespread—except in cases where cadres had simply ignored instructions from above! Free speech, while not a non-issue, cannot explain the causes for the changes in 1957 by itself. Instead, it was the broader heyday of the intellectuals—as well as cadres wondering when *their* heyday might come—that takes center stage in this account.

CHAPTER 6: A PARTIAL BACKLASH, 1957

Intellectuals entered 1957 at the apex of their prestige and privilege in the PRC period. The majority of intellectuals had seen their standards of living rise across the board. The state was more invested in their research than ever before. And the Communist Party had, at long last, opened its doors to the intellectuals by admitting them into its ranks. The seeds of the 1957 backlash had already been planted, however, as low-level cadres came to resent the advances made in intellectuals' lives—advances that had often been denied to them. Privileging the intellectual class at the expense of the CCP's most loyal supporters was not a sustainable policy; at some point, cadre resentment (and even active resistance) would force the government to recalculate. That recalculation came in 1957 in the form of the Anti-Rightist Campaign. Nominally, the campaign was directed against “right-wing” intellectuals who had criticized the CCP too strenuously under the auspices of the Hundred Flowers Campaign (which called for a right to free speech and free criticism of the government). To be sure, some intellectuals did cross red lines by not only criticizing party policy, but also questioning the Communists' right to rule. In a public editorial in late May, a professor at Renmin University named Ke Peiqi issued a direct challenge to the party-state: “The ‘I-am-the-state’ attitude you hold cannot be tolerated... You must not be arrogant and conceited, you must not distrust the intellectuals. If you do well, fine; if not, the masses will knock you down, will kill the Communists, and overthrow you.”⁵⁹⁹ Of course, not all intellectuals who criticized the state were so explicit in calls for overthrowing the regime.⁶⁰⁰ Still, state tolerance for free speech had revealed genuine antipathy for CCP rule.

⁵⁹⁹ Quoted in Chen, *Thought Reform of the Chinese Intellectuals*, 164.

⁶⁰⁰ For a comprehensive look at documents written by intellectuals critical of the CCP, see MarFarquhar, *The Hundred Flowers Campaign and the Chinese Intellectuals*.

Of course, the Anti-Rightist Campaign silenced not only the true critics, but also genuine supporters of the regime who had not been circumspect enough in speaking out. Notable examples of genuine party supporters who were attacked during the campaign include the professor Yue Daiyun and the *People's Daily* editor Deng Tuo.⁶⁰¹ Even though the Anti-Rightist Campaign began to target actual supporters of the CCP, the cases of Yue and Deng are not necessarily representative of the broad experiences of intellectuals in 1957, however. Government documents show that the state was only generally concerned with a small minority of intellectuals that it had labelled “rightists.” The vast majority, the party-state still maintained, were either faithful progressives or, more likely, a malleable centrist faction. The overriding goal of the Anti-Rightist Campaign was to promote a broad-based unity between the progressive and centrist camps. Of course, the logic behind these ideological labels was often dubious at best. And it is probably true that many so-called “centrists” ultimately sided with their leftist colleagues over their “rightist” ones not out of genuine belief, but instead to avoid the kinds of scrutiny and punishment that had befallen their wayward colleagues. Despite all this, I maintain that 1957 was an incredibly complex year in the history of the politicking between intellectuals, cadres, and the party-state. The majority of intellectuals were not directly targeted by the Anti-Rightist Campaign, nor did they see the benefits they had accrued during the previous year (see Chapter 5) disappear. In many cases, the same reforms already underway proceeded unaffected by the crackdown. The Anti-Rightist Campaign was undeniably transformative for society and cruel to its targets; nevertheless, it represented only a partial backlash to the intellectuals’ heyday of yesteryear.

⁶⁰¹ For an account of Yue Daiyun’s epic story, see Yue and Carolyn Wakeman’s famous *To the Storm: The Odyssey of a Revolutionary Chinese Woman* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985), especially 1-53. For an account of Deng Tuo’s experiences in the Anti-Rightist Campaign, see Cheek, *Propaganda and Culture in Mao’s China*, 167-187.

Traditionally, scholars have laid the responsibility for the inauguration of the Anti-Rightist Campaign squarely at the foot of Mao Zedong, who was caught off-guard by a flurry of anti-party criticism from intellectuals as the result of the Hundred Flowers Campaign and became paranoid that intellectuals sought to undermine the regime's authority.⁶⁰² I do not disagree with any of these assessments; rather, I seek to broaden out the treatment of the Anti-Rightist Campaign in a number of ways. First, I argue (primarily in Chapter 5, although I also cover the topic in the present chapter) that intellectuals as a whole were generally supportive of the CCP. Second, and more significantly, I suggest that the campaign was the result of both top-down decision-making as well as pressure from rank-and-file cadres. My treatment of the Anti-Rightist Campaign is meant to add on to the current scholarly understanding of the campaign, not refute it.

This chapter approaches the year as a whole, picking up as the reform efforts to improve intellectuals' living standards continued. Due to a combination of factors—notably, resistance from an emboldened class of lower-level cadres—the reform efforts had begun to stall out in early 1957. As the previous chapter has shown, livelihood reforms were never egalitarian, often privileging intellectuals employed in the most vital sectors of the economy. Many other intellectuals began to wonder when they could experience the full array of benefits that industrial engineers, for example, had accrued. This sense of frustration at a stalled reform effort coincided with directives from above encouraging intellectuals to air their views freely. As such, many intellectuals spoke out with renewed vigor during the middle months of the year. While other intellectuals were offering major critiques of CCP rule, plenty other intellectuals drew attention

⁶⁰² Arguably the most famous coverage of the Anti-Rightist Campaign comes from Theodore Chen's *Thought Reform of the Chinese Intellectuals* and Frederick Teiwes' *Politics and Purges in China*. Additionally, Merle Goldman provides some treatment of the topic in *Literary Dissent in Communist China*.

to matters of practical importance in their daily lives—all while maintaining their firm support for the regime. A variety of factors—influence from cadres on the ground, in addition to exposure to vitriolic critiques from some intellectuals—forced the state to recalculate and launch the Anti-Rightist Campaign. I examine both the emerging narrative of a vast right-wing conspiracy to challenge the CCP as well as the ways in which certain benefits for intellectuals were actually upheld and even strengthened by the end of the year. The logic of carrying out a partial backlash meant that the state had to not only punish its perceived enemies, but also secure the support of the majority of intellectuals. For scholars who had successfully threaded the needle of airing their views without making themselves targets of the state, 1957 was not so different from 1956.

The Reform Effort Deferred: The Limits of Livelihood Improvements for Intellectuals

It was no secret that the cadres overseeing intellectuals had come to look down on the scholar class. They had achieved some successes by the end of the previous year by holding up some intellectuals' applications to join the CCP, and had forced the government to institute more rigorous standards for application acceptances (see Chapter 5). In 1957, cadres pushed further in an effort to stall out the reform movement. Cadres could often revoke pay increases that had passed the previous year, or reapportion salaries within the *danwei* to favor themselves at the expense of intellectual employees. For low-ranking party members, stripping intellectuals of some pay increases felt like righteous retribution for scholars who had increasingly ignored political study and who, in cadres' words, “ate meals with choice ingredients” (*chi babao fan*).⁶⁰³ Increasingly, intellectuals identified cadres themselves as the root of the problems in their daily

⁶⁰³ *Zhongguo fangzhi gonghui shanghai shi weiyuanhui guanyu liumian zhishifenzi wenti de cailiao*, 1957, C16-2-186-80, China Spinning and Weaving Union Shanghai Municipal Committee, SMA.

lives. Resistance from the cadre class alone did not produce the stall in the reform movement in totality, however. Pragmatic necessity too meant that city governments had to triage resources, often in ways that left some intellectuals out in the cold. Particularly for older intellectuals, unemployment had never been fully ended during the height of the work assignment program at the beginning of the decade. While young scholars were advancing their careers in the most favored positions and seeing advancements in their living standards, older intellectuals began to complain of unequal outcomes based on age. In sum, these issues demonstrated that the reform efforts of 1956 had created a climate of expectation that was only partially fulfilled.

At the beginning of the year, reports began emerging that described unfulfilled obligations to the intellectual community. At the Number Two Steel Factory in Shanghai, for example, a report from January 5 revealed that less than half of the engineering staff (only four persons out of a total of thirteen) had seen housing improvements during the previous year. Others were still waiting better accommodations. In the case of overall salary improvements, a number of engineers had asked the overseeing *danwei* to find employment opportunities for their spouses to supplement their own income. No progress had been made on these job assignments.⁶⁰⁴ In other cases, cadres had simply stopped following the new policies from the 1956 reforms. At one Shanghai chemical factory, cadres had abruptly stopped holding face-to-face meetings with intellectuals, and instead returned to making proclamations via the factory intercom system or public bulletins.⁶⁰⁵ The factory's intellectual staff complained about the reversion to the old policies; they much preferred the face-to-face meetings that had taken place

⁶⁰⁴ *Zhonggong Shanghai dier gangchang weiyuanhui guanyu 1956 nian zhishifenzi de zhengzhi gongzuo zongjie*, January 5, 1957, A46-1-13-19, Chinese Communist Municipal Government of Shanghai Iron and Steel Industry Committee, SMA.

⁶⁰⁵ *Zhonggong shanghaishi xuhui quwei tongzhan bu gongzuo bu bianyin de "qingkuang fanying" 1957 nian dier qi*, January 17, 1957, B76-3-141-2, Shanghai Municipal Chemical Industry Office, SMA.

the previous year—moreover, they complained that the quality of the intercom system, which used imported technology from the Soviet, was quite poor and difficult to listen to! The factory cadres seemed to have used intercom broadcasts to antagonize intellectuals. In one particularly egregious example, intellectuals noted that the ranking administrator publicized that he had increased his own monthly salary by 30 yuan, which was much higher than the raises any of them had received (and some intellectuals still had not seen any raises at all).⁶⁰⁶ Whether due to a lack of resources or a sense of emboldened resistance to the reforms, cadres had not been able to deliver on the full range of improvements intellectuals had expected by the start of 1957.

In other cases, factory administrations tried to disguise the real conditions for intellectual staff members under rosy pronouncements. At the Shanghai Asia Iron and Steel Factory, cadres described the state of affairs as “the best of all possible worlds” (*jinshan jinmei*) in a report to the municipal government. It is unclear why this language was used, however, when well over 10% of their intellectual staff had been classified as retrogressives for a slew of reasons—“negative antagonism” (*xiaoji de duikang*), a mindset of pursuing “individual interests” (*geren liyi*), or a lack of diligence in one’s work (*gongzuo shang bu anxin*).⁶⁰⁷ The staff expressed frustration about having their CCP membership applications denied. In the case of one engineer, Liu Shuyuan, the factory administrators had refused to submit his materials to the municipal government without giving a reason. “I’ve been working at this factory for five years,” Liu complained, “and I fear that the leadership doesn’t know what kind of person I am...it feels like I have been forgotten.”⁶⁰⁸ Based on other examples from the factory, it is likely that Liu had not demonstrated enough enthusiasm during the mobilization campaigns earlier in the decade. One

⁶⁰⁶ Ibid.

⁶⁰⁷ *Zhonggong yaxiya gangtiechang weiyuanhui guanyu zhishifenzi gongzuo qingkuang de baogao*, January 9, 1957, A46-1-13-26, Chinese Communist Municipal Government of Shanghai Iron and Steel Industry Committee, SMA.

⁶⁰⁸ Ibid.

of his colleagues, He Derang, was described as having exhibited an intense loyalty to the regime. As a result, the cadres were more than willing to recommend her for party membership.⁶⁰⁹ The case of He Derang was a testament to the genuine concern the CCP displayed for educated women—so long as their ideological credentials were impeccable.

Indeed, if there was a bright spot for intellectuals at this juncture, it was undoubtedly for female scholars. The government clearly had an interest in championing the progress at integrating intellectual women into the workforce; a *People's Daily* editorial came out on March 6, 1957 that refuted the old adage that “female wisdom is not equal to that of men” (*nüzi zhihui buru nan*). The article also noted that half of all high-level chemical researchers were women by that point. Employment trends pointed to a sharp increase in the employment of female intellectuals in teaching, the arts, and medicine, with some early signs of progress in fields like geology, the hard sciences, mathematics, and biology.⁶¹⁰ To be sure, female intellectuals were just as vulnerable to the Anti-Rightist Campaign as their male colleagues; at the same time, they undoubtedly advanced far more than male intellectuals when the 1950s as a whole are considered. At the same time, it is unlikely that older female intellectuals were able to make much progress due to their age. An editorial from a Beijing intellectual, He Siyuan (a male), noted that the regime had stopped short of providing full employment for older intellectuals despite progress for younger and middle-aged intellectuals during the early 1950s. He argued that older intellectuals’ practical knowledge—most notably, knowledge of foreign languages—could prove quite useful to the state.⁶¹¹ As such, age appears to have still been a limiting factor for intellectuals, regardless of gender.

⁶⁰⁹ Ibid.

⁶¹⁰ Ding Baofang, *Zai gaodeng jiaoyu he kexue shiye zhong: Beijing nü zhishifenzi you zhongyao gongxian*, March 6, 1957, RR.

⁶¹¹ *Fahui jiu zhishifenzi de qianli: He Siyuan de fayan*, March 8, 1957, RR.

In Shanghai, surveys from March reveal the successes and limitations of the reform effort for intellectuals. According to one report, a full 70% of intellectuals employed in the education industry had received some kind of wage increase. That being said, a wage increase alone did not necessarily translate to a fully secure standard of living; problems persisted in terms of a lack of availability among various consumer goods and foodstuffs, as well as an overall lack of quality.⁶¹² Although the 70% rate of wage increases is impressive, there is no definitive evidence that every intellectual who had received a wage increase could expect the new salary rate to continue into 1957 and beyond. Also, the statistics are limited in that they only related to education personnel, without corresponding percentages for engineers, medical personnel, artists, or researchers. Moreover, a wage *increase* did not necessarily have to be substantial to be counted as such; a later study showed that the average salary increase was about 16.34% of their 1955 salaries.⁶¹³ Of course, intellectuals also benefited in ways beyond salary hikes; for example, housing improvements (which may have included rent deductions) were not factored into the 16.34% figure. Intellectuals had also managed to wield a considerable degree of influence in the city, with a full 40% of delegates to the Shanghai People's Congress being composed of non-CCP intellectuals.⁶¹⁴ There were already signs in mid-March that the city was in the process of reassessing its policies toward intellectuals; the municipal government announced the foundation of the Shanghai Pedagogical Association, which focused on spreading the study of Marxism-Leninism among educators.⁶¹⁵

Intellectuals themselves had taken note of the limits of reform by late March. One famous intellectual, Luo Longji (the vice-chairman of the China Democratic League; later targeted as a

⁶¹² Shanghai Political and Economic Summary No. 5, March 1-March 15, 1957, CPR10, 435.

⁶¹³ Shanghai Political and Economic Summary No. 6, March 16-March 31, 1957, CPR10, 442.

⁶¹⁴ Ibid.

⁶¹⁵ Shanghai Political and Economic Summary No. 5, 435.

rightist in the latter half of the year) praised the party's successes in improving intellectuals' working hours, library materials, scientific instruments, and assistance from young researchers. Nevertheless, he pointed to a continuing "lack of mutual comprehension" (*gemo*) between intellectuals and their overseeing cadres.⁶¹⁶ In some cases, cross-class resentment from the cadres had real implications for intellectuals' salaries. In general, cadres tended to use a rating system (*pingji zhi*) to determine how much an intellectual would get paid per month. Intellectuals had begun to realize that the rating system unfairly privileged an intellectuals' political background over work performance, as well as CCP members over other party members or unaffiliated intellectuals.⁶¹⁷ Though no data is available on the disparity in wages between various political classifications (progressive, centrist, and retrogressive), many scholars had come to believe that the lion's share of the benefits had gone to the progressive faction. Meanwhile, a representative to the National People's Congress named Li Boqiu discussed the state of intellectuals in Shanghai and Guangzhou in a speech on March 25. Li suggested that wage increases had only gone through for about two-thirds of intellectuals, and also noted that hospitals and clinics were still in the midst of significant shortages of medicine and supplies.⁶¹⁸ For its part, the national government seemed to be relatively uninterested in pressing forward with the reform efforts of 1956. A *People's Daily* article suggested that the government's attention had been refocused on population pressure in the major cities; the editorial called on older intellectuals to return to their ancestral villages in order to alleviate urban population pressure. Retired intellectuals could still

⁶¹⁶ Luo Longji, *Jiaqiang dang yu feidang zhishifenzi de tuanjie*, March 23, 1957, ARC.

⁶¹⁷ *Ibid.*

⁶¹⁸ *Shanghaishi renmin weiyuanhui bangongting guanyu zhuanfa quanguo renmin daibiao dahui Li Boqiu daibiao guanyu zhishifenzi wenti de shicha baogao de han*, March 25, 1957, B123-3-884-1, Shanghai Municipal First Bureau of Commerce, SMA.

work in advisory roles in rural areas, the author said.⁶¹⁹ It thus seems likely that the national government was unaffected by reports of continuing issues facing intellectuals, and was satisfied with the progress already made. Other issues seemed more pressing.

One benefit intellectuals appreciated in 1956 was a reduction in political meetings. As such, the resumption thereof during 1957 caused considerable consternation among the scholarly community. In Shanghai, intellectuals complained that cadres started infusing political study—which included calls for criticism and self-criticism—into the old face-to-face meetings where cadres would check on intellectuals to make sure they were happy with their living and working conditions. Perhaps in response to cadre resentment for the livelihood improvements intellectuals experienced during 1956, these meetings often called on intellectuals to reflect on the “comfort and ease” (*anyi*) of their lives, as well as criticize their class arrogance (*zigao zida*; literally, “thinking of oneself as tall and great”).⁶²⁰ For their part, Shanghai intellectuals felt that cadres had become willfully ignorant of the issues that still affected them; they called on their administrators to “investigate the realities of their lives” (*xizama kanhua*; literally, “get off one’s horse to look at the flowers”). Intellectuals felt that cadres “loathed” (*hen*) them, and that they would treat anyone who had any kind of connection whatsoever to the old Guomindang regime harshly. Some factories even reverted wages back to the 1955 level, causing intellectuals to criticize the CCP for going back on its word (*chuer faner*).⁶²¹ For Shanghai intellectuals well versed in the political *modus operandi* of the Communist Party, they realized that a new rectification movement was on the horizon. The Shanghai Municipal Government had begun

⁶¹⁹ *Jiejue chengshi renkou yongji de yige banfa: zeng zhenwu jianyi zhengfu jiangli tuixiu de ganbu, zhishifenzi, gongren zai ziyuan he keneng tiaojian xia, jinliang huidao nongcun juzhu. Zhe dui ge fangmian dou you haochu*, March 18, 1957, RR.

⁶²⁰ *Shanghaishi jidian gongye ju guanyu zhishifenzi taolun “xuanchuan gongzuo huiyi baogao” de qingkuang*, April 10, 1957, B173-4-96-1, Shanghai Municipal Machine-building and Electrical Industry Management Office, SMA.

⁶²¹ *Ibid.*

reining in the ongoing Hundred Flowers Campaign (where the free airing of views was referred to, metaphorically, as “blooming”), saying, “First, there should be a limited scale of ‘blooming’; after that, we believe that some more ‘blooming’ can occur. But we want to avoid any sudden outbursts of ‘blooming’ all at once.”⁶²² Across the board, intellectuals saw many of the gains of 1956 begin to evaporate.

Much of the attention drawn to the continuing problems experienced by intellectuals was accomplished through older intellectuals speaking out—in general, older intellectuals seemed to take greater advantage of the more liberal national climate than their younger colleagues. At the same time, older intellectuals also may have had more to complain about. They argued that the party had only gleaned a superficial understanding of their actual beliefs during the Thought Reform Campaign of 1952, and had not updated their information since. They suggested that cadres were overeager to mechanically apply labels like “counterrevolutionary” or “anti-party,” which could irrevocably hinder the rest of a scholar’s career.⁶²³ Some older intellectuals, such as the engineer Du Guangzu (who worked at Huasheng Factory in Shanghai), may have been old enough to retire; Du’s children were grown adults, after all. Still, Du refrained from retiring out of a belief that he was a “good-for-nothing” (*hunhun*) who could not do much else besides work at the factory. The working conditions at Huasheng had become grim, however. Wages had actually been cut during 1955, meaning that any wage increases at best probably would not exceed what intellectual staff members were making in 1954. Despite promises of raises, nothing actually happened. Du and his colleagues had therefore become increasingly skeptical of their

⁶²² Ibid.

⁶²³ *Shanghai zhishijie de xin qixiang*, April 24, 1957, ARC.

cadres, saying that “the stairs creak but no one comes down” (*zhi ting louti xiang, meijian ren xialai*)—that is, that the administration was all talk and no action.⁶²⁴

By mid-year, the nation was mostly gripped in the drama of the Anti-Rightist Campaign; as a result, there was little work being done to assess the actual living and working conditions of intellectuals. A handful of documents after May are revealing, however, and demonstrate that a sense of stalled reforms persisted for many intellectuals over the course of the entire year. In mid-June, the Shanghai Ministry of Higher Education noted that it was having difficulties finding jobs for graduates. *Danwei* around China were under instructions to “economize” (*jieryue*), meaning that they were often hesitant to add new staff members. As a result, the Shanghai Municipal Government tried to absorb some 1957 graduates in order to ease pressure on other industries, although these efforts still fell short of what was needed.⁶²⁵ The PRC State Council acknowledged the lack of opportunities for recent graduates in mid-July, drawing attention to four defects in the existing system of work assignment: (1) not enough attention was paid to students’ political histories, (2) gaps between students’ academic specializations and the practical needs of society, (3) too short a time frame for assigning a suitable job, considering the short time-span of the summer vacation, and (4) the refusal of some students to accept a job offer from the government.⁶²⁶ To try and fix the problem, the State Council proposed a number of changes: the work assignment program would begin drawing plans well before graduation, and would advise schools on the most at-need professions. The State Council also called for more

⁶²⁴ *Shanghaishi jidian gongye ju guanyu jige jishuren yuan (gaoji zhishifenzi) youguan wenti de qingkuang diaocha*, May 2, 1957, B173-4-96-36, Shanghai Municipal Machine-building and Electrical Industry Management Office, SMA.

⁶²⁵ *Shanghaishi renmin weiyuanhui zhuanfa “guanyu cong zhishifenzi zhong zhaopin gongzuo ren yuan ruogan wenti de qingshi baogao” de tongzhi*, June 18, 1957, B243-1-79-13, Shanghai Municipal Ministry of Higher Education, SMA.

⁶²⁶ *Guowuyuan guanyu gaodeng xuexiao 1957 nian shuqi biyesheng fenpei gongzuo de jixiang yuanze guiding*, July 17, 1957, ARC.

quality professors in the sciences in order to increase the overall scientific literacy of the intellectual population. University *danwei* would also have to look for opportunities to involve students in manual labor in order to give them a broader array of professional qualifications. Lastly, the State Council called for an end to the unofficial practice of universities letting unemployed students (including those who had refused their job assignments) to continue to live in university dorms until they had found some source of employment.⁶²⁷

It appears that the problem of unemployment for recent graduates continued into the following year. The Shanghai Municipal Government announced plans to devote a considerable budget—698,816 yuan—to help unemployed intellectuals find work in 1958. Although considerable, that sum was only about half of the city’s budget for assistance to support currently-employed intellectuals, at 1,272,061 yuan.⁶²⁸ For intellectuals who had finally had the opportunity to pursue a degree thanks to the party’s expansion of the education system, facing potential unemployment was no doubt considerable evidence of the limits of reform. Even employed intellectuals still had complaints, however; Shanghai doctors complained about a new policy of assigning them to work in different districts from where they lived (*huaqu yiliao*). Although doctors were appreciative of new cultural opportunities, such as the local Philharmonic Orchestra, they complained about boring, repetitive performances that were targeted to a lay audience instead of them.⁶²⁹ Meanwhile, the prestige gained by medical personnel during 1956 had largely disappeared during 1957. There was a highly-publicized incident where a combat

⁶²⁷ Ibid.

⁶²⁸ *Shanghaishi caizheng ju wei heding shanghaishi laodong ju 1958 nian chengshi shiye zhigong ji shiye zhishifenzi jiuji shiyefei niandu yusuan ji fenpei yusuan*, December 27, 1957, B127-2-63-9, Shanghai Municipal Bureau of Labor, SMA.

⁶²⁹ *Shanghaishi weisheng ju guanyu jiang yinianlai de gaoji zhishifenzi fazheng qingkuang ji jinhou yijian baoqing heshi de han*, December 30, 1957, B242-1-1037-1, Shanghai Municipal Ministry of Hygiene, SMA.

veteran was denied treatment at the First People's Hospital, causing other PLA members to criticize the Shanghai health care system for long waits.⁶³⁰

For all these reasons, intellectuals had come down from the heady months of the previous year. A good deal of the promises made from the national party, as well as provincial and municipal governments, had either not materialized yet or had even been retracted by resentful cadres—bold moves that typically went unpunished by ranking party members. At the same time, we should be careful not to overstate the case. As the previous chapter has shown, there was a wealth of significant and measurable benefits for intellectuals that was already underway. The idea of a “stalled-out” reform movement is marginal to the general trend of livelihood improvements. As the final section in this chapter will explore, many intellectuals were able to solidify the gains of 1956 even during the frenzy of the Anti-Rightist Campaign. That being said, however, the goal of this section has been to demonstrate that there was a sense, among a sizeable number of intellectuals, that the benefits they were expecting had not come through. Moreover, the manner in which the reform movement began to fizzle out represents a microcosm of larger political forces; cadres were emboldened by some of their successes in slowing down reform efforts already, and accordingly pushed forward at the beginning of 1957. Overseeing party branches may have been aware of low-ranking cadres' intransigence, but they showed little appetite to intervene. That boded even less well for intellectuals.

A Cacophony of Views: Intellectuals Speak Out

Intellectuals' sense of frustration coincided with political changes at the top. Mao Zedong himself had invited the intellectuals to freely offer criticism of state policy via a speech on

⁶³⁰ Ibid.

February 27 detailing the “contradictions” between classes.⁶³¹ Thus began the zenith of the Hundred Flowers Campaign. To be sure, some intellectuals used the perceived shift to a more liberal political climate in order to levy severe criticism of the CCP regime. In many other cases, however, intellectuals used the opportunity to draw attention to their continuing class problems (both real and perceived), as elucidated in the previous section. This is not to suggest that the majority of intellectuals’ freely-aired views in early and mid-1957 were apolitical, but rather that little evidence exists of overt and widespread anti-party sentiments among intellectuals. Thus far in the decade, intellectuals had generally found ways to cooperate with the new regime in tacit return for benefits, from prioritizing intellectuals in the nationwide work assignment programs to targeted class benefits in 1956. For the majority of intellectuals, they probably had little reason to think that drawing national attention to their continuing issues would elicit a different response from the party center than such strategies had at the beginning of the decade or in 1955.

At the beginning of the year, intellectuals still had plenty of access to and influence with sympathetic municipal governments. A pair of speeches in early 1957 by Shanghai intellectuals to the city’s municipal committee showed that intellectuals were aware of the changes in the national environment and began to try and solidify support from high-level party institutions. One of the speeches, by Xu Zhongnian, complained about the “mean-spirited” treatment of intellectuals by cadres and countered that intellectuals had proved their loyalty to the CCP. He acknowledged that there were still right-leaning intellectuals, but expressed a faith in their capability for political transformation: “even reactionaries can become revolutionaries!”⁶³² He asked the Shanghai government for more patience, noting that intellectuals were “particularly

⁶³¹ MarFarquhar, *The Hundred Flowers Campaign and the Chinese Intellectuals*, 1-10.

⁶³² *Qian lun zhishifenzi: Xu Zhongnian zai shanghai shi zhengxie diyiju weiyuanhui disici quanti huiyi shang de fayangao*, 1957, L1-1-107-36, Chinese People’s Political Consultative Conference Shanghai Municipal Committee, SMA.

sensitive about their reputations” (*aimianzi*). Xu concluded his speech by calling for a “Three Intentions Policy,” including more attentiveness to the needs of intellectuals, more patience in waiting for wayward intellectuals to undergo ideological transformation, and an overall perseverance in the party’s broad policies for intellectuals.⁶³³ A speech from Gao Hongzhang discussed the plight of older intellectuals (Gao himself was over 60 years old), whom Gao credited for the advancements already accomplished in critical sectors like scientific research. Gao cited the old idiom that “great strength can cultivate new energy through the full utilization of old teachers” (*dali peiyang xinseng liliang, chongfen liyong lao jiaoshi*).⁶³⁴ Although Xu and Gao’s speeches had no measurable effect on municipal policy, the fact that the city government was still actively soliciting intellectuals views was indicative of the still-favorable climate in the early months of the year.

Although most intellectuals did not begin speaking out in earnest until May, there were some criticisms published earlier. Two doctors from Tianjin, Wan Fuen and Zhang Jizheng, argued that the Communist Party had not paid adequate attention to medical professionals, and called for a “doctor-nurse alliance” to better advance their interests. Both Wan and Zhang were members of the CDL, and on the basis of their own personal experiences argued that non-CCP intellectuals were given unequal treatment by cadres. They also criticized the Youth League for eroding the authority of experts by providing young scholars with an “insulated” education.⁶³⁵ Of course, calling for such an alliance may have been quite dangerous, politically, given that it would not have been a stretch to suggest that Wan and Zhang were advocating for the formation

⁶³³ Ibid.

⁶³⁴ *Liushishui yishang de gaoji zhishifenzi jijixing yingdang shouda gulu: Gao Hongzhang zai shanghaishi zhengxie diyiju weiyuanhui disici quanti huiyi shang de fayangao*, 1957, L1-1-107-76, Chinese People’s Political Consultative Conference Shanghai Municipal Committee, SMA.

⁶³⁵ Fang Ling, *Tianjin liangwei mingyi fabiao gongji dang de kuangwang miulun*, March 14, 1957, ARC.

of a new, unlicensed political party. Other early criticisms stopped short of such statements. A writing by Chen Yousong, deputy director of the Education Department at Beijing Normal University, criticized the over-reliance on the Soviet model in reforming Chinese education. Chen argued that the Thought Reform Campaign, as well as subsequent injunctions to continue political study, represented an “incalculable waste of both time and energy” (*langfei le xuduo ren de shijian jingli buxuan*).⁶³⁶ On the other hand, Chen praised the government’s successes at combating unemployment among intellectuals, although noted that some intellectuals had been awkwardly placed in unsuitable jobs (*xuezu shilü*). Chen also argued that younger students (who had opportunities to work as teaching assistants for their professors) had become increasingly suspicious of the faculty, which hampered the ability of older intellectuals to properly cultivate young scholars’ intellects.⁶³⁷

The floodgates opened in May, however. A torrent of letters arrived in Beijing from intellectuals around the country interested in airing their views on continuing problems in their working and living conditions. Dong Weichuan, vice-provost of Beijing Normal University, argued that the party committee at the school was made up of cadres who had a poor understanding of the realities of university work, and therefore could not serve as effective administrators. Dong instead proposed that the faculty should instead govern the school system (*jiaoshou zhi xiao*).⁶³⁸ In a second letter, Dong described his “persecution” during the Three-Anti Campaign by individuals “without qualifications” who had denounced him (*mei zige kongxu wo*), thus coming off as somewhat haughty. He also argued that education reforms had led to a significant amount of reshuffling among university faculty between various “sister schools,”

⁶³⁶ Chen Yousong, *Jiaoyu gongzuo zhong de jiaotiao zhuyi he guanliao zhuyi*, April 30, 1957, ARC.

⁶³⁷ Ibid.

⁶³⁸ Dong Weichuan, “*Xing renhe zhidu dou xu xinlai lao jiaoshi*”, May, 1957, ARC.

which often upended the lives of professors required to move. Dong concluded his second letter by arguing that intellectuals had view representatives they could truly rely on; even the democratic parties (such as the Jiusan Society) that nominally represented intellectuals had coerced intellectuals into undergoing self-criticism along with CCP directives.⁶³⁹ Other criticisms took the form of big-character posters (*dazibao*) splayed around campus. A second-year student at Guangxi Normal University, Zhang Zou, criticized the inequalities between the ruling class and the people, and suggested that intellectuals should struggle against such inequalities.⁶⁴⁰

One of the more common complaints from intellectuals was regarding the overall primacy of ideology in their professional lives. Various professors working at the Beijing Institute of Steel and Iron submitted a jointly-written letter to the state that called for an end to thought rectification work. Zhang Cungen argued that an intellectual's love for their country was not correlated to a conviction in Marxism-Leninism; Kong Qingfu, meanwhile, argued that the superiority of American science over Soviet science meant that studying Marxism-Leninism did not produce tangible breakthroughs. Wu Shugao, meanwhile, defended older intellectuals by saying that a career of long and careful research (as opposed to political studying) could lead to national academic successes.⁶⁴¹ Another joint criticism, this time from both professors and students at Xiamen University, again criticized thought work. Chen Jin (a student of economics) argued that frequent meetings and study sessions got in the way of "real" work and research. Wu Jianhua (a student of history) argued that many intellectuals had "gone mad" (*fafeng*) due to the excesses of the Thought Reform Campaign. One student, Zhu Tong (in foreign languages) went

⁶³⁹ Dong Weichuan, *Wo de chujing*, May, 1957, ARC.

⁶⁴⁰ Zhang Zou, *Dazibao: zhi laoshi de xin*, May, 1957, ARC.

⁶⁴¹ Zhang Cungen, Kong Qingfu, Zhang Qingyao, Wu Shugao, Wen Xingba, and Li Dayi, *Fandui zhishifenzi sixiang gaizao*, May, 1957, ARC.

further than his classmates in decrying the overt killing of some intellectuals by the PLA during the civil war.⁶⁴² Although provocative, Zhu's criticisms were not echoed by any others, who instead highlighted areas for possible reform and collaboration. Another letter from Jing Zhenhua, a professor of oceanography at Shandong University, explained that older Chinese scientists had been trained to avoid ideology in the interest of seeking unbiased truth. Jing turned the frequently-used idiom "thinking of oneself as tall and great" (*zigao zida*) against the cadres, arguing that *they* were the real arrogant ones. Jing concluded similarly to Dong Weichuan in arguing for "democratically-run schools" (*minzhu ban xiao*).⁶⁴³

The idea of a "democratically-run school" was echoed, both explicitly and implicitly, by others.⁶⁴⁴ Wu Xianpei, a professor at Chongqing Normal University (who had been involved in disseminating anti-Soviet materials before 1949, and was thus under some suspicion by the local authorities), revealed that the administration of his school had instituted an unfair system where wages were based solely on CCP membership as opposed to the quality of work. He also rejected the ideological classification scheme promulgated by the regime, saying that the overwhelming majority of those targeted as counterrevolutionaries were, in fact, decent, moral people. Wu argued that that party's frequent shifts in policy toward intellectuals was like "a slap in the face, followed by a piece of candy" (*yige erguang, yikuai bingtong*).⁶⁴⁵ To add substance to his arguments, Wu brought up an example from Lu County in Sichuan where a professor had been accused of corruption. After an investigation revealed no conclusive proof, cadres instead targeted the professor's wife. She later hung herself after enduring a gruelling interrogation and

⁶⁴² "Guanyu zhishifenzi zhengce" de yanlun, May, 1957, ARC.

⁶⁴³ Jing Zhenhua, "Yaoyong lishi yanguang kan gaoji zhishifenzi", May, 1957, ARC.

⁶⁴⁴ For a more comprehensive look at the national push for democratically-run schools, see Chen, *Thought Reform of the Chinese Intellectuals*, 158-162.

⁶⁴⁵ Wu Xianpei, "Gezhong yundong buzhi gaocuo le haoduo ren", May, 1957, ARC.

public embarrassment. Even still, Wu was careful to note his support for the overall leadership of the CCO—just not its low-ranking cadres.⁶⁴⁶ Chen Shiwei, vice-principal of Lanzhou University (in Gansu Province), criticized the idea that cadres without any background in higher education could effectively administer the university system. With the majority of president, provost, or principal positions at Chinese universities now held by cadres, the CCP had an enormous foothold in the university system. Chen suggested that these cadres were only out for themselves, and had ignored Communist doctrines such as the mass line.⁶⁴⁷

Chen Shiti, a biology professor at Chongqing Medical School, was also concerned about the broader relationship between the cadres and the masses. Chen argued that a form of “estrangement” (*gehe*) existed between cadres and those they oversaw. This represented an interesting rhetorical strategy; Chen was explicitly identifying intellectuals with the “masses,” thus symbolically refuting cadre criticisms of elitism or arrogance among intellectuals. At the same time, Chen himself may have been guilty of some degree of haughtiness; one of his other criticisms related to the lower qualifications among the contemporary crop of teaching assistants, who too often “spoke without thinking” (*xinkou kaihe*).⁶⁴⁸ Chen was also in a unique position due to his religious identity as a Christian. He criticized the government had discriminated against Christianity due to its links to Western imperialism. In particular, Chen pointed out the disparities in the state’s religious policies; the government had created a new holiday with respect to Islamic tradition, whereas no such holiday had been established in accordance with the Christian tradition.⁶⁴⁹ Another Chongqing intellectual, Feng Kexi, criticized the general lack of

⁶⁴⁶ Ibid.

⁶⁴⁷ Chen Shiwei, *Yingdang quxiao gaodeng xuexiao dangwei zhi*, May, 1957, ARC.

⁶⁴⁸ Chen Shiti, *Zhengzhi yundong de guilixing—dongyuan baogao, douzheng, zongjie sanbuqu—zai minmeng yu jiusan zuotanhui shang de fayan*, May, 1957, ARC.

⁶⁴⁹ Ibid.

free expression. Feng argued that, after Thought Reform, many intellectuals had begun policing themselves about what they did and did not say in public. He acknowledged—and praised—CCP efforts to raise the standards of living for intellectuals, from diet to housing to even clothing options. But Feng also said that these material things did not make for a fulfilling life in of themselves. Feng concluded his remarks by reminding the authorities that intellectuals, especially in Guomindang-controlled territory, had often risked their lives to assist the CCP in coming to power. The government therefore owed them, in Feng’s view.⁶⁵⁰

Other intellectuals felt that the party’s reforms had left the education system unrecognizable from the pre-1949 era. Yang Zhaolong, a professor in Shanghai, discussed the generation gap between young and older intellectuals in a speech on May 4. Yang suggested that young intellectuals placed unrealistic and stress-inducing demands for political purity on their older colleagues. Yang also bemoaned the level of influence the CCP had over the next generation of intellectuals; for the first time in China’s history, young intellectuals had been cultivated more by the state than by their mentors.⁶⁵¹ Chen Yanzhi, director of the Shenyang chapter of the CDL, echoed other criticisms of low-ranking cadres in a speech on May 8. “The knowledge possessed by intellectuals is not anything extraordinary,” Chen said, quoting a common cadre saying, “all we’d need is a concentrated effort, and we could grasp it as well.” In addition to criticizing cadres, Chen also expressed dismay regarding the prevalence of crash courses and night classes for the working classes. These supplementary courses were often too rigorous for enrollees, who often had little more than a primary school education, according to Chen.⁶⁵² An editorial in *People’s Daily* on May 10, from a non-CCP intellectual named Li Yue,

⁶⁵⁰ Feng Kexi, *Zhishifenzi de wenti zai nali?*, May, 1957, ARC.

⁶⁵¹ Yang Zhaolong, *Zai Shanghai shiwei zhaokai de zhishifenzi zuotanhui shang de fayan*, May 4, 1957, ARC.

⁶⁵² Chen Yanzhi, *Chen Yanzhi zai guangming ribao bianji bu yaoqing shenyang gaoji zhishifenzi zuotanhui shang de jianghua*, May 8, 1957, ARC.

criticized intellectuals who had managed to gain CCP membership during the reforms of 1956. Li said that intellectuals who had gained party membership were no longer willing to accept any criticism from their unaffiliated colleagues. “There are some comrades who have braved enemy gunfire who have nevertheless taken a step back from the gateway to criticism and self-criticism,” Li said. Gaining party membership was generally based on a desire for career advancement than a genuine belief, he argued.⁶⁵³

Criticism of the cadre class continued as the month wore on. Hu Ming, director of the Russian Language Department at Beijing Normal University, complained that intellectuals who were not favored by the cadres tended to have either modest or no wage raises during 1956. Hu expressed the idea that intellectuals felt like they “had a job, had responsibilities, but had no power” (*youzhi, youze, wuquan*).⁶⁵⁴ A collaborative document from professors at Xi’an Normal University appeared the following day, which criticized cadre leadership even while praising the CCP broadly. The professors described an incident where cadres had carried out a bizarre reorganization of Xi’an Normal and Shaanxi Normal University, whereby the former would specialize in physics and geography while the latter would focus on biology and chemistry. The reorganization forced many intellectuals to pick up and move. Other academic departments, especially the humanities, had been unfairly downsized.⁶⁵⁵ The professors also complained about the unfair arrest of a teacher at Xianyang Middle School, Shu Longyuan, who had been incarcerated on September 10, 1954. Shu had worked as a translator in the Guomindang Defense Department before liberation, and had been antagonistic to CCP rule ever since. Despite this, Shu’s academic credentials were outstanding, meaning that his crime was one of belief only (he

⁶⁵³ Li Yue, “*Dangnei zhishifenzi*” *de guli*, May 10, 1957, ARC.

⁶⁵⁴ Hu Ming, *Zhuyao maodun shi dang he qunzhong de guanxi buhao, xuexiao de guanliaozhuyi xiangdang yanzhong*, May 10, 1957, ARC.

⁶⁵⁵ *Xi’an shiyuan qiang gao gou shen: jiaoshou tichu jianrui piping*, May 11, 1957, ARC.

took no direct actions to oppose the CCP's leadership). The Xi'an professors compared Shu's arrest to the crackdown on communist and communist-sympathetic intellectuals during the 1940s.⁶⁵⁶

Other intellectuals in the northwest were chafing against stringent censorship policies. Qiu Shiming, a professor in the Art History Department at Northwest School for the Arts, described his personal difficulties in finding a venue to publish criticism of the cadres. He had written an article criticizing the heavy-handedness of his department head, but his colleagues had completely ignored it. He instead tried to publish his criticism via *Fine Arts*, a local magazine. The editorial board rejected the article, saying that it was unrealistic for Qiu to expect that the department be run without any errors.⁶⁵⁷ One of Qiu's colleagues, Xu Taotian, described older intellectuals as "old slaves" (*lao nucai*) who had been completely neglected by the CCP. The majority of party membership acceptances had gone to younger intellectuals, much to Xu's chagrin. Xu also noted that many younger intellectuals had received higher wage raises and fast promotions when compared to their older colleagues.⁶⁵⁸ An associate professor of physics at Shandong University, Liu Hongbin, echoed Xu's frustrations about the uneven process of applying for party membership. Liu revealed that many Shandong intellectuals who had been admitted into the CCP had actually come from a petty capitalist background, despite the government's rhetoric—presumably because they were younger and therefore untarred (or less tarred) by association with the Guomindang. Overall, however, Liu was satisfied with the

⁶⁵⁶ Ibid.

⁶⁵⁷ *Xibei yizhuan jiaoshi zuotan dui xuexiao lingdao de yijian*, May 16, 1957, ARC.

⁶⁵⁸ Ibid.

government's outreach to youths; he noted that he and his wife were convinced that the party would take care of their son in the event that anything were to happen to them.⁶⁵⁹

Increasingly, intellectuals speaking out demonstrated a variety of positions on the role of the CCP; some maintained that the leadership was generally correct, but policy had been warped by problematic implementation by the cadres. Others instead suggested that problems ran to the top. Ren Yongzhong, a professor in Shenyang, was in the former camp. He complained that cadres had stripped medical schools of critical instruments under the belief that they were “wasteful” during the Three-Anti Campaign; hydroelectric boards had been converted into hot plates, for example. Still, Ren maintained that “the party’s policies are correct, and Chairman Mao’s instructions are clear”—the fault lay in the cadres on the ground.⁶⁶⁰ A professor in Shaanxi, Yuan Yaoting, was less sanguine about the CCP, which he accused of wanting to “do everything by itself” (*baoban daiti*), thereby crowding out the minor democratic parties. Yuan also described a bleak economic situation for non-CCP intellectuals. Nearly all university professors were reliant on the incomes from spouses in order to make ends meet; however, CCP-affiliated intellectuals’ spouses invariably had an easier time finding sideline economic opportunities than non-party ones. Another professor, Zhou Yao, stopped short of criticizing the national government, however. The main problem according to Zhou was that cadres had not adequately protected research time; Zhou was forced to come into campus on Sundays just to keep up with his research projects.⁶⁶¹ The provost of a university in Guangzhou, Chen Ziming, argued that non-party intellectuals had virtually “given up.” Some of Chen’s colleagues in the sciences explicitly blamed the national Ministry of Education for the lack of government support

⁶⁵⁹ Liu Hongbin, *Zai Shandong dangwei zhaokai de minzhu dangpai fuzeren zuotanhui shang de fayan*, May 16, 1957, ARC.

⁶⁶⁰ Ren Yongzhong, *Zai Shenyang yixueyuan zuotanhui shang de jianghua*, May 17, 1957, ARC.

⁶⁶¹ *Zhonggoang Shaanxi shengwei yaoqing gaodeng xuexiao jiaoshou zuotan*, May 18, 1957, ARC.

for research; they said that research academies were now better places to work than academia.⁶⁶² These criticisms were unique in that they put the lion's share of the blame on the institutions of national government.

Previous chapters have noted that there was a particularly tense relationship between intellectuals and cadres in Yunnan Province. As expected, Yunnan scholars thus used the opportunity to express their many complaints with their overseers. Du Fenshui, deputy director of the Yunnan chapter of the CDL, had insight into the geographic differences in how party members treated democratic party representatives. Du described several instances where he was traveling to conferences in Beijing; officials from the central government had always made time to meet with him despite their busy schedules. However, cadres in the Yunnan government frequently snubbed Du and his colleagues.⁶⁶³ Qin Zan, who worked for the Kunming branch of the Jiusan Society (another one of the minor democratic parties), agree with Du's assessment. Ranking cadres in Yunnan generally did a good job in carrying out the state's policies, in Qin's view. Meanwhile, middle- and low-ranking cadres typically looked for any excuse to treat intellectuals harshly.⁶⁶⁴ Yang Ming, a direct colleague of Du Fenshui's, analyzed the problem in terms of class background. Cadres directly supervising intellectuals tended to come from an agricultural or military background, and thus had little understanding of academics' work. Yang suggested that the state might consider furthering the program of admitting intellectuals as members in order to allow for intellectual cadres to manage non-party intellectuals.⁶⁶⁵

⁶⁶² Guangming Daily, *Gaojiao bu gongzuo you yanzhong quedian: Guangzhou gaoji zhishifenzi zai benbao zuotanhui shang jianrui piping*, May 19, 1957, ARC.

⁶⁶³ People's Daily, *Yunnan ge minzhu dangpai difang zuzhi fuzeren piping dang dui zhishifenzi de zongpaizhuyi qingxu*, May 22, 1957, ARC.

⁶⁶⁴ Ibid.

⁶⁶⁵ Ibid.

The democratic parties as a whole had a difficult time responding to the shifting political winds. On one hand, they owed their continuing existence to the whims of the CCP, in essence—on the other, however, they were tasked with representing their members (many of whom were intellectuals). Representatives from the minor parties met at a conference in Wuhan on May 23 to discuss how best to react to the outpouring of intellectual criticism—and sometimes dissent. Representatives noted that the parties had always supported the government’s mobilization campaigns, from Thought Reform to Suppress the Counterrevolutionaries. At the same time, representatives also felt that too much of state policy had been derived from the Soviet model, which had placed undue burdens on Chinese intellectuals.⁶⁶⁶ The representatives both acknowledged the “preferential treatment” (*youdai*) of intellectuals but also that intellectuals had found some of the reforms wanting; they still felt that the state was not fully invested in supporting research, for example.⁶⁶⁷ As such, the democratic parties had a difficult task during this period: echoing intellectuals criticisms while not pushing back too much against state policy. These ambiguities were sometimes reflected among democratic party members. A member of the Tianjin branch of the CDL, Yan Lichuan, accused another CDL member (Li Limin) of being a rightist in a letter on May 24. Li was working as the department chair of the Fine Arts Department at Tianjin Normal University, and also had a position at Tianjin Pictorial Magazine.⁶⁶⁸ This may suggest that Yan Lichuan was simply looking to advance his own career by accusing a superior of rightist behavior—an action that clearly went beyond the bounds of the Communist Party. Democratic party members were adapting to the politics of the new era.

⁶⁶⁶ *Wuhan diqu dazhuan xuexiao minzhu dangpai fuzeren bangzhu dang kaizhan zhengfeng yundong*, May 23, 1957, ARC.

⁶⁶⁷ *Ibid.*

⁶⁶⁸ Chen Xiaozhao and Yan Lichuan, *Youpaifenzi Wang Maigan, Li Limin de fandang yanxing*, May 24, 1957, ARC.

Other intellectuals made suggestions or criticisms regarding the day-to-day operation of universities. Fu Zhongsun, a professor at Northwest University, argued that cadres paid too much attention to student agitation and not enough to the professoriate. In a personal example, Fu describes the firing of his friend Zhang Peihu from the university after he had been targeted by student radicals. Fu described the student body as more like “fiction writers” than experienced journalists when it came to making big-character posters. Moreover, Fu noted that professors rarely had the time to respond in-depth to accusations on the posters, thus allowing faulty information to stay up for long periods of time.⁶⁶⁹ A report from several intellectuals at the Beijing School of Political Law in June praised the CCP for its work in increasing wages, but also exposed issues with the fairness of exam policies. One professor, Du Ruji, described getting pressured by cadres to bump exam grades for party-affiliated students (either full members, Youth League members, or radical activists) who had failed. Du attributed this issue to cadres not understanding the serious role of examinations within academia.⁶⁷⁰ A lecturer at South China Normal University, Huang Yiqiu, complained that he was required to teach 12 classes per week—while his department head (installed by the party branch in charge of the school) only had to teach 7. Huang also explained the drawbacks of the expansion of the education system, which had burdened intellectuals with huge class sizes, lower average achievement levels from students, and a dwindling supply of tutors. Despite the old maxim of “respect for the teacher, love for the student” (*zunshi aisheng*), Huang said that students in the mid-1950s saw faculty as little more than strangers (*luren*).⁶⁷¹

⁶⁶⁹ Fu Zhongsun, *Wo dui dang de zhishifenzi zhengce gandao yihan*, May 27, 1957, ARC.

⁶⁷⁰ Qian Duansheng, Du Ruji, Wang Ge, Yang Hegao, Zhou Ren, Tao Heqian, Yao Ming, and Liang Shitong, *Guanyu zhishifenzi zhengce de yanlun*, June, 1957, ARC.

⁶⁷¹ *Huanan shifan xueyuan jixu zuotan neibu maodun: jiaoshoumen tichu xuduo piping he jianyi*, June 1, 1957, ARC.

Some intellectuals wrote highly personal accounts of the hardships they had endured during the 1950s. He Tingjie, a professor at Beijing Normal University, described himself as an “activist” during the Thought Reform Campaign, having dutifully attended and participated in every political meeting his university held. However, He had become disillusioned with the immense workload expected by the new regime. He described working 12-hour days on the regular, with very few breaks during the workday. Eventually, He began vomiting blood due to the stress and had to take an extended leave from the university.⁶⁷² Upon returning, He was targeted during the Suppress the Counterrevolutionaries Campaign, although for unclear reasons; indeed, when He pressed him on the issue, his supervisor told him that he was neither a counterrevolutionary nor a “bad element” in reality. Again, He contracted a stress-induced disease: bacterial tracheitis, causing him to “piss in his pants every day” (*mianku meitian dou yao niao shi*). Over time, He lost his enthusiasm for the rectification campaigns and began to see the cadres as “hired thugs” (*dashou*).⁶⁷³ In another case, Wu Zhaofa, the head of the Biology Department at Beijing Normal, filed a complaint about one of his teaching assistants, Zhao Youxia (a man “without virtue nor any ability,” according to Wu!). Apparently, Zhao had been put in charge of making a list of faculty who would be given the opportunity to travel to the Soviet Union for study—a great honor that could also be highly beneficial for one’s career. Zhao ended up putting his own name on the list while snubbing Wu.⁶⁷⁴

Although many of the intellectuals who spoke out were older professors, students would occasionally join in through the writing of big-character posters. Although some students used posters to hurl accusations of being a “rightist” at others, some used them to offer criticisms of

⁶⁷² He Tingjie, *Yige feidangrenshi jiao zhengzhi ke de xiachang*, June 1, 1957, ARC.

⁶⁷³ Ibid.

⁶⁷⁴ Wu Zhaofa, *Guanyu tisheng jiangshi, liu su ji sufan wenti*, June 5, 1957, ARC.

state policy. One poster at Zhejiang University—titled “Return My Professors!”—complained that the government was removing the best professors from universities and funneling them into research institutes. One famous geologist, Zhu Kezhen, had been reassigned to the Academy of Sciences in 1955, for example. The anonymous writer of the poster suggested that the most renowned scholars at Zhejiang University had been “scattered among other schools” (*fensan dao qita xuexiao zhong qu*).⁶⁷⁵ A student at East China Normal University, Lu Chongdun, reported on the reasons why he and his classmates were using big-character posters to criticize the government: they were fed up with a lack of choice regarding their majors, the inflexible copying of Soviet education policies, discrimination against teachers in primary and secondary schools, a lack of good wages for intellectuals more generally, the infringement on the dignity of the professoriate, and the party’s authoritarian manner of assigning work after graduation.⁶⁷⁶

Not all intellectuals used the opportunity to levy criticism at the party at all; some instead turned on their colleagues and criticized the critics. Xu Xiangong, for instance, complained that intellectuals were “proud and aloof” (*zizun guao*), and argued that non-party intellectuals were not offering proper respect to the authority of the cadres (Xu was the vice provost of Zhongshan University). Xu still encouraged the government to work through the minor democratic parties in reforming these wayward intellectuals, however.⁶⁷⁷ The president of the Academy of Sciences, Guo Moruo, praised the leadership of the government, calling the party the “train engine” (*huoche*) of China. When interviewed about the danger of right-wing intellectuals speaking out, an interviewer asked Guo whether the old idiom “do not blame the speaker, instead take note of what they say” still applied. Guo only responded, vaguely, that

⁶⁷⁵ *Zhejiang daxue guanyu “huan wo jiaoshou” wenti de dazibao*, June 2, 1957, ARC.

⁶⁷⁶ Lu Chongdun, *Huadong shida mudu ji*, June 12, 1957, ARC.

⁶⁷⁷ Xu Xiangong, *Tiaozheng dang tong zhishifenzi jian de guanxi*, May 24, 1957, RR.

“speakers who say innocent things are innocent, speakers who say guilty things are guilty.”⁶⁷⁸

The president of Wuhan University, Li Da, criticized right-wing intellectuals for using the moment as a pretext for attacking the state. Li said that rightists had begun criticizing the party after a famous sociologist named Fei Xiaotong published his influential essay, “The Early Spring Weather of the Intellectuals” (*zhishifenzi de zaochun tianqi*), although Li defended Fei personally. Li argued that the goal of the Hundred Flowers Campaign was to help intellectuals to organically advance their own thinking through a more liberal national climate; however, the campaign had been “distorted” (*waiqu*) by rightists seeking to discredit Marxism-Leninism and the entire socialist system more generally.⁶⁷⁹

This section has exposed a wide array of views from a wide array of Chinese intellectuals in 1957. That said, some broad themes certainly exist. The vast majority of intellectuals still maintained their faith in the leadership of the CCP, but criticized the inability (or refusal) of low-level cadres to carry out the policies proposed by the state. Of course, it is possible that some intellectuals were being disingenuous; they only praised the CCP out of a fear of reprisals, in other words. There is little reason to think that every intellectual, or even the majority, who insisted on their continued loyalty to the regime was lying, however. Intellectuals had long offered tentative support for the CCP during the civil and the first half of the decade. For its part, the state had usually passed policies responsive to the needs of intellectuals. There was little indication that this time might be different, from intellectuals’ perspectives. Another relatively consistent theme is the importance attached to practical affairs like wages, support for research, and working hours. Intellectuals’ primary objective in the Hundred Flowers Campaign was to

⁶⁷⁸ Guo Moruo, *Guo Moruo jiu jianjue huiji zichanjiuji youpaifenzi changkuang jingong deng wenti xiang “guangming ribao” jizhe fabiao tanhua*, June 27, 1957, ARC.

⁶⁷⁹ Li Da, *Cong youpai de jingong kan zhishifenzi bixu jiaqiang gaizao: Li Da zai diyijie quanguo renmin daibiao dahui disici huiyi shang de fayan*, July 4, 1957, ARC.

solidify the practical livelihood improvements that had begun the previous year—not to bring about a new era of free-speech liberalism or challenge the authority of the CCP.

The State's Recalculation: The Flow of the Anti-Rightist Campaign

If the intellectuals were reasonable in their belief that they would not be punished for speaking out, that begs the question of why the party chose to respond in a dramatically different way than they had when intellectuals first began drawing attention to shortcomings in the 1953-1955 period. To be sure, intellectuals did push much further than they had earlier, perhaps emboldened by earlier successes. A nontrivial number of intellectuals did seem to offer support for the overthrow of the CCP—even if these voices were dwarfed by those loyal to the regime. Nevertheless, the majority of intellectuals were more focused on further improvements to their standards of living and dutifully professed their loyalty to the party than not. Why the recalculation, then? Other scholars have provided various answers: Jung Cheng and Jon Halliday have suggested that the entire Hundred Flowers Campaign was a Maoist trick to lure out the subversives, Roderick MacFarquhar instead theorized that Mao himself was caught off guard by the scale of resistance to CCP rule, while Merle Goldman instead posited that the CCP's *modus operandi* was a period of liberalism followed by rectification.⁶⁸⁰ In truth, scholars cannot be certain what possessed the party leadership, and Mao more specifically, to turn against free expression so suddenly. Joel Andreas has offered two other insightful conclusions regarding Mao's decision to initiate both the Hundred Flowers and Anti-Rightist Campaigns: first, Mao was genuinely concerned with the problem of “bureaucratism” among the cadres, and second,

⁶⁸⁰ See Jung Cheng and Jon Halliday, *Mao: The Unknown Story* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2005), MacFarquhar, *The Origins of the Cultural Revolution, Volume 1: Contradictions among the People, 1956-1957* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1974), and Merle Goldman, *Literary Dissent in Communist China* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1967), respectfully, for the aforementioned positions.

that Mao was nevertheless unsympathetic to the haughtiness of the intellectuals.⁶⁸¹ Building off of Andreas' argument, I suggest that the party as a whole had mostly sided with the intellectuals against their own cadres over the course of the decade. During Thought Reform, the national government had mostly tried to rein in cadres excesses (see Chapter 3); afterward, the state forced cadres to study alongside intellectuals (see Chapter 4); during the reforms of 1956, the state encouraged preferential treatment of intellectuals *over* the cadres (see Chapter 5). However, that position became untenable heading into the second half of 1957. Cadres represented the base of the Communist Party, and they had become increasingly dissatisfied with the situation. As such, despite real concerns about the cadre class, the party leadership realized that it could only afford to side against them so much. The Anti-Rightist Campaign represents the state's attempt at solidifying the loyalty of its low-ranking cadres.

During the first few months of the year, the government fielded an increasing number of reports describing the extent of intellectual material privilege as a result of the previous year's reforms. A report at the end of January noted that intellectuals affiliated with the minor democratic parties had begun ignoring the directives of the cadres in some localities. Moreover, they had found ways of circumventing the directives of the cadres to study Marxist-Leninist texts.⁶⁸² Neglecting ideological reform would certainly have seemed problematic to the national government, which had insisted on the continuing importance of political study even in the midst of livelihood reforms during 1956. A report in early March (from the Central Committee's "Ten-Member Group for Intellectuals' Problems"), had discovered that Beijing intellectuals had seen a wealth of new luxuries, from the semi-reasonable like exclusive dining halls or clubs to the

⁶⁸¹ See Andreas, *Rise of the Red Engineers*, 40.

⁶⁸² State Council Specialist Bureau, *Hunansheng minmeng fanying dang yu feidang de guanxi qingkuang*, January 28, 1957, ARC.

questionable like billiards tables or even yachts. The report also criticized intellectuals who had successfully joined the CCP during the previous year, noting that they had generally neglected to keep up with ideological rectification work once their applications had been accepted.⁶⁸³ A third report in early April, this time from an investigator in Yunnan, revealed the new luxuries enjoyed by Yunnan intellectuals (even despite a fractured relationship with the cadres). They had guaranteed housing, free theater tickets provided by their schools, and stipends specifically for luxury foodstuffs (*fushipin*). Even those living within one *li* (about 500 meters) from their school enjoyed a free bus service. In one particularly egregious case, a professor in the History Department of Yunnan University had misappropriated conference stipends while traveling to Beijing to get a hemorrhoid removed—thus using up 500 individuals' worth of monthly medical stipends!⁶⁸⁴ These early reports show why the national government may have been unsympathetic to the argument that intellectuals required further improvements to their standards of living in order to do their work effectively.

Thus far, the party-state had typically seen intellectuals as absolutely vital to national reconstruction. However, a survey of several Shanghai engineers revealed a more complex picture on the ground. The survey focused on four individuals: Zhu Jiafeng, Du Guangzu, Liu Xiqi, and Zhou Qi. Zhu, who had studied in Germany for five years before returning to China to work as an inspector at an aircraft repair facility, was a ranking engineer at Shanghai Piston Ring Factory (previously named Detai Internal Combustion Factory). The survey revealed that Zhu had used his position's stature to try and promote friends to other high-level positions, despite an abject lack of qualifications. Moreover, Zhu was a Christian, and had rarely come in to work on

⁶⁸³ Central Committee Ten-Member Group for Intellectuals' Problems, *Zhishifenzi zhong de jige wenti*, March 4, 1957, ARC.

⁶⁸⁴ Yan Jinwen, *Yunnan bufen gaodeng xuexiao zhong gaoji zhishifenzi dui shenghuo yaoqiu guogao*, April 5, 1957, ARC.

Sundays (which would have probably been the expected norm).⁶⁸⁵ Du Guangzu, meanwhile, was entering advanced age (his degree, from MIT in the US, was from 1921). Du had worked for universities in Hunan Province, Nanjing, Beijing, and Shanghai before leaving academia to work at Huasheng Factory. Du was generally referred to as “Old Tutor” (*laofuzi*) by his colleagues. At the same time, his productivity had begun to suffer due to his age. The report recommended either encouraging him to retire or move back to academia.⁶⁸⁶ Both Liu Xiqi (who had previously worked for the sprawling Guomindang bureaucracy) and Zhou Qi were also older engineers, and had assistant managerial positions at Dazhong Factory. Coworkers saw Liu as lazy; his son worked in a nearby factory, for example, and Liu would leave work for hours at a time to go see him. The two men were described as “having many ideas but producing no results.”⁶⁸⁷ In all cases, it was work performance as opposed to ideology that dogged these three intellectuals (Liu’s connections to the Guomindang were ignored, tellingly). In reading the survey, the government may have wondered exactly why all these three were receiving preferential treatment on the basis of their expertise.

Things began to change in May. In the middle of the month, Mao Zedong himself offered his own thoughts on the state of the national discourse. Mao struck a surprisingly moderate tone; he acknowledged that there were “dogmatists” within the CCP that had committed errors in carrying out state policy. Nevertheless, he said that those who were criticizing dogmatism were doing so at the expense of “revisionism.” Both dogmatism and revisionism should be criticized equally, in Mao’s view. The chairman revealed his preferences, however, when he said that the

⁶⁸⁵ *Shanghaishi jidian gongye ju guanyu jige jishurennyuan (gaoji zhishifenzi) youguan wenti de qingkuang diaocha*, May 2, 1957, B173-4-96-36, Shanghai Municipal Machine-building and Electrical Industry Management Office, SMA.

⁶⁸⁶ *Ibid.*

⁶⁸⁷ *Ibid.*

faction that had ignored revisionism while only criticizing dogmatism were “linked in countless ways” (*qiansi wanli*) to capitalism. Mao then went on to criticize a rightist faction within academia for turning the “centrist faction” (*zhongjianpai*) against the CCP. Although critical of the intellectuals, Mao still noted that the focus in cracking down on wayward intellectuals should be mobilizing them for socialist construction rather than only punishing them, per se.⁶⁸⁸ Mao’s speech had a noticeable effect on the ground. Shortly after, the situation in Shanghai changed dramatically. Much like during the Thought Reform Campaign, intellectuals were again expected to spend long hours in struggle sessions for criticizing each other as well as themselves.⁶⁸⁹ National bureaus like the Irrigation Works Department saw the changing winds and altered course. The department held a conference for its intellectual employees on May 22, which focused mostly on national bureaucrats criticizing intellectuals. According to the conference leaders, intellectuals had mistakenly seen themselves as “a cut above others” (*gaoren yideng*).⁶⁹⁰ The days of special privileges for intellectuals were winding down.

Although the government may have initiated the Anti-Rightist Campaign, the backlash against intellectuals was not exclusively a top-down phenomenon. Shifting messages from the state encouraged other actors on the ground to change their own behavior, which in turn forced the national government to take a harder line. Student activism took off in late May; at Lanzhou University, for example, the campus was decorated with a wealth of big-character posters by the end of the month. Student activists often used these posters to encourage their professors to engage in the campaign by asserting their loyalty to the state via their own big-character posters. Others were more confrontational; one student at Lanzhou confronted the professor Zhou Muxi

⁶⁸⁸ Mao Zedong, *Mao Zedong suo zhuan de shiqing zhengzai qi bianhua*, May 15, 1957, ARC.

⁶⁸⁹ Shanghai Political and Economic Summary No. 9, May 2-May 15, 1957, CPR10, 469.

⁶⁹⁰ *Shuili bu gaoji zhishifenzi: dui dang qun guanxi buzhengchang de xianxiang tichu piping*, May 22, 1957, RR.

(the chair of the Mathematics Department), jeering, “fuck you, I hope your kids beat you up!”⁶⁹¹ Perhaps in an effort at self-preservation, the minor democratic parties too began to alter course in the middle of the year. The Jiusan Society held a conference on June 15 that focused on criticizing the liberal ideas of “rightist” intellectuals. This particular conference focused on Chu Anping (a Jiusan member), the editor-in-chief of *Guangming Daily*, who was targeted as a rightist at the end of the month.⁶⁹² The largest tonal shift from government documents did not appear until late into June, when Beijing disseminated a set of instructions calling for local governments to “strike while the iron is hot” (*chenre datie*). Every *danwei* would be required to submit a list of names of “genuine” rightists—this meant intellectuals actively opposed to the government, as opposed to those who may be dissatisfied with the regime but still accepting of its leadership (who were instead considered centrists). Although the process of cutting down on political study had never fully taken off, the instructions from late June called for a full resumption of formal thought rectification work along the lines of the Thought Reform Campaign.⁶⁹³ At least to some extent, the national government was building on the energy and resentment from below. The Anti-Rightist Campaign fed on itself.

At the same time, the national government rarely lost sight of the main goal of the backlash: convincing the centrist intellectuals to join forces with progressive intellectuals and defend the regime from their right-leaning colleagues. Further instructions from the Central Committee give play to the multifaceted objectives of the Anti-Rightist Campaign. A set of

⁶⁹¹ Sun Jing and Han Bingren, *Lanzhou daxue xuesheng zifa “ming,” “fang” qilai*, May 30, 1957, ARC. Other complaints from students were less ideological, however. They complained that the university frequently failed to notify them of their semester grades. In one case, a student was expelled after having failed four classes over the course of the year. However, because they were unaware of their grades, they perceived that they had simply been expelled without reason.

⁶⁹² *Fan youpai de douzheng: tigao le zhishifenzi de juewu. Jiusan xueshe zuotanhui de zhengzhi kongqi xianzhu zhuanbian*, June 15, 1957, RR.

⁶⁹³ *Zhonggong zhongyang guanyu daji, guli zichan jieji youpai fenzi de zhishi*, June 26, 1957, ARC.

instructions on June 29 called on all local party organs to expose rightist thought, both in order to demonstrate the “malicious” intent of the rightists but also to demonstrate the danger of associating with rightists—this, in essence, was a coded threat to centrist intellectuals. At the same time, the instructions also informed cadres that their main goal was to simply persuade centrist intellectuals that denouncing rightists was the right thing to do. Cadres were expected to form better connections with the centrist faction as well as their representatives.⁶⁹⁴ A piece by Mao Zedong in early July again demonstrated the twin goals of the campaign. Mao blasted intellectual elitism: “the person who believes that the masses cannot speak reason, that they must be compelled to obey and cannot be persuaded...that person is not a genuine communist.”⁶⁹⁵ He also suggested that rightist intellectuals had been able to “sneak into” (*hunru*) both the CCP as well as the Youth League. At the same time, the document was still an olive branch to the centrist faction. “It is incorrect to give out serious punishments for small crimes,” Mao said, although “it is also incorrect to give out small punishments for serious crimes.” He showed some awareness of the continuing problems intellectuals faced in their working conditions, calling for an end to “selfish departmentalism” (*benweizhuyi*). Although Mao defended the death penalty, he nevertheless expressed hope that only a small number of rightists would actually die over the course of the campaign.⁶⁹⁶ The national government clearly was taking the threat of right-wing intellectuals seriously—but that alone was only part of the Anti-Rightist Campaign. Genuinely persuading centrist intellectuals to support the regime, and further improving their livelihoods, was also on the agenda.

⁶⁹⁴ *Zhonggong guanyu zhengqu, tuanjie zhongjianfenzi de zhishi*, June 29, 1957, ARC.

⁶⁹⁵ Mao Zedong, *1957 nian xiaji de xingshi*, July, 1957, ARC.

⁶⁹⁶ *Ibid.*

In July, various cities and provinces reported on the steps they were taking to carry out the campaign. The Shanghai government estimated that 4.77% of secondary school teachers were “genuine” rightists (as opposed to 24.28% leftists and 70.94% centrists), suggesting that relatively few Shanghai teachers faced serious scrutiny at this juncture. The report described centrist intellectuals as those who were willing to accept CCP control of politics, but not of culture, education, science, or technological research.⁶⁹⁷ Shanghai planned a three-step plan for carrying out the backlash: (1) continuing the Hundred Flowers Campaign, although introducing centralizing tendencies by having each district nominate only one or two loyal intellectuals to air views at official party conferences, (2) transforming the Hundred Flowers Campaign to focus on using free expression to expose and criticize rightist intellectuals, and (3) carrying out rehabilitative political study among rightist intellectuals, focused on the study of Mao and Zhou Enlai’s writings.⁶⁹⁸ In Beijing, the municipal government proposed a similar plan whereby each *danwei* affiliated with higher education would submit a list of names of suspected rightists. These lists were non-binding, however, and the municipal government called on each *danwei* to provide materials proving that the listed individuals were in fact rightists before they could be officially labelled as such. *Danwei* within the school system and local industries, as well as student groups, would also be asked to submit lists of names in the future. The Beijing report was somewhat about what would happen if a *danwei* did not name any rightists—the document simply says that the municipal government will “seek truth from facts” (*shishi qiushi*) in such cases.⁶⁹⁹ The Yunnan Provincial Government followed in Shanghai and Beijing’s footsteps,

⁶⁹⁷ Shanghai Municipal Committee, *Shanghaishi zhongdeng, chudeng xuexiao zhengfeng yundong jihua*, July, 1957, ARC.

⁶⁹⁸ Ibid.

⁶⁹⁹ *Zhonggong Beijing shiwei guanyu ge danwei dianming pipan youpai Renzi zhuyi shixiang de tongzhi*, July 1, 1957, ARC.

calling for representative conferences and asking local *danwei* to submit names of rightists. The Yunnan government had a higher estimate of rightists, however; the province determined that 21% of democratic party intellectuals were rightists, in addition to 8-12% of university professors and 3.5% of university students. Branches of the minor democratic parties in Kunming and Gejiu had already been asked to expel 384 members for rightist beliefs.⁷⁰⁰

Much like with Thought Reform, there were limits to the rectification campaign. Even as the list of names of rightists around the country had nearly doubled by July 9, going from an initial estimate of 4000 genuine rightists to over 8000, only about 3% of those 8000 had actually been accused by name. Generally, an intellectual seen as guilty of having severe rightist beliefs would have their names published either in a newspaper or other local media. The Central Committee encouraged local branches to increase that 3% to 10%, but still said that 90% of genuine, accused rightists should face no more than a small amount of criticism from their *danwei*. Moreover, the national government insisted that “ample evidence” (*zhengju chongfen*) be collected before an intellectual had their name published in the media.⁷⁰¹ Around the same time, the Beijing city government attempted to clamp down on the overly harsh treatment of rightist intellectuals. The city described several recent occurrences where rightists were berated and denounced at a conference; overly punitive or harsh criticism was denounced as “rough and cruel” (*cubao*) by the city.⁷⁰² The city also explained that public denunciations were not effective at satisfying the broad goals of the Anti-Rightist Campaign: “[public denunciations] cannot effectively refute rightist viewpoints, educate the masses, or exercise one’s own political thinking,

⁷⁰⁰ *Yunnan shengwei zhuanfa shengwei guanyu daji youpaifenzi de qingkuang jianbao*, July 2, 1957, ARC.

⁷⁰¹ *Zhongyang guanyu dui youpai gudan fenzi dianming pipan he dui kexuejia zhong de youpaifenzi zuzhi fanji de tongzhi*, July 9, 1957, ARC.

⁷⁰² *Zhonggong Beijing shiwei guanyu fanyoupai douzheng zhong buduan fasheng jianban cubao xianxiang de tongzhi*, July 10, 1957, ARC.

and they can even drive a wedge between the centrist masses and the left.” The city criticized universities that forbade rightists from speaking or putting up big-character posters as well as activists who called out rightists by name in the middle of campus via loudspeakers (although the report nevertheless praised their political energy).⁷⁰³ The evidence suggests that the state was not wholly interested in a frenzied attack on the rightists, and instead encouraged local activists and party branches to act strategically.

At the same time, the case should not be overstated. The national government was still interested in punitive measures for rightists. A report from the Beijing government suggested that the city believe that right-wing intellectuals had managed to infiltrate both the Youth League and the Communist Party, and accused these rightists of “inciting, organizing, leading, or conspiring with anti-party and anti-socialist elements.” The report also suggested, without evidence, that some of these rightist intellectuals had supplied sensitive information to other non-party rightist intellectuals, therefore giving them more ammo for their attacks on the state.⁷⁰⁴ Unlike the previous report’s calls for caution, this document endorses expelling rightist intellectuals from the party and/or the Youth League. About 110,000 intellectuals had joined the CCP by mid-1957, and the Beijing government estimated that up to 10% of these recent admittees might be rightists. As such, they would have to be expelled pending an investigation.⁷⁰⁵ The Central Committee, meanwhile, had become concerned about the spread of right-wing thought among university students. Universities in Beijing had estimated that about 6% of the graduating class of 1957 were rightists, as opposed to 64% centrists and 30% leftists. The national government therefore encouraged universities to bring in students over the summer for further rectification

⁷⁰³ Ibid.

⁷⁰⁴ *Zhonggong Beijing shiwei guanyu chuli gaodeng xuexiao zhong dangnei, tuannei youpaifenzi de yijian xiang zhongyang de qingshi baogao*, July 14, 1957, ARC.

⁷⁰⁵ Ibid.

work, which may have included physical labor in a factory or in a nearby village.⁷⁰⁶ For university graduates that had been found to be rightists, they were still allowed to apply to have their case reviewed by a local party branch. Although they could not be given a work assignment while their case was under review, they were not forbidden from finding work on their own. And while they could not receive a formal wage, the government allowed for suspected rightists to receive some minor subsidy funds.⁷⁰⁷ Perhaps one of the most surefire ways to avoid ideological problems was through changing the class composition of the universities. The Central Committee praised the case of Renmin University, where 90% of the student body had come from a working class or military background. Unsurprisingly, about half of Renmin graduates had already made successful applications to join the CCP.⁷⁰⁸

Over the course of the summer, universities and other intellectual-heavy institutions began applying national directives to ferret out the rightists. From mid to late July, the Academy of Sciences in Beijing held a number of conferences designed to refute the Democratic League's culture of excessive tolerance for right-wing scientists. Only about a third of the conference attendees were either classified as leftists or had membership in the CCP, meaning that the focus was on the coveted centrist faction. Party investigators surveyed these centrist intellectuals to see how they perceived the conferences. In general, they seemed satisfied with the agenda and approved of the state's directives against rightists. Centrist intellectuals seemed to believe that there was both logic and evidence behind the punishments for right-wing intellectuals. Others believed that the conferences were evidence of the CCP's care for and belief in the importance of

⁷⁰⁶ *Zhongyang guanyu chuli benjie gaodeng xuexiao biyesheng zhong you yanzhong fanshehuizhuyi yanxing de fenzi de tongzhi*, July 16, 1957, ARC.

⁷⁰⁷ *Ibid.*

⁷⁰⁸ *Ibid.*

the intellectual class as a whole.⁷⁰⁹ Of course, it is possible many of these opinions were given under duress (no “centrist” was identified by name in the survey, moreover). Still, it appears that intellectuals were genuinely divided politically, and those belonging to the “centrist” faction escaped punishment from the authorities. There is at least some evidence that the centrists were not particularly sympathetic to right-wing intellectuals, either. In the universities, reports described a large-scale campaign by rightists to criticize the party; walking through campus, one would undoubtedly see big-character posters, anonymous messages left on classroom blackboards, or flyers posted in student dorms all denouncing the CCP’s leadership.⁷¹⁰ At East China University, party officials and party-sympathetic students and faculty pushed back via the same tactics. One anonymous blackboard message argued that the Hundred Flowers Campaign was intended to support “all kinds of expression” (*zhongzhong de fang*), not just anti-party speech.⁷¹¹ As such, leftists had begun the task of criticizing the critics, often by adopting their same methods.

By the start of the fall semester, the Anti-Rightist Campaign was well underway. According to a report on conditions in Beijing, 7511 rightists had already been brought to the municipal government’s attention as a result of the campaign. 3529 (about 47%) had faced criticism in some form or another, although it is unclear if further punishments had been applied. Although the majority of rightists were found in the Beijing university system, the majority of intellectuals in Beijing schools were not rightists. Of a total of 113,213 persons employed in academia in the city, only 4,230 had been found to be rightists—constituting less than 5% of the

⁷⁰⁹ *Zhonggong zhongyang zhuanfa kexueyuan dangzu guanyu zhaokai kexuejia fanyoupai douzheng zuotanhui qingkuang de baogao*, August 7, 1957, ARC.

⁷¹⁰ Lu Ying and Yang Meirong, *Jingli le yichang fengbao de duanlian: ji shida fanyoupai douzheng qianhou*, August 8, 1957, ARC.

⁷¹¹ *Ibid.*

total. Of the graduating class of 1957, only 6.1% were identified as rightists.⁷¹² The numbers were different, albeit not exceedingly so, in Shanghai, where 1,353 total right-wing intellectuals had been identified. This included 797 students (2.6% of the total student population in Shanghai), whereas a full 13.5% of the professoriate had been identified as right-wing.⁷¹³ Rightist influence in Yunnan Province seemed higher, with the vice-provost of Yunnan University giving a speech that directly denounced the leadership of the CCP (officials described his speech as “a cake with white arsenic frosting”; *tangyi pishuang*). Even still, the numbers were not terribly higher in the province as a whole. By September, 331 Yunnan intellectuals had been identified as rightists, which represented 4% of the total intellectual population of the province. 18.1% of Yunnan professors had been accused, whereas the graduating class that summer was composed of 10% rightists.⁷¹⁴ To be sure, the campaign upended the daily operations at universities across China. Nevertheless, the number of targets generally remained small.

One of the main effects of the Anti-Rightist Campaign was the pushback against the democratic parties, thus enshrining the CCP’s supreme authority. At a conference for democratic party-affiliated intellectuals in mid-September, party officials began pushing back directly against the “diluting” (*chongdan*) effect that the democratic parties had on the CCP’s authority by accepting and insulating right-wing intellectuals. Party officials at the conference explained that their task was to encourage centrist intellectuals to support the Communist Party above all. They also encouraged centrist intellectuals to continue making “good-natured” (*shanyi*)

⁷¹² *Zhonggong zhongyang zhuanfa Beijing shiwei guanyu fanyoupai douzheng qingkuang de baogao*, August 17, 1957, ARC.

⁷¹³ *Zhonggong zhongyang zhuanfa Shanghai shiwei guanyu shanghaishi gaodeng xuexiao fanyoupai douzheng qingkuang he xia xueqi gongzuo bushu de baogao*, August 30, 1957, ARC.

⁷¹⁴ *Zhonggong Yunnan shengwei guanyu sisuo gaodeng xuexiao fanyoupai douzheng qingkuang de baogao*, September 6, 1957, ARC.

criticisms of working conditions to their *danwei*.⁷¹⁵ The democratic parties clearly read the writing on the wall, and changed course in the interest of securing their very survival. Officials from these parties met in Shanxi Province in late September, and acknowledged that they had become havens for anti-CCP intellectuals. They pledged to do better in rooting out rightists within their ranks.⁷¹⁶ Intellectuals who belonged to the democratic parties were generally confused about their status during this period—despite the official line that these parties were in the process of transformation from bourgeois capitalist parties to socialist ones, they still felt as though they were written off by the cadres as irredeemably bourgeois. Debate between various political factions continued through the end of the year; at a Democratic League conference in Tianjin, some intellectuals wondered why being a bourgeois party was such a bad thing, whereas leftist intellectuals criticized the rightward drift of the party. In their view, overall membership rates were falling, whereas most of the recent admittees were rightist intellectuals.⁷¹⁷

Perhaps the most significant consequence of the Anti-Rightist Campaign—one with policy implications lasting through the rest of the decade—was the growth of a frustrated, pessimistic attitude within the government regarding the status of intellectuals. The decade thus far had been a testament to the CCP’s firm belief that scholars, even older ones, could transform into true socialist intellectuals. Although rightists in general made up fairly small percentages of the intellectual population, the “need” for the Anti-Rightist Campaign convinced national politicians that the earlier Thought Reform Campaign had little lasting effects. As such, new ideas emerged regarding the necessary steps for a real, lasting class transformation of the

⁷¹⁵ People’s Daily, *Zhishifenzi de liangmian xing jiqi ta: ge minzhu dangpai zhengfeng gongzuo huiyi ce ji*, September 18, 1957, ARC.

⁷¹⁶ Zhang Xuelü and Li Qingfen, *Shanxisheng gegaodeng xuexiao shuqi zhengfeng shengli jieshu fanyoupai douzheng chengguo jinyibu gonggu kuoda*, September 25, 1957, ARC.

⁷¹⁷ Zhang Tinggan, *Ge minzhu dangpai Yunnan, Tianjin, deng di zuzhi zai taolun minzhu dangpai de xingzhi deng wenti shi baolu chu de hunluan sixiang*, November 1, 1957, ARC.

intellectuals. Jiang Nanxiang, president of Qinghua University, foreshadowed official policy shifts toward the end of 1957 (and especially in 1958-1959; see Chapter 7) in his commencement speech for the graduating class that summer. He specifically encouraged graduates to respect the working class by assisting in agricultural or industrial production and argued for the benefits of physical labor in terms of graduates' political consciousnesses.⁷¹⁸ It is unclear if Jiang was in contact with national political figures; however, his calls for manual labor became reality quite soon. Party officials first began openly proposing the merits of "sending down" intellectuals (particularly students) to the countryside to assist in agricultural production at a conference in mid-September. These officials acknowledged that Thought Reform was incomplete, and that a bureaucratic, top-down campaign could only accomplish so much.⁷¹⁹ Transformative hard labor would be the key to finally unlocking the intellectuals' potential, party officials believed.

The Central Committee offered its official endorsement of the plan to have intellectuals engage in physical labor *en masse* in mid-October. Urban schools could help with industrial production, the Central Committee advised, whereas rural schools could help with agriculture. The state was well-entrenched by this point; the bureaucratic process of beginning the sending-down campaign was a testament to state entrenchment. Rural schools coordinated with county governments to find students and faculty opportunities to visit various nearby villages, while urban schools coordinated with municipal governments to find factories in need of extra hands. Local government had to report on the progress of the new campaign to prefectural and provincial governments, which would then inform the Central Committee.⁷²⁰ The Shanghai

⁷¹⁸ Jiang Nanxiang, *Qinghua daxue xiaozhang jiang nanxiang dui Qinghua daxue yingjie biyesheng de jianghua*, August 15, 1957, ARC.

⁷¹⁹ People's Daily, *Zhishifenzi de liangmian xing jiqi ta: ge minzhu dangpai zhengfeng gongzuo huiyi ce ji*, September 18, 1957, ARC.

⁷²⁰ *Zhonggong zhongyang guanyu zai zhongdeng xuexiao he xiaoxue de jiaozhiyuan zhong kaizhan zhengfeng he fanyoupai douzheng de tongzhi*, October 15, 1957, ARC.

government began to push for intellectuals to go to the nearby countryside during the fall semester. While there may have been some enthusiasm for being sent down among some intellectuals working in government bureaus, the majority of students found it difficult to adapt to rural life without their families or comforts. Although the first intellectuals to be sent down were mostly young, the city pushed older intellectuals to engage in physical labor as well. Part of the first wave of sent-down intellectuals included 25 academic department heads from around the city.⁷²¹ The campaign expanded fast; by the end of the year, a total of 3000 intellectuals had left the city for the villages.⁷²²

A report from the Shanghai Education Bureau reflects on the enormous changes of 1957 from an official perspective. Previous optimism about the intellectual class had dimmed; now, the main government focus was on training a new generation of “working-class intellectuals” (*gongrenjieji zhishifenzi*). The bureau echoed criticisms of the current generation of intellectuals, and denounced the belief that “the working class cannot become leaders in science and technology.”⁷²³ For workers and peasants, becoming an intellectual was a prime opportunity for real social mobility. Shanghai cadres working in factories, mines, urban enterprises, or nearby villages were instructed to look for promising candidates for schooling among their workers. The city announced plans to send 200,000 workers to trade schools and 100,000 workers to receive a secondary school education over the course of the following decade. Meanwhile, in order to better improve access to education among the peasantry, the education bureau called for the strengthening of rural schools.⁷²⁴ By the end of 1957, 68.7% of secondary school students had

⁷²¹ Shanghai Political and Economic Summary No. 22, November 16-November 30, 1957, CPR10, 600-601.

⁷²² Shanghai Political and Economic Summary No. 23, December 1-December 15, 1957, CPR10, 615.

⁷²³ *Shanghaishi jiaoyu ju guanyu 1958 nian dao 1967 nian tigao gongnong ganbu peiyang gongrenjieji zhishifenzi de guihua gangyao*, December 26, 1957, B105-7-266-60, Shanghai Municipal Bureau of Education, SMA.

⁷²⁴ *Ibid.*

come from a working class background. The city planned to have that number increase to 85% by 1962. Inequalities still persisted, however; at top-ranked schools, only about 51% of the student body had come from a working class background. The city set a more achievable rate of 80% for these schools by 1962. At universities, only 34.1% of students had come from the working class—and the city did not feel comfortable setting a target of over 55% for 1962. In order to accomplish these grand aims, Shanghai reallocated various grants to explicitly favor children of workers and peasants. In addition, students who were categorized as having some form of “familial struggle” (*jiating you kunnan de*) were given additional subsidies for attending school.⁷²⁵ Although the process of transforming the class characteristics of the intellectual population was clearly already underway, the CCP felt that the realities exposed by the Anti-Rightist Campaign required the process to be expedited.

Until 1957, the national government, in addition to many municipal governments (especially Shanghai) had generally championed intellectuals and delivered policies responsive to their needs. However, all levels of government became aware of the need to recalculate over the course of the year. Low-level cadres resented what they saw as officially-sanctioned privileges given to the intellectuals; increasingly, higher-level party officials became sympathetic to that view over the course of 1957. Far from grateful for the advancements of 1956, many intellectuals demanded more and more. Some even attacked the foundations of CCP rule. The state therefore launched the sweeping Anti-Rightist Campaign. Far removed from the optimistic motives behind Thought Reform, the Anti-Rightist Campaign turned the tactics of right-leaning intellectuals against them. Big-character posters and campus pronouncements denounced their behavior. Conferences criticized both right-wingers as well as the organizations that had shielded

⁷²⁵ Ibid.

them—primarily, the democratic parties. Contradictions persisted, however, with the national government usually urging lower branches to avoid overly punitive measures. Still, national officials could hardly shake a feeling of pessimism regarding the ability of the intellectuals to truly gain a working-class consciousness. As such, a new, radical solution emerged: sending intellectuals down to the countryside or to urban factories for physical labor. Over the course of the fall semester, thousands of intellectuals were part of the first wave of scholars participating in manual labor. Meanwhile, cities like Shanghai began drawing up concrete plans to promote workers and peasants going to school and becoming intellectuals in their own right. The year thus revealed the unsustainability of the previous state policies regarding intellectuals.

Exposing Rightist Activity

Although the Anti-Rightist Campaign was conducted in a much different manner from, and under different motives than, the Thought Reform Campaign, some similarities emerged over the course of the year. Much like during Thought Reform, the CCP used confessions as a way of forcing intellectuals to reflect on their “errors” and pledge to do better in the future. Unlike during Thought Reform, however, when confessions were usually submitted to the local Public Security Bureau and then simply collected dust, confessions during the Anti-Rightist Campaign were used actively to root out other right-wing intellectuals. In some cases, confessions from intellectuals who had previously spoke out—for example, Dong Weichuan and He Tingjie—were used by the authorities to delegitimize the issues these intellectuals identified. Ultimately, the CCP used confessions to propose a new narrative of a broad, right-wing conspiracy to dethrone the CCP using various umbrella organizations in and outside academia.

Rooting out this right-wing intellectual activity justified increased scrutiny of the authorities over intellectual activity.

The first major confession of the campaign came from Chu Anping (editor-in-chief of *Guangming Daily*). Much of the suspicion surrounding Chu came from his contacts with Luo Longji (vice-president of the Democratic League), identified as one of the top rightists in China. Chu had been a student of Luo's, and had even invited the older man to his wedding in 1934. Chu then met Luo while studying abroad in Britain in 1937. After taking a job at *Guangming Daily* in the lead-up to liberation, Chu was visited by Luo and asked to provide a job for Zhang Bojun, a friend of Luo's who had worked for a Sichuan newspaper during the war. In Chu's telling, Luo and other rightists were able to publish right-wing stories through *Guangming Daily* through their contacts with Zhang Bojun. Chu argued that, despite his lack of judgment in admitting Zhang, he was innocent; he was busy working on a series of articles describing military operations in Xinjiang.⁷²⁶ Another accused rightist, Li Deji (a history professor at Yunnan University), also confessed to illicit dealings with Luo. Li said that he had met Luo during a conference in Beijing during the fall of 1950. They shared their similar political opinions over a number of meals. Apparently, Luo convinced Li to covertly organize right-leaning intellectuals in the Yunnan area; in return, Luo would encourage the local branch of the CDL to provide political cover for Li and help advance his career.⁷²⁷ The CCP essentially used the confessions of Chu and Li to run an ideological sting operation on Luo Longji, who ultimately had to submit his own confession. Luo was charged with being a rightist on the basis of his anti-communist activities both before and after liberation. In the 1930s, Luo had organized various anti-communist political parties in Tianjin, which including urging youth members to

⁷²⁶ Chu Anping, *Chu Anping de jiaodai*, June 27-June 30, 1957, ARC.

⁷²⁷ Chinese Communist Yunnan University Committee, *Li Deji de ziwo jiaodai*, September, 1957, ARC.

enlist in the Guomindang military. After liberation, Luo had encouraged the new regime to ally with the United States, and had even petitioned Washington for millions of dollars in reconstruction aid. After Thought Reform, Luo had decided that intellectuals could “function as rivals” (*fenting kangli*) to the Communist Party, and used his position in the CDL to organize right-leaning intellectuals and disseminate information critical of the state.⁷²⁸

Although Luo Longji was certainly one of the highest-profile targets of the Anti-Rightist Campaign, other confessions exposed similar “networks” of right-wing intellectuals. Dong Weichuan, who had previously published several criticisms of the CCP, submitted a confession in mid-July that described his contacts with others at Beijing Normal University. Dong elucidated a series of conversations with a colleague named Zhong Jingwen, who complained about the gap in the living arrangements of the professoriate and the cadres. Dong also became a close acquaintance of Tao Dayong (an editor of China Vocational Press) after both being invited to dinner at the house of one of the university’s vice-provosts. Both Tao and Dong were CDL members. Tao became increasingly urgent in encouraging Dong to speak out. Once the Hundred Flowers Campaign swept campus, Dong began to see other professors—He Tingjie and Luo Zhifu—frequently taking the bus to campus for the sole purpose of “looking at the big character posters.” For these men, the new era of free expression was the second coming of the May Fourth-era intellectual activism.⁷²⁹ Perhaps in part due to the information provided by Dong, a local newspaper published an exposé of He Tingjie, partly perhaps as a refutation to the criticism made by He several months earlier. The article denounces He for being misleading about his political history; he had actually joined the Guomindang in 1929, and wrote an article calling for military operations against the CCP base in Yan’an. He was an active supporter of Jiang Jieshi’s

⁷²⁸ Luo Longji *zai minmeng zhengfeng hui shang de jiaodai*, August 12, 1957, ARC.

⁷²⁹ Dong Weichuan, *Dong Weichuan jiaodai cailiao*, July 16, 1957, ARC.

policy of “pacifying the interior before resisting foreign aggression” (*rangwai bi xian an nei*). He Tingjie had also taken a job with the Guomindang military directly in 1938.. Although most of these problems come from before liberation, He had, problematically, kept all this information hidden from the authorities during Thought Reform.⁷³⁰

Although older intellectuals were the primary targets of the Anti-Rightist Campaign, students too submitted confessions describing the spread of rightist beliefs among youths. A student of history at Yunnan University, Li Jingyu, confessed to using big-character posters and anonymous essays to express his “hatred” of the CCP during the Hundred Flowers period. Li had become radicalized after meeting a fellow student, Yang Yougeng, who was working on a piece for the school magazine defending political groups that had been labelled as “reactionary.” Li was intrigued by Yang’s beliefs, and had begun skipping his allotted rest period to discuss politics with Yang in the other student’s dorm room. Li, Yang, and other friends plotted to break into and destroy the university’s stored files collected during the Suppress the Counterrevolutionaries Campaign as a means of protest.⁷³¹ Right-wing students in the Hanyang district of Wuhan had been organized by a professor, Wang Jianguo, who invited them for extravagant dinner parties at his house. Wang used his students for force a coup in their school, calling for the forced retirement of several cadres in the administration and the elevation of Wang as the new president. Students began to riot in the streets after successfully forcing out the cadres. The riots were only broken when a mob of workers and peasants flooded the campus to declare support for Mao and the CCP.⁷³² Meanwhile, students at Tianjin Normal University confessed to using an English language reading group as cover for right-wing activities. The

⁷³⁰ Beijing Daily, *He Tingjie fandong de zhenmianmu baolu wuyi*, July 19, 1957, ARC.

⁷³¹ Li Jingyu, *Guanyu da minzhu wenti de jiaodai*, July 20, 1957, ARC.

⁷³² *Zhonggong hanyangxian weiyuanhui guanyu yizhong baoyuan shijian kaocha gongzuo zongjie baogao*, August 30, 1957, ARC.

group would translate and circulate materials critical of socialism as well as the communist bloc. Although it appears that the overwhelming majority of accused rightists were male, a report on the situation at Tianjin Normal noted that “women’s excellence in the field of exploitative art is no less than that of men,” and described how several female students had done translation work of illicit materials.⁷³³

Although academia was the epicenter of the Anti-Rightist Campaign, non-academic intellectuals were also targeted by the authorities. Chen Qian, a member of the Sichuan branch of the China Federation of Literary and Art Circles, was accused of being a rightist and submitted a confession on August 3. Chen was extremely critical of state control over art production, calling regulations “dogmatic.” He further stated that “no writings, songs, or dramas have been produced that could rival the May Fourth era.” Chen occasionally wrote pieces in defense of other suspected or accused rightists, such as his colleague Liu Shahe. Chen also confessed to meeting Liu and other right-wing artists in a public park to drink tea and discuss their work—as well as politics.⁷³⁴ The Shanghai filmmaker Mei Duo submitted a confession on September 25 describing a conspiracy between himself and an editor of Wenhui News to publish articles from other rightists. Mei pushed for the publication of an article about filmmaking from one of his colleagues, Zhong Dianfei, who had already been accused of being a rightist. Despite this, Mei urged the Wenhui editorial board to publish Zhong’s article regardless.⁷³⁵ A professor at Beijing Film School, Sun Mingjing, submitted a confession on October 10 describing his previous antagonism toward state film regulators. Sun also described his fractured relationship with the cadres at the school: “Socialism and Thought Reform may have ‘saved’ you,” he said, “but you

⁷³³ *Tianjin shifan xueyuan jiefa chu yige fandong zuzhi: “yingwen dushuhui”*, September 11, 1957, ARC.

⁷³⁴ Chen Qian, *Jiaodai wo de fandang yanxing*, August 3, 1957, ARC.

⁷³⁵ Mei Duo, *Mei Duo zai zhongguo dianying gongzuozhe lianyi hui pipan youpai zuotanhui shang de jiantao yu jiaodai*, September 25, 1957, ARC.

have in turn let socialism down by linking socialism and bureaucratism together.” He also confessed to authoring a number of big-character posters critical of the CCP.⁷³⁶

Some of the confessions also cast a negative light on the democratic parties, allowing the state to further limit their influence. For example, a professor of Chinese at Beijing Normal University, Peng Hui, submitted a confession at the end of the year. Peng was a member of the women’s committee in the Beijing chapter of the CDL, meaning that her confession was used to condemn the Democratic League more broadly. Her supposed crimes were not particularly severe: she had renounced her CCP membership back in 1934 after her husband was arrested by the Guomindang and threatened with execution, but had rejoined in 1950. At Beijing Normal, she had spoken out against the cadres and advocated for “democratically-run schools” (*minzhu banxiao*), as others did.⁷³⁷ Although Peng’s “errors” seem relatively minor, her position was used to further stigmatize the minor parties. *People’s Daily* also ran editorials criticizing the CDL for admitting suspected or accused rightists like Zhang Luo. Overall, applications to join the CDL had been increasing over the course of 1956 and 1957; however, there is good reason to suspect that many of these new applications were from political targets. One CDL member, Xue Yinong, criticized the organization, noting that “comrades targeted during the Suppress the Counterrevolutionaries Campaign seem especially enthusiastic” to join the CDL.⁷³⁸ During the first half of 1956, the Qingdao branch of the CDL had admitted 42 new members, 14 of whom had previously been political targets; in 1955, 16 new members had been admitted, 10 of which were previous targets.⁷³⁹

⁷³⁶ Sun Mingjing, *Sun Mingjing de jiaodai jiancha*, October 10, 1957, ARC.

⁷³⁷ *Zhonggong Beijing shifan daxue weiyuanhui guanyu kaichu youpai fenzi peng hui dangji de jue ding*, December 31, 1957, ARC.

⁷³⁸ Xiang Cun, *Tamen fazhan shenmeren rumeng? Qingdao minmeng youpai jituan de fazhan zuzhi huodong*, August 14, 1957, ARC.

⁷³⁹ *Ibid.*

Many of these examples discuss coalitions or networks of right-leaning intellectuals. To be sure, however, the Anti-Rightist Campaign inarguably targeted plenty of loyal intellectuals too. Yue Daiyun, a professor at Beijing University, was a notable victim of the campaign after she had proposed starting a new magazine on campus with other like-minded colleagues (technically, starting a new magazine may have violated the spirit of PRC laws against non-sanctioned political organizations). Yue did not even follow through on creating the magazine, but was still denounced by other professors and students—many of whom she had previously criticized as rightists as recently as 1955! Despite her clear, professed loyalty to the regime, she was stripped of her party membership.⁷⁴⁰ Yue's account shows that many accusations were not genuine, and instead reflected attitudes of careerism or simple petty revenge among other colleagues. An editor of *People's Daily*, Deng Tuo, was expelled from his job at the outset of the Anti-Rightist Campaign due to personally invoking Mao's wrath—for pushing back against the Hundred Flowers Campaign. Deng had predicted (correctly) that the criticisms would become increasingly stringent; at the time, this simply made Mao angrier. As the state prepared to launch the Anti-Rightist Campaign, Deng had prevented some of his colleagues from publishing articles that might expose them to accusations of being a rightist. As such, Deng was dismissed. He spent much of the next few turbulent months in quiet solitude with his family.⁷⁴¹ The cases of Yue and Deng show that the Anti-Rightist Campaign cannot only be understood as a logical pushback against anti-CCP intellectuals; indeed, petty politicking among colleagues produced a number of bogus accusations that ultimately tarred plenty of loyal intellectuals with the "rightist" label.

The state used Anti-Rightist Confessions to promote a new narrative regarding the intellectual community. Whereas state pronouncements for much of the previous decade had

⁷⁴⁰ See Yue and Wakeman, *To the Storm*, 25-42.

⁷⁴¹ Cheek, *Propaganda and Culture in Mao's China*, 173-185.

championed the intellectuals and their ability to transform, the government now took a more cynical view and used these confessions as a means of promoting a darker vision of intellectual life. Many of these confessions are fantastical, and perhaps embellished—describing shady conspiracies among right-leaning intellectuals to meet, discuss their politics, and develop plans to foster resistance to the state. In many cases, these confessions took on the character of a sting operation, with minor and mid-level targets being forced to submit confessions that would in turn allow the authorities to assemble “evidence” against high-value targets like Luo Longji.

Although there is no doubt some truth to the stories exposed by these confessions, the cases of Yue Daiyun and Deng Tuo show that the Anti-Rightist Campaign took on a very different character from previous rectification movements. In an effort to vilify the intellectuals, the state was certainly willing to let plenty of its own be thrown under the bus.

Solidifying Intellectual Gains

Central to this chapter’s argument has been the assertion that the Anti-Rightist Campaign was only a partial backlash—even as it swept up innocent, pro-CCP intellectuals in its wrath, the campaign left the overwhelming majority of intellectuals untouched. Even those who were labelled “rightists,” more often than not, faced little real punishment beyond minor criticism. Even as the state began to lose its previous sympathies for the intellectual class, it still realized that its priorities of production increases and scientific advancement could not occur without the input from intellectuals. As such, solidifying some of the gains from 1956 is just as much a part of the story of 1957 as is the Anti-Rightist Campaign. Although there is little evidence that the scale of livelihood increases seen in 1956 continued into 1957, the CCP identified several ways in which it could continue to cultivate intellectuals and provide for their needs. The admittance

of qualified intellectuals into the CCP continued unabated, despite protests from some cadres at the end of 1956. The government also continued to invest in research materials and scientific instruments, sometimes even increasing sums from their 1956 levels. For the majority of intellectuals, 1957 represented the institutionalization of the gains they had made during the previous year.

Only a few weeks after the official launch of the Anti-Rightist Campaign on June 8, the Central Committee released a supplemental set of instructions regarding intellectuals' treatment. The document notes that the party, at all levels, had not given enough attention to offering political opportunities to high-level intellectuals. Because so many of these scholars were not CCP members, the report argued, rightists had used the opportunity to advocate for the overthrow of the regime from ranking positions within academia. "We must open the door for intellectuals," the instructions concluded, "and not close it in front of them."⁷⁴² In some ways, the state was able to use the Anti-Rightist Campaign to offer further justifying its plans for admitting intellectuals as members; it would be a pragmatic move to limit the potential influence of rightist intellectuals, officials argued. Even as the campaign began to heat up, the regime showed no interest in closing off all criticism whatsoever from intellectuals. In an editorial in *People's Daily*, a Beijing intellectual named Cao Shujing explained his view that there were two types of intellectuals: those who harmed the party and the country (*wu dang wu guo*) and those who supported both (*wei dang wei guo*). The former, Cao argued, "only praise and never criticize, while the party's organizations trust, encourage, and promote them. The party finds it difficult to connect with the other kind of intellectual, and therefore frequently rejects—and even

⁷⁴² *Zhonggong zhongyang guanyu zai yiliangge yue hou xishou yipi gaoji zhishifenzi rudang de tongzhi*, June 28, 1957, ARC.

attacks—they.”⁷⁴³ The fact that Cao’s article was published in state media represents an endorsement of sorts by the regime; in fact, they may have agreed with his argument that offering faithful criticisms of the state was in line with an intellectual’s duties.

Reports from the fall showed that efforts to admit intellectuals into the CCP did not lose much strength despite the ongoing Anti-Rightist Campaign. In late August, The Beijing city government revealed that a total of 389 high-level intellectuals had been admitted as party members over the course of the previous year. The city as a whole was home to 6829 high-level intellectuals, with a full 21.8% of them having party membership by the fall of 1957. There was still some evidence of the political situation; the data distinguished between “lecturers” (*jiangshi*) versus full professors (*jiaoshou*), with the former having a membership acceptance rate of 29.9% and the latter having a smaller one of 13.8%. Moreover, the city called on its bureaus to pay attention to political beliefs as well as service and work history.⁷⁴⁴ In the city of Nanjing, 53 intellectuals had been admitted—although smaller, cities outside of Beijing and Shanghai did not have the same density of scholars among the urban population. One admitted Nanjing intellectual explained their choice to apply as such: “I realized that we are facing serious problems, and I could best propose solutions from within the party.”⁷⁴⁵ In Tianjin, meanwhile, 25 intellectuals had been admitted into the party at the start of the fall alone. The report from Tianjin described these intellectuals as facing a backlash from their colleagues who denounced their “toadyism” (*paima*).⁷⁴⁶ In mid-October, the Shaanxi Provincial Government announced that it had recently accepted 28 new high-level intellectuals as members. The province praised the new admittees for

⁷⁴³ Cao Shujing, *Bo “liang zhong zhishifenzi” lun*, August 5, 1957, RR.

⁷⁴⁴ *Zhonggong Beijing shiwei guanyu 1957 nian zai gaoji zhishifenzi zhong fazhan dang de jihua xiang zhongyang de baogao*, August 21, 1957, ARC.

⁷⁴⁵ *Nanjing xin rudang de gaoji zhishifenzi: jue da duoshu zhanren gongren jieji lichang*, August 21, 1957, RR.

⁷⁴⁶ *Jingguo fanyoupai douzheng yange kaoyan: tianjin yipi gaoji zhishifenzi rudang*, September 7, 1957, RR.

“firmly holding their positions” (*zhanwen lichang*) in the face of the rightist attack on the party. Jin Zhongyuan (a lecturer in the Irrigation Department at Xi’an Jiaotong University), for example, overcame personal medical issues in order to initiate the Anti-Rightist Campaign at his university. And Lü Guangzu (an engineer at Northwest Spinning and Weaving Supervisory Office) was a consistent critic of right-wing politics even during the liberal Hundred Flowers period.⁷⁴⁷ As such, the Anti-Rightist Campaign afforded loyal intellectuals more opportunities to advance their careers.

In Shanghai, the intellectual-dense city had to strike a more conciliatory tone with the local scholarly community even in the midst of the Anti-Rightist Campaign. Foreign observers still based in the city described a “fierce” campaign against right-wing Shanghai, but also noted that there was no evidence that any intellectuals in Shanghai had been subjected to physical violence or had been removed from their positions by the end of August (it is unclear if this changed later, or if these observers were simply not privy to the full extent of the campaign).⁷⁴⁸ The Shanghai government, meanwhile, continued to support local intellectuals’ efforts to join the CCP, in line with other major cities. In some factories, the rate of party membership among engineers was approaching the targets proposed by the city in February 1956 (see Chapter 5).⁷⁴⁹ The city government, meanwhile, released a new list of criteria that cadres should use to evaluate applications for promising intellectuals that reflected the changed political climate. The city emphasized five key characteristics: (1) having a clear political history, (2) supporting the leadership of the CCP, which included having participated in previous mass campaigns, (3)

⁷⁴⁷ Xinhua News, *Zai fanyoupai douzheng zhong zhanwen lichang: Shaanxi yipi gaoji zhishifenzi rudang*, October 19, 1957, ARC.

⁷⁴⁸ Shanghai Political and Economic Summary No. 16, August 16-August 31, 1957, CPR10.

⁷⁴⁹ *Shanghaishi gangtie gongye dangwei guanyu 1957 nian xiabannian zai gaoji zhishifenzi zhong fazhan dangyuan yu jijifenzi gongzuo de dasuan*, August 28, 1957, B112-4-102-16, Shanghai Municipal Metallurgical Industry Bureau, SMA.

providing the necessary background information, which included information on family members and *their* political histories, (4) having an accomplished career, and (5) being forthcoming and self-critical about any shortcomings they may have.⁷⁵⁰ Although practical requirements for membership had not disappeared entirely, the new set of qualifications emphasized politics to much starker degree than in 1956. Still, the fact that many workplaces had hit the targets (or even exceeded them) originally proposed in early 1956 suggests that Shanghai intellectuals, overall, benefitted roughly as intended in a net sense.

As the fall wore on, cities began to evaluate the state of the Anti-Rightist Campaign. The data is relatively consistent with the idea of a partial backlash; the majority of intellectuals were not targeted by the campaign. In Beijing, about 4.3% of all academics had been identified as rightists by the end of September, with only 23% of them being classified as “extreme right-wingers” (that is, those who were the best candidates for official punishment). These numbers reflected divides among academics: 15% of full professors had been accused, as opposed to 6.7% of teaching assistants, 4.3% of students, and only 1.56% of party-affiliated intellectuals. These numbers suggest that, in general, younger intellectuals were better able to weather the storm than their older colleagues.⁷⁵¹ Moreover, the Beijing government recommitted itself to fixing some of the issues intellectuals faced in their day-to-day lives. The city agreed with intellectuals that some cadres had been paying themselves unfairly high salaries, and also announced plans to carry out a “rechecking” (*fucha*) of materials collected during the Suppress the Counterrevolutionaries Campaign and exonerate any intellectuals who may have been unfairly targeted. Beijing also announced budgetary increases for schools and universities to facilitate

⁷⁵⁰ Ibid.

⁷⁵¹ *Zhonggong Beijing shiwei guanyu beijingshi gaodeng xuexiao zhengfeng he fanyoupai douzheng qingkuang he jinhou gongzuo bushu xiang zhongyang de baogao*, September 20, 1957, ARC.

both teaching and research. The municipal government would continue to survey leftist and centrist intellectuals to gather their opinions and advice on policy.⁷⁵²

As the Anti-Rightist Campaign continued, various city governments were put in an awkward position. Previous policies from 1956 to improve intellectuals' livelihoods were still technically on the books, despite the vastly changed political circumstances in late 1957. In November, for example, the Shanghai government took steps to clarify that all previous directives still stood. The city government also praised budgetary increases for library materials at the Academy of Sciences from 70,000 yuan in 1955 to 300,000 yuan in 1956, and called for further increases in the ensuing years. On average, Shanghai had increased the budget for importing foreign scientific instruments by 30 million yuan every year from 1952 to 1957.⁷⁵³ As such, extended benefits for intellectuals even during the Anti-Rightist Campaign went beyond just party membership acceptances. Shortly afterward, the PRC State Council approved plans for further research investments across the country. This would include an increase of nearly 5 million new library books and scientific materials; back in 1950, only 200 chemical reagents were available for use in research, whereas 4000 were available by the end of 1956. The State Council pushed for further increases in the following years. The report from the State Council showed awareness of the ongoing rectification movement, noting that many right-wing intellectuals had used instrument or library shortages as a means of critiquing the entire socialist system. The plans, in part, represented an effort by the national government to refute these claims and assert the state's continuing care for the intellectuals.⁷⁵⁴

⁷⁵² Ibid.

⁷⁵³ *Shanghaishi renmin weiyuanhui guanyu zai zhenggai jieduan ying zhuyi gaishan gaoji zhishifenzi gongzuo tiaojian de tongzhi*, November, 1957, B163-2-493-90, Shanghai Municipal Light Industry Office, SMA.

⁷⁵⁴ *People's Daily, Wei kexue yanjiu gongzuo chuangzao lianghao de tiaojian*, November 10, 1957, ARC.

At the end of November, the Department of Higher Education, part of the PRC Ministry of Education, conducted a nationwide survey of the results of the Anti-Rightist Campaign. Overall, 3.5% of university intellectuals (including faculty, students, and staff) had been labelled rightists—presumably, only a small number of them ever faced serious punishments. Much as in previous reports, the survey revealed a high degree of differentiation among academics; 6% of teachers and lecturers had been classified as rightists, in comparison to 10-15% of tenured professors and associate professors.⁷⁵⁵ The department also examined the class background of those who had been identified as rightists. According to them, 37.5% of right-wing intellectuals had come from an “exploiting class” background.⁷⁵⁶ Although this did not represent a majority of rightist scholars, previous increases in intellectuals coming from a working class background suggest that exploiting-class-background intellectuals were overrepresented among rightists, unsurprisingly. As such, the department endorsed measures to continue changing the class character of the intellectuals. The Ministry of Education, in light of the department’s work, announced plans to double its education assistance funds. 70% of the funds were to be used to identify promising candidates for schooling among peasants and industrial workers.⁷⁵⁷ Even though most intellectuals were not categorized as rightists, the national government still clearly felt a need to further reengineer the class composition of the intellectual community—even while many of the loyal intellectuals saw expanded benefits.

Up to this point, there has been little data on what punishments, exactly, rightists as a whole might have faced (despite several gripping case studies in the form of Deng Tuo and Yue Daiyun). Two reports from Beijing in December reveal likely outcomes for less prominent

⁷⁵⁵ Yang Xiufeng, *Sulian daibiaotuan yu yang xiufeng huitan jiyao: gaojiao bu de fanyou douzheng he xin renwu*, November 29, 1957, ARC.

⁷⁵⁶ *Ibid.*

⁷⁵⁷ *Ibid.*

rightist intellectuals. The PRC Ministry of Propaganda had exposed 59 rightists among its staff, which included artists, literati, news affiliates, and editors. Of these 59, 2 were expelled from the party (all 59 were originally CCP members), 11 were assigned remedial physical labor, 8 were allowed to continue their employment with period check-ups by higher officials, 10 were removed from their current jobs—but would be given an alternative job assignment, and 28 were demoted but allowed to continue in their work.⁷⁵⁸ The report also includes demographic data. These 59 rightists were overwhelmingly male; only 2 female intellectuals were included. There was no correlation between a place of origin (included an urban versus rural background) and being labelled a rightist. Age-wise, the vast majority were in their 40s, although one was as young as 22 while another was as old as 68.⁷⁵⁹ A week later, the Beijing Municipal Government announced punishments for 31 rightists working for the city. 3 were expelled from the CCP, 2 were assigned supervised physical labor, 2 were allowed to continue their employment with periodic check-ups, 3 were removed from their positions but given alternative jobs, 12 were allowed to continue teaching duties but were stripped of other academic assignments and had their salaries cut, 2 were allowed to continue teaching duties but *did not* have their salaries cut, 1 was entirely exempted from punishment, 4 were arrested, and 2 were stripped of their party membership and subjected to additional supervision by the authorities.⁷⁶⁰ Although these punishments seem overly draconian, it is important to place them in context. Such punishments were only applied to a tiny fraction of intellectuals; even then, the worst punishments (being stripped of party membership, arrest, or forced physical labor) were applied to a minority of the

⁷⁵⁸ *Zhongyang xuanchuan bu guanyu zhuming de wenyi, yishu, xinjian, chuban jie youpaifenzi de chuli yijian xiang zhongyang de baogao*, December 8, 1957, ARC.

⁷⁵⁹ *Ibid.*

⁷⁶⁰ *Beijing shiwei guanyu dui gaodeng xuexiao jiaoshi he xuesheng zhong ruogan youpaifenzi de chuli banfa*, December 15, 1957, ARC.

accused. Moreover, even intellectuals removed from their jobs had opportunities to be rehired; in a controversial case at the Central School of Drama, two rightist professors (Li Zongjin and Feng Fasi) were rehired after initially being thrown out of the school.⁷⁶¹

This section has shown why we should not draw any hasty conclusions about the overall political relationship between the intellectuals and the Communist Party as a result of the Anti-Rightist Campaign. The initiation of the campaign certainly upended the lives of intellectuals, who once again had to attend frequent study meetings and criticism sessions. Only a fraction were ever targeted by the campaign, however. And while the majority may have been disappointed that previous policies capping meeting time (such as the Five-Sixths Policy in Shanghai, for example) did not survive the tumult of 1957, they could still enjoy opportunities to apply for party membership and further investments from the government into their research projects. For the small minority of intellectuals who had been labelled rightists, most experienced some criticism and that was it. A minority of the minority faced substantial punishments, although the most common punishment was probably some form of demotion or salary cut. Arrests were exceedingly rare, as were ejections from the CCP. A decent number of accused rightists were assigned hard physical labor, although even non-rightist intellectuals would join them in the villages and the factories during the coming years. The most normal experience for intellectuals during 1957 may have included some frustration, to be sure. However, the benefits many intellectuals saw in 1956 did not totally disappear, and in some cases were strengthened.

Conclusion

⁷⁶¹ *Wenhua bu youxie danwei dui fanyou saowei gongzuo zhongshi bugou*, November 29, 1957, ARC.

1957, in sum, included a number of multifaceted developments for intellectuals. Among the scholarly community, there was a real sense that many of the gains during 1956 were starting to stall, sometimes thanks to cadre intransigence. Many saw their salary benefits disappear, for example, while other promises never materialized. This sense of frustration coincided with national efforts to encourage more freedom of speech, with Mao directly asking intellectuals to criticize the party. Although many intellectuals voiced their frustrations over the stalled reform efforts, some used the opportunity to challenge the CCP's authority more directly. A small minority voiced support for the overthrow of the CCP (or a real democratic sharing of powers with the minor parties). The state was surely spooked by the latter, but more importantly had come to realize that it could only side with the intellectuals against its own cadres for so long. As such, the CCP bowed to pressure from the rank-and-file and launched the Anti-Rightist Campaign to place intellectuals under far more scrutiny. Using tactics reminiscent of Thought Reform, the Anti-Rightist Campaign revealed, in some cases, right-wing networks of scholars operating inside and outside academia. These rightists often used front organizations to cover their real activities: encouraging resistance to the state and distributing anti-CCP materials. But the state clearly overreached in trying to ferret the genuine rightists out. Clearly pro-communist intellectuals suffered as a result of the campaign for bogus or trumped-up "errors." The majority of intellectuals—the "leftists" and "centrists"—actually saw progress on some of the concerns they had raised at the beginning of the year. The national government support efforts to further increase rates of party membership among intellectuals, and such efforts continued through the end of the year. The government also announced plans for purchasing more foreign books and instruments, as well as deepening investments into research. The heyday may have been over, but progress continued.

That is not to say that 1957 did not see any major changes. The year, with all its drama, represented the end of a sense of optimism from the state regarding the ability of intellectuals to genuinely transform themselves. Even as the government allowed more scholars to join the CCP, it made plans to further increase the percentages of intellectuals who had come from a working-class background. The government had always been interested in investing in the next generation of intellectuals—both pro-CCP youth as well as workers and peasants who were given opportunities to get a degree after liberation. But these plans gained urgency in the wake of the Anti-Rightist Campaign. The current crop of intellectuals might be useful for the state in achieving further production increases and broader economic successes, but the state had become cognizant that a gap between the intellectuals and the government would continue. Moreover, the state began to wonder what steps could possibly help older intellectuals gain a working-class consciousness, if years of political study had not produced the sweeping changes the CCP had hoped for. Slowly, new plans emerged: having students and professors engage in hard labor alongside peasants and factory workers, so that they could appreciate the lives of the masses. Having intellectuals contribute to production with their own hands might be what was needed for a genuine breakthrough—a Great Leap Forward.

CHAPTER 7: WORKER INTELLECT AND INTELLECTUAL WORK, 1958-1959

It had been almost a decade since the Communists set up the new regime in Beijing, and the question of how intellectuals would fit into the new China remained unresolved. The state had been generally responsive to the concerns of its intellectual class up until the second half of 1957, even as it harbored concerns about the linkages between intellectual status and generational economic privilege; intellectuals were literal symbols of the inequalities the Communist Party had pledged to root out as it stormed its way to victory. However, a deluge of resentment and resistance from the cadres—alongside a lack of sympathy from the party elite regarding intellectuals’ criticisms made during the Hundred Flowers Campaign—forced the government to recalculate. And thus, as the Anti-Rightist Campaign began to wind down in 1958, the “intellectual problem” remained. A *People’s Daily* editorial published on February 25, 1958 offered a new imagining of how intellectuals might best serve the new society, however. The article explained that what the nation really needed were “red experts” (*hongyouzhuan*), with supreme technical and ideological qualifications.⁷⁶² Although the idea of a “red expert” certainly sounded impressive, that was hardly a new idea. What was new, starting in 1958, were two primary strategies the state used to accomplish this. First, the government encouraged intellectuals to go “down to the countryside and up to the mountains” (*xia xiang shang shan*) to participate in hard labor alongside the peasants and industrial laborers. Second, the state would double down on its strategy of providing formal education for the working class and for the children of peasants and workers.⁷⁶³

⁷⁶² *Shanghai kexuejia he jiaoshou xianqi ziwo sixiang gaizao yundong: juexin zuo youpai, lizheng hongyouzhuan*, February 25, 1958, RR

⁷⁶³ Robert Taylor discusses university enrollment and the PRC state’s class-levelling efforts at length in *China’s Intellectual Dilemma: Politics and University Enrollment, 1949-1978* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1981).

Of course, these two strategies were in of themselves not particularly new. Intellectuals had been encouraged to participate in labor earlier during the decade. A good number of scholars even volunteered for work in the villages during the Land Reform adjustments of 1950 and 1951 (see Chapter 2). And the state had expanded access to education through a wider array of schools, more enrollments, and worker-focused “spare-time schools” with evening classes and remedial technical training.⁷⁶⁴ The scale of these policies expanded rapidly during 1958 and 1959, however, as the entire country moved in a wildly utopian direction under the auspices of the Great Leap Forward. Changes in how intellectuals were perceived coincided with new, radical agrarian policies meant to build off of the partial collectivization underway since the early years of the decade.⁷⁶⁵ Although the Great Leap Forward has usually been seen primarily as a set of policies focused on rural production and breakneck-paced industrialization, the Great Leap also included new policies focused on intellectuals. The state imagined that a strong effort could force older intellectuals to finally come around and embrace a proletarian class consciousness, all while a new generation of intellectuals could emerge from the working classes and their children. Many intellectuals formed ranks around the state and offered support for the Great Leap. Even the disgraced former editor of *People’s Daily*, Deng Tuo, made a forceful case for the Great Leap through 1958 and 1959.⁷⁶⁶ Other rising names in the intellectual world like Zhang Chunqiao, Yao Wenyuan, Wu Zhipu, and Qian Xuesen all endorsed the Leap; as such, intellectuals bear some degree of responsibility for the resulting famine alongside central

⁷⁶⁴ For a discussion of the rise of spare-time schools after 1950, see Chen, *Chinese Education since 1949*, 27-29. In addition, attempts at bringing in students of a working class background into the education system extend back even to the CCP’s days in Yan’an; see Pepper, *Radicalism and Education Reform in 20th-Century China*, 121.

⁷⁶⁵ See Huaiyin Li, *Village China under Socialism and Reform: A Micro-History, 1948-2008* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2009), 23-49 as well as Ralph A. Thaxton, Jr., *Catastrophe and Contention in Rural China: Mao’s Great Leap Forward Famine and the Origins of Righteous Resistance in Da Fo Village* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 89-117.

⁷⁶⁶ Cheek, *Propaganda and Culture in Mao’s China*, 187-189.

government officials.⁷⁶⁷ As such, the state's doubling down efforts at producing intellectual generational change were very much part of the broader policies that shook the nation at its ten-year anniversary.

Previous scholars of intellectual policies have typically ended their studies at the end of the Anti-Rightist Campaign.⁷⁶⁸ I instead argue that the state's effort to "proletarianize" (*laodonghua*) the intellectuals and educate the workers represents the natural conclusion of the story of Chinese intellectuals during the 1950s. As such, I am in line with Joel Andreas' examination of the "red engineer" generation.⁷⁶⁹ However, whereas Andreas approaches the red experts from the perspective of competing social factions of political versus cultural capital, I see state policy as indicative of the failures of previous efforts at winning over the intellectuals; after the dust had cleared from drama and politicking of 1950-1957 between intellectuals and the state, all that was left was the promise of generational change. And even then, the national government never fully gave up on older intellectuals. Having these scholars participate in hard labor was seen as the only means left at achieving real transformation after nearly a decade of abstract political study had not produced the desired results.

I approach the final years of the 1950s from four perspectives. First, I look at the data collected by the state in the wake of the Anti-Rightist Campaign to assess the continuing impacts that the crackdown had on the scholarly community. I have previously argued that the campaign targeted a very small minority of the overall number of Chinese intellectuals (see Chapter 6); the data collected from 1958 and 1959 largely bears out these conclusions. Moreover, the state's

⁷⁶⁷ Cheek, *The Intellectual in Modern Chinese History*, 175-178. Zhang Chunqiao and Yao Wenyuan would go on to be two of the four members of the infamous "Gang of Four" during the Cultural Revolution years (along with Wang Hongwen and Mao's wife, Jiang Qing).

⁷⁶⁸ See Chen, *Thought Reform of the Chinese Intellectuals* as well as MacFarquhar, *The Hundred Flowers Campaign and the Chinese Intellectuals*.

⁷⁶⁹ See Andreas, *Rise of the Red Engineers*, especially 49-54 and 61-80.

analysis of the Anti-Rightist Campaign shows why national officials began moving away from previous policies that emphasize political study and sporadic rectification movements (such as Thought Reform, the Three-Anti, and the Anti-Rightist Campaigns). They began to doubt the effectiveness of previous strategies. Second, I examine the phenomenon of intellectuals participating in factory and village work. Although the “down to the countryside and up to the mountains” movement might be described as “forced labor,” I instead show that intellectuals were still able to freely express frustrations and grievances, which were sometimes met with actual policy changes from above. Third, I look at the expansion of policies designed to support workers and their children obtaining formal degrees and thus becoming “intellectuals” in their own right. Building off of this, my fourth line of analysis looks at generational change: how young scholars attitudes began to diverge from their elders, and how young intellectuals paved the way for later upheavals during the 1960s and beyond.

The Fallout from the Anti-Rightist Campaign

To be sure, some intellectuals were unfairly targeted and oppressed due to a sweeping crackdown from above during the Anti-Rightist Campaign (see the previous chapter’s examination of the cases of Deng Tuo and Yue Daiyun). That being said, however, the Anti-Rightist Campaign was at most a partial backlash to intellectual overreach. The majority of intellectuals received no real punishment, and even those who were targeted as “rightists” rarely faced more than mild criticism from their colleagues. Although the crackdown did not cease at the end of 1957, the state began to collect data on the scale of the crackdown as well as its effectiveness. This collated information largely bears out my previous conclusions: the overwhelming majority of intellectuals escaped any real punishments for their political beliefs

during 1957. The state did continue the search for rightists and meted out punishments accordingly over the course of 1958 and 1959, although not at the scale of the previous year. Ultimately, the state's assessment of the Anti-Rightist Campaign added fuel to the perspective that a new approach was needed to transform China's intellectuals.

A reporter from *People's Daily*, Han Ming, conducted an investigative report of university professors during the waning months of 1958 and the first weeks of 1959. He published his findings on January 18, which revealed broad, national statistics on what scholastic activities university professors were involved in at the end of 1957. According to Han's report, 30% of university intellectuals had teaching duties, 10% were engaged either in scientific research or translation work, 15% were engaged either in library research or assistant teaching work, 3% were engaged in administrative work, 7% were in the process of moving to a different university, 4% were in the process of moving to work in a secondary school, 5% were preparing to start new research projects, 5% were preparing to enter an administrative position in a local government branch, 15% had fallen seriously ill or were preparing to retire, while only 3% were undergoing review for serious political errors.⁷⁷⁰ The report shows that a meager amount (3%) of intellectuals were under active suspicion for being rightists at the start of 1958. Even then, it is unlikely that all intellectuals within that 3% faced serious punishment. At the same time, other data points may suggest possible punishments. For example, being transferred to a different university (7%) or transferring to a secondary school teaching job (4%) may have included some professors who were demoted as a result of the Anti-Rightist Campaign. Even if we add these percentages together, however, we are only left with 14% of university intellectuals who *may* have been involved as targets in the Anti-Rightist Campaign—still a small fraction, clearly. Han

⁷⁷⁰ Han Ming, *Zai gaodeng xuexiao zhixing zhishifenzi zhengce de wenti*, January 18, 1958, RR.

Ming himself seemed to think his data was evidence of incomplete ideological transformation; he called for more work to rectify intellectual thought and criticized the university-led means of political study during the Thought Reform Campaign.⁷⁷¹ As such, the article seemed to anticipate the new campaign to promote physical labor.

Despite the limited nature of the Anti-Rightist backlash, it seemed that there were certainly voices that wanted the campaign to go further. A *People's Daily* editorial on February 7, 1958 derided the intellectuals' "stinking pretensions" (*choujiazi*), and criticized the use of intellectuals to fill government posts. The author claimed that the state's use of intellectuals was simply a return to China's dynastic past, where literati-bureaucrats dominated the levers of political power.⁷⁷² The heated rhetoric of the editorial did not match the political reality on the ground, however; foreign observers suggested that the Anti-Rightist Campaign was significantly less violent than previous crackdowns on the bourgeoisie. Accused rightists, such as the national Minister of Transportation, Zhang Bojun, were often allowed to remain at their posts.⁷⁷³ Punishments may have increased somewhat during February; reports from Shanghai describe the arrest of about 100 rightists in the first half of the month—although it is unclear how many of these rightists were intellectuals. There is some evidence that female intellectuals may have received disproportionate punishment relative to their male colleagues, despite the state's intentions to promote gender equality. The Shanghai Women's Federation removed several members of its standing committee for expressing rightist viewpoints, which was a step beyond what happened to many male intellectuals.⁷⁷⁴ Moreover, it appears that the state began to dismiss

⁷⁷¹ Ibid.

⁷⁷² *Dadiao zhishifenzi de choujiazi: gan dang laodong renmin de xiaoxuesheng*, February 7, 1958, RR.

⁷⁷³ Wilson, *China: Annual Review for 1957*, January 24, 1958, CPR10, 710. Zhang ultimately left his post several months later, during 1958, however.

⁷⁷⁴ Shanghai Political and Economic Summary No. 3, February 1-February 16, 1958, in *China: Political Reports, 1911-1960, Volume 11: 1958-1960*, edited by Robert L. Jarman (Cambridge: Archive Editions, 2001) [hereafter CPR11], 28.

some rightist high-level government ministers by the end of February.⁷⁷⁵ These instances show the contradictions and ambiguities inherent in the Anti-Rightist Campaign. Even nearly a year on from its inception, the campaign was little clearer in how far it would go.

More of the inequalities of the campaign were revealed in March. In general, reports showed that intellectuals in senior positions were disproportionately punished for being rightists, with a newer generation of younger intellectuals moving in to take these available jobs.⁷⁷⁶ As such, the campaign was in some ways cover to actively facilitate generational change. A report from the end of the month demonstrated that primary and secondary school teachers also faced disproportionate punishments in comparison to university professors, who were seen as “high-level” intellectuals. The Central Committee urged schools in Beijing to dismiss a full 70% of primary school teachers and half of secondary school teachers who were classified as rightists. Rightist primary and secondary school teachers who were not dismissed were expected to participate in physical labor, and would be permitted to return to their jobs after a semester-long probation should they show evidence of ideological progress. Upon returning to their jobs, rightist teachers would have to confess in public in front of a school assembly.⁷⁷⁷ The Central Committee’s interests here were probably multifaceted. On one hand, the state clearly saw lower-level intellectuals as less inherently valuable, and therefore encouraged education bureaus to focus punishments on them. On the other hand (and perhaps more importantly), the Central Committee desired to open up as many new spots within the school system as possible to a new generation of intellectuals. Also included in the report was a directive to have schools force

⁷⁷⁵ Wilson, Telegram No. 106, From Peking to Foreign Office, February 26, 1958, CPR11, 194.

⁷⁷⁶ Shanghai Political and Economic Summary No. 5, March 1-March 15, 1958, CPR11, 48.

⁷⁷⁷ *Zhonggong zhongyang guanyu chuli zhong, xiaoxue jiaoshi zhong de youpai fenzi, fangeming fenzi he qita huai fenzi wenti de zhishi*, March 28, 1958, ARC.

elderly or sickly teachers into retirement or into a different line of work.⁷⁷⁸ These instructions indicated that the government proposed comprehensive policies designed to usher in younger teachers—of which dismissing rightists was one of several strategies.

The continuing efforts to root out rightists put the democratic parties in an awkward position. At the height of the Anti-Rightist Campaign, the minor parties had come under criticism for shielding rightists and serving as a platform for intellectuals to express anti-CCP views. As a means of political survival, intellectuals in the democratic parties felt that it was time to shift course. In mid-April, two intellectuals in Tianjin—Fang Xianzhi (vice-chairman of the Tianjin chapter of the Jiusan Society) and Zhang Guofan (chairman of the Tianjin chapter of the Democratic League)—announced that they had “handed their hearts” (*jiao xin*) over to the Communist Party. In a joint statement, Fang and Zhang called on their parties’ members to do the same. Ultimately, 1838 Tianjin democratic party members (many of whom were intellectuals) affirmed their steadfast loyalty to the regime.⁷⁷⁹ A coalition of democratic party officials, led by Fang and Zhang, surveyed party-affiliated rightists and described their errors. According to the report, 20% of democratic party members had errors in regard to the relation between the CCP and the masses; for example, not trusting the CCP’s leadership, or rejecting the idea that “the layman can lead the expert.” 6.7% rejected the socialist system entirely; they wanted Soviet-style economics with American-style freedoms. 20.5% had critiqued the CCP’s use of mass mobilization campaigns. 5.9% expressed disagreement with actual government policies. 6.4% had errors in their opinions on international politics—the most common being “worshipping America” (*chong mei*). 25.8% were classified as “bourgeois individualists” for being primarily motivated by fame and profit. Only 15% of Tianjin democratic party members

⁷⁷⁸ Ibid.

⁷⁷⁹ Yin Chongjin, *Tianjinshi minzhu dangpai kaizhan jiao xin yundong de qingkuang*, April 21, 1958, ARC.

were error-free.⁷⁸⁰ Nonetheless, it appears that Fang and Zhang's efforts to affirm loyalty to the regime had already achieved successes by the end of the month. A full 27.5% of bourgeois intellectuals in their parties had "turned left" (*zuozhuan*) in their thinking and behaviors as a result of the "give our hearts to the CCP" campaign.⁷⁸¹ The Central Committee endorsed these efforts in a set of instructions in July, which affirmed that the government saw the democratic parties as partners in national construction. The Central Committee also explicitly favored letting democratic parties carry out further thought rectification on their own. At the same time, central political officials also called for more "integration" (*jiehe*) of the CCP and the minor parties' rectification efforts, although no concrete measures were discussed.⁷⁸²

Cities continued the work of ferreting out rightist intellectuals into the midyear. In Shanghai, for example, the Public Works Management Office called for further searches for "bourgeois intellectuals" to receive some kind of punishment or dismissal. The criteria for determining who was or was not a "bourgeois intellectual" were nonetheless vague. The management office made reference to qualities such as an "oppositional mood" or feelings of "combativeness" toward the CCP. Anyone who spoke out against the political campaigns of the early 1950s naturally came under a great deal of suspicion. Some intellectuals still had warm feelings for the Guomindang; the management office contrasted feelings that the GMD "could not do without [them]" (*shaobuliao wo*), whereas the CCP saw them as disposable (*shaodeliao wo*).⁷⁸³ Even still, Shanghai made efforts to avoid the heavy-handedness of earlier campaigns. The city announced plans to let the democratic parties take the lead in organizing new study

⁷⁸⁰ Ibid.

⁷⁸¹ Ibid.

⁷⁸² *Zhonggong zhongyang tongzhanbu guanyu gaizao minzhu dangpai de gongzuo gangyao*, July, 1958, ARC.

⁷⁸³ *Shanghai shi shizheng gongcheng ju guanyu yi gongzuo gangwei wei jidi dui zichanjieji zhishifenzi tuanjie jiaoyu gaizao de qingkuang he jinhou de yijian*, June 13, 1958, B257-1-271-45, Shanghai Municipal Public Works Management Office, SMA.

sessions for bourgeois intellectuals.⁷⁸⁴ Meanwhile, the city government of Shijiazhuang (capital of Hebei Province) announced that it had uncovered 1156 rightists living within the city. Only 71 of these rightists ultimately had their information forwarded to the local Public Security Bureau, however; meanwhile, 6 had committed suicide due to constant harassment. Of the rightists who had been criticized in public, 38.36% seemed to demonstrate a sincere desire to improve, and diligently carried out new work assignments while accepting criticism from their colleagues. 48.94%, meanwhile, were contrite in public but were under suspicion for expressing doubt behind the scenes; for example, they frequently complained about any new work assignments they received. 11.89% were seen as completely unrepentant. One example of the final category was the engineer Li Gennian, who was accused of sleeping on the job at his factory and constantly complaining about being hungry. In addition, Li criticized the Great Leap Forward (somewhat presciently) as a “stage of death” (*yaoming tai*).⁷⁸⁵

At the end of the year, the city of Shanghai announced a new round of investigations (*shencha*) into local intellectuals, relating to both their ideological beliefs as well as whether they had proper technical qualifications. Any association with a reactionary political group would be grounds for serious concern and scrutiny. However, the city called on cadres to distinguish between “ordinary members” (*yiban chengyuan*) of these right-wing groups and “core members” (*guganfenzi*).⁷⁸⁶ There is some evidence that this latest round of investigations was not as intrusive as previous efforts, such as during Thought Reform or the zenith of the Anti-Rightist Campaign. Cadres generally carried out these investigations behind the scenes, as opposed to through invasive criticism or struggle sessions. Moreover, only intellectuals with clear evidence

⁷⁸⁴ Ibid.

⁷⁸⁵ *Zhongguo gongchandang shijiazhuangshi weiyuanhui tongzhi*, August 4, 1958, ARC.

⁷⁸⁶ *Zhonggong Shanghai shiwei jiaoyu weisheng gongzuo bu guanyu gaoji zhishifenzi shencha wenti de jidian yijian*, December 25, 1958, B242-1-1062-12, Shanghai Municipal Ministry of Hygiene, SMA.

of counterrevolutionary activities would be asked to submit new confessions—as opposed to Thought Reform, when almost every intellectual had to submit a confession. Cadres would ask intellectuals under scrutiny to submit new documents after their investigations had produced tangible evidence of political errors. After submitting the confession, the cadres would decide whether further disciplinary action would be appropriate.⁷⁸⁷ As with other efforts to target rightists, few intellectuals who submitted new confessions ever saw any meaningful punishment beyond that. The vast majority of information (including the confessions) collected during the investigations was never used—the city mandated that it would instead be stored in local archives.⁷⁸⁸

In mid-February 1959, the Shanghai government began to evaluate the actual effectiveness of the Anti-Rightist Campaign, as well as its various offshoots that continued throughout 1958. The city was troubled by its findings. Intellectual antipathy or resistance to the CCP had actually increased over the course of 1957 and 1958, with many Shanghai scholars describing “suffering hardships” (*chikui*) as inherent to socialism. Many had begun referring to party cadres as “blockheads” (*shagua*). For their part, cadres were equally resentful of the intellectuals; one said, “the 1956 party policies on intellectuals were right-wing for giving intellectuals preferential treatment, so intellectuals started to get cocky. The Anti-Rightist rectification campaign let us vent our anger.”⁷⁸⁹ It is remarkable to see cadres denouncing CCP policies, but the quote is evidence of the delicate line the state had to walk to appease both intellectuals and its cadres. But the cadres seemed to reject even the government’s latest

⁷⁸⁷ Ibid.

⁷⁸⁸ Ibid.

⁷⁸⁹ *Zhonggong shanghaishi zhongdeng zhuanye xuexiao weiyuanhui guanyu zhixing zhishifenzi zhengce de jiancha baogao*, February 18, 1959, A29-2-112-25, Chinese Communist Municipal Government of Shanghai Vocational School Committee, SMA.

approach to managing intellectuals by cultivating a new generation of red experts. The cadres in Shanghai criticized students for being passionate about politics only during mobilization campaigns; afterward, they seemed to cool off quickly. Cadres saw young students as “arrogant” (*zigao zida*) much like their older counterparts.⁷⁹⁰

Data on the effectiveness of the Anti-Rightist efforts is inconclusive. In one report, the city claimed that the percentage of intellectuals classified as leftists or center-leftists rose from the 20s to the 30s; moreover, 40% of all campus personnel were supportive of the campaign, in contrast to 50% having a middle-of-the-road attitude and only 10% in opposition.⁷⁹¹ A different report came to a different conclusion, however. The second report stated that before the Anti-Rightist Campaign, university faculty could be broken down as 14.7% leftist, 22.1% center-leftist, 44.5% centrist, 10.3% center-rightist, and 7.4% rightist. After the campaign, they could be broken down as 23.5% leftist, 16.2% center-leftist, 38.2% centrist, 10.3% center-rightist, and 11.8% rightist.⁷⁹² Even if the number of leftists had increased, most of the change came from center-leftists moving further right, without much change among centrists. And the number of rightists had actually *increased*.

The CCP thus began to turn its attention toward promoting new strategies for reforming intellectuals: participation in physical labor, either in the countryside or in the factories. The state began to reassess its decade-long strategies of heavy-handed mobilization and rectification work through political study and criticism sessions during the rest of 1959. The few official pronouncements from the state regarding rectification show the regime in the middle of a shift in its policy approach. In mid-April, the Shanghai government released a statement suggesting that

⁷⁹⁰ Ibid.

⁷⁹¹ Ibid.

⁷⁹² *Cong shisheng guanxi kan women guanche zhishifenzi zhengce zhong de wenti*, March 6, 1959, A23-2-429-30, Chinese Communist Municipal Government of Shanghai Education and Hygiene Work Bureau, SMA.

a good number of intellectuals who had received party membership during the 1956 and 1957 reforms were under scrutiny for “insincere” beliefs. The report called for more work to be done among recently-admitted party intellectuals, but without many specifics.⁷⁹³ One of the effects was that the city sharply curtailed rates at which intellectuals would be admitted into the party. Data from the summer months of 1959 shows that only 1 out of every 100 new party admittees in Shanghai was an intellectual.⁷⁹⁴ Overall, however, gaining party membership during previous years generally afforded intellectuals to weather the Anti-Rightist storm. Even exposed rightists who retained their party membership typically did not experience much social stigma or criticism from media or the masses.⁷⁹⁵ Perhaps in a conciliatory effort, the government announced plans in late 1959 to remove the label of “rightist” from around 1000 intellectuals nationwide.⁷⁹⁶ Taken as a whole, these sparse developments suggest that the state had largely moved on from its previous policies regarding intellectuals. Cultivating the next generation now received paramount importance from the party center.

Although the Anti-Rightist Campaign had begun to wind down by the start of 1958, it continued to echo through the year with a series of dismissals and offshoot investigations that targeted intellectuals. Nothing from 1958 changes the overall picture of the Anti-Rightist Campaign as a partial backlash, however. Only a small minority of intellectuals ever received serious punishments, and arrests were exceedingly uncommon. The state also promoted less invasive means at carrying out rectification work, and even let the minor democratic parties take the lead in organizing new study efforts and criticism sessions. Part of this may have been due to

⁷⁹³ *Zhonggong shanghaishi xuhui quwei jiaobu guanyu dangnei xuexi he guanche dang de zhishifenzi zhengce de qingkuang baogao*, April 20, 1959, A23-2-429-138, Chinese Communist Municipal Government of Shanghai Education and Hygiene Work Bureau, SMA.

⁷⁹⁴ Shanghai Political and Economic Summary No. 5, July 1-July 15, 1959, CPR11, 297.

⁷⁹⁵ Stewart, Telegram No. 835, From Peking to Foreign Office, December 16, 1959, CPR11, 433.

⁷⁹⁶ *Ibid.*

a continuing sense of fatalism regarding the ability of older intellectuals to transform, which had arisen during the previous year (see Chapter 6). If anything, evidence collected regarding the effectiveness of the Anti-Rightist Campaign was middling at best. And some evidence suggested that the primary increases in the number of leftist intellectuals came from the center-leftist intellectuals—all while the number of rightist intellectuals may have actually expanded. As a result, the regime began to promote a new approach that emphasized cultivating a second generation of PRC intellectuals, drawn from the working classes and the current crop of left-wing youth. To the extent that older intellectuals still had a chance to transform, it would come from the fields and the factories rather than through study sessions.

Down to the Countryside, Up to the Mountains

If the titanic efforts made to help intellectuals transform since liberation no longer seemed sufficient to the task, then, the party began to wonder, what could actually produce the desired results? The main efforts of the state during 1958 and 1959 were centered around spurring working-class people to receive formal educations and become intellectuals in their own right, thus cultivating a new generation of left-wing youth and newly-educated workers. But that still left the older intellectuals in an awkward place. The government thus began a new push—a last-ditch effort—to get older, established intellectuals to undergo thorough thought rectification. This was the “down to the countryside and up to the mountains” campaign, which involved sending intellectuals to villages near their cities or factories within them to assist in productive activities alongside laborers and peasants. Experiences varied, of course, especially depending on whether an intellectual had been labelled a rightist during 1957. Rightists like Yue Daiyun (who, of course, cannot be considered right-wing under any objective criteria) generally spent many

long months in the countryside apart from their families. Other established intellectuals might only perform physical labor during the day, followed by return trips to their cities of residence. As such, having intellectuals participate in physical labor was not primarily a punitive measure, but rather an opportunity for genuine reform and reflection on intellectuals' class privilege.

Some intellectuals, especially students, had begun to participate in physical labor during breaks in the academic year. Many intellectuals had participated in agricultural labor during the Land Reform Campaign, meaning that “sending-down” policies were hardly new. They were applied at a much higher scale starting in 1958, however. In a *People's Daily* report on January 8, a party journalist described the new government policy of having intellectuals supplement agricultural or industrial production. Although the majority, at this juncture, were young recent graduates, the article expressed the state's plans to expand participation further over the course of the next two years. The primary objective was “raising [intellectuals'] consciousnesses” (*tigao juewu*), not punishment for right-wing beliefs (although that too would later become part of the campaign).⁷⁹⁷ Much as the CCP began to increasingly let the minor democratic parties shoulder more responsibility for organizing normal thought rectification work, the state also relied on the minor parties to promote the new efforts. Deng Chumin, now vice-chairman of the national Democratic League (Deng had previously been a prominent supporter of the Thought Reform Campaign during 1952; see Chapter 3), made a forceful case for the benefits of physical labor, which he saw as the natural conclusion to the decade-long process of thought rectification, which included both the Thought Reform and Anti-Rightist Campaigns. Intellectuals should “recognize their class attributes, resolve to let their airs go, participate in physical labor, thoroughly transform themselves, and make a great leap forward in both thinking and politics from the old

⁷⁹⁷ Zheng Qimin, *Zhishifenzi gaibugai canjia laodong duanlian: shuidian zongju zhankai yichang da bianlun, ganbu sixiang chengqing hou fenfen baoming yaoqiu shoupi xiafang*, January 9, 1958, RR.

stage to a new one,” Deng argued.⁷⁹⁸ It is striking that Deng used the phrase “great leap forward” in reference to further ideological remolding among the intellectuals. This shows that the mass movement was all-encompassing, and that spurring rural and steel production was just one facet of a broader, collective “leap.” A *People’s Daily* editorial, submitted by staff members of a Shanghai research institute, confirmed that the final transformation of the intellectual class into “red experts” was in fact one of the primary facets of the Great Leap Forward.⁷⁹⁹

With the new policy set, the state began further involving the democratic parties in promoting physical labor for the intellectuals. At the beginning of March, the Jiusan Society held a conference declaring its unequivocal support for the government’s latest initiative. Jiusan party leaders urged all members—many of whom were intellectuals—to strive to become both red and expert. Moreover, the Jiusan Society also asked that intellectuals “give their hearts over to the [Communist] Party” (*ba xin jiaogei dang*) and learn from the experiences of the peasantry and industrial workers through physical labor. The Jiusan Society also pledged to transform its membership base into 80% leftists within the next five years.⁸⁰⁰ Around the same time, the United Front Work Department, a bureau within the national government that oversaw the relationship between the CCP and the minor democratic parties, released a report criticizing the common belief among intellectuals that “expertise should be prioritized over redness” (*xian zhuan hou hong*).⁸⁰¹ The department went on to cite an ongoing “competition” between scientists in Shanghai and Tianjin over which community could first transform, completely, into red

⁷⁹⁸ Deng Chumin, *Wo yao gechang: Deng Chumin tan zhengfeng he fanyoupai douzheng hou de zhishifenzi zhuangkuang*, February 9, 1958, ARC.

⁷⁹⁹ *Zhengqu zai wunian nei youhong youzhuan genghong gengzhuang: Shanghai shiqi wei kexuejia tichu changyi, xiwang kexueyuan gaoji zhishifenzi dou neng dingchu geren de guihua*, February 25, 1958, RR.

⁸⁰⁰ *Jiusan xueshe de shehuizhuyi jingsai juexin shu*, March 1, 1958, ARC.

⁸⁰¹ *Zhongyang tongzhanbu guanyu zichan jieji fenzi, zichan jieji zhishifenzi he minzhu dangpai chengyuan de ziwo gaizao wenti de tongzhi*, March 4, 1958, ARC.

experts. Both groups of scientists pledged to complete their transformation within five years.⁸⁰²

Although the democratic parties had taken a hit during the Anti-Rightist Campaign, they remained influential among the broader intellectual community even through the end of the decade. As such, the state's new policies had to work in concert with the democratic parties.

In the early months of 1958, intellectuals had not yet begun their forays into the villages and the factories *en masse* yet. However, there were other examples of intellectuals' work becoming drawn into the wider Great Leap Forward maelstrom. In mid-March, the Shanghai government released a report on intellectuals' work within the city. The municipal government had recently laid plans to specifically promote machinery, electric appliances, and ships—and in all three cases, intellectual expertise was seen as key to hitting new production targets. In contrast to documents from 1957 expressing a growing sense of skepticism about the intellectual class, these documents adopted the conciliatory language of previous years, calling for “close cooperation” (*miqie hezuo*) between the intellectuals and the city government.⁸⁰³ In order to promote its new manufacturing goals, the city established a number of “small groups” within the municipal bureaucracy to draw up plans for machinery, electronics, and shipbuilding. These groups would coordinate with research departments (most predominantly, several professors at Jiaotong University) and sometimes even employ professors as advisers. The groups also established connections with prominent researchers and engineers across China. The groups' efforts produced a centralizing effect, where research teams across Shanghai would coordinate the sharing of instruments, research data, and laboratory facilities to increase efficiency.⁸⁰⁴

⁸⁰² Ibid.

⁸⁰³ *Zhonggong Shanghai shiwei jiaoyu weisheng gongzuo bu guanyu zhuanfa jixie, dianji, zaochuan xietiao xiaozu guanyu xiezuo peiyang gongrenjieji zhishifenzi de chubu fang'an de tongzhi*, March 14, 1958, A23-2-1644-43, Chinese Communist Municipal Government of Shanghai Education and Hygiene Work Bureau, SMA.

⁸⁰⁴ Ibid.

Meanwhile, other academic departments around the country drew up plans to have professors assist the Great Leap Forward in ways beyond participating in physical labor. One Yunnan professor began teaching classes that described new methods for fertilizer and manure use; another traveled around the province to visit a number of peasant co-ops and conduct experiments on high-yield methods of crop cultivation.⁸⁰⁵ To hit the Great Leap Forward targets, all hands were on deck.

The state also began to publicize cases where “centrist” intellectuals had undergone transformation into genuine leftists. One such intellectual was Wang Junheng, a professor of geography at Beijing Normal University, who explained his thinking at the end of 1957 as such: “after the Anti-Rightist Campaign, I still had doubts whether the rightists were genuinely anti-party or anti-socialist.”⁸⁰⁶ Wang had originally come from a landowning family, although his birth status did not irrevocably tar his reputation with the party. He explained that he had been troubled by the denunciations from the Thought Reform and Three-Anti Campaigns, but did not speak out against either movement and still vocalized his support for the Communist Party. He was labelled as a centrist for a lack of conviction that rightist intellectuals were truly “enemies,” however. After 1952, he had received tenure at Beijing Normal, and he had received the same salary as someone with a high level of political achievement (*gao de zhengzhi*). Wang saw his professional treatment as evidence of the CCP’s good graces.⁸⁰⁷ Wang’s political history was somewhat complicated. He described his disillusion with the old Guomindang regime, blasting their corruption and mismanagement. He even called for Jiang Jieshi’s overthrow. Nevertheless,

⁸⁰⁵ Fandui ‘zhishi siyou, geren dangan, jishu baoshou, buken jiaoxin’ tichang ‘zhishi gongkai, jiti hezuo, gexin jishu, chedi jiaoxin’: kunming kexuejia juexin ziwo geming, ge dazhuan xuexiao gaoji zhishifenzi zhiyuan shengchan cheng fengqi, April 4, 1958, RR.

⁸⁰⁶ Wang Junheng, *Jue buzai anyu zhongjian zhuangtai le*, May 2-17, 1958, ARC.

⁸⁰⁷ Ibid.

he took no concrete actions of resistance against the Guomindang, and even believed rumors that the Communist rebels were “burying people alive” or “splitting families up.” Wang’s opinions began to change after liberation, although he still expressed private misgivings about Land Reform. His son enlisted in the military in advance of China’s entry into the Korean War, an action Wang supported publicly but about which he still had inward doubts.⁸⁰⁸ Wang’s case represented an olive branch to intellectuals who may have been open to the CCP regime but skeptical of its excesses. He was evidence that becoming a red expert was an opportunity open to all intellectuals.

Although the majority of intellectuals who participated in physical labor did not leave until 1959, an initial wave of scholars left for the villages during the course of 1958. As previous documents note, intellectuals engaged in hard labor were overwhelmingly recent graduates at this point. But two older intellectuals who had worked in the villages reported on their experiences to the Shanghai Municipal Government in a pair of speeches before the end of the year. One of them, Xu Shanxiang, discussed the new party slogan of “educating the masses and proletarianizing the intellectuals” (*gongnong qunzhong zhishihua, zhishifenzi laodonghua*), although Xu still argued for caution, noting that many workers and peasants still lacked the formal expertise to become leading scholars overnight. Xu also noted that Soviet intellectuals in critical industries, such as iron and steel production, tended to be genuine experts as opposed to recently-educated, politically orthodox former workers.⁸⁰⁹ The second speech, by a scholar named Zhao Shuwen, was more optimistic about his experiences. He described going to the villages as “an opportunity to eat, live, and work alongside the peasantry.” He was impressed by

⁸⁰⁸ Ibid.

⁸⁰⁹ *Dayuejin zhong zichanjieji zhishifenzi yingai zuoxie shenme? Xu Shanxiang zai shanghai shi zhengxie dierju diyici quanti huiyi shang de fayangao*, 1958, L1-1-135-15, Chinese People’s Political Consultative Conference Shanghai Municipal Committee, SMA.

the villagers' hard-working attitude and bravery.⁸¹⁰ Zhao spent about four months in total in the countryside, and had taught a total of 90 hours' worth of classes. Meanwhile, he had tried to learn as much as he could about agricultural production techniques. He did exhibit a bit of trademark intellectual haughtiness in his speech; he notes that he was able to grasp these agricultural techniques quite quickly, while the peasants "could not compare" to his expansive pool of knowledge. He described having to fall back on farming metaphors to get the peasants to understand high-minded philosophical concepts. Zhao had gone so far as to recommend several improvements to the peasants' techniques based on his own knowledge of geography. Other intellectuals working alongside him were highly critical of these suggestions, accusing him of ignoring the peasants' wisdom and of not having studied geography "systematically."⁸¹¹ Although both Xu and Zhao were polite, both expressed some reservations about the experiences.

Their skepticism was generally ignored. In 1959, the state began sending waves of intellectuals to the villages and the factories. The first document that discussed mass sending-down policies comes from early March, when the majority of professors or teachers at some schools began doing menial labor during the day. The problem, from the perspective of the CCP, was a sharp decline in rates of participation in political study sessions. Whereas 80% or 90% of academic intellectuals participated in political study at the beginning of the decade, a survey suggested that attendance rates had fallen as low as 34% in some schools.⁸¹² As such, party officials began embracing a new strategy by doubling down on previous policies of having

⁸¹⁰ *Dui zichanjiejie zhishifenzi canjia tili laodong jinxing ziwo gaizao de chubu tihui: zhao shuwen zai shanghaishi zhengxie dierju diyici quanti huiyi shang de fayangao*, 1958, L1-1-135-18, Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference Shanghai Municipal Committee, SMA.

⁸¹¹ *Ibid.*

⁸¹² *Cong shisheng guanxi kan women guanche zhishifenzi zhengce zhong de wenti*, March 6, 1959, A23-2-429-30, Chinese Communist Municipal Government of Shanghai Education and Hygiene Work Bureau, SMA.

intellectuals work in the factories and the villages. Unfortunately, my data does not contain specific numbers relating to how many intellectuals were sent down. Nonetheless, we can infer that many more intellectuals were sent down starting in 1959 relative to 1958, when documents suggest that most sent-down intellectuals were students. Documents from 1959 describe intellectuals being sent down as coming from various ideological camps, and from various age groups. Although sending-down techniques were used as punishment for right-wing intellectuals, even centrists and leftists were also expected to partake during the first half of 1959.

Intellectuals who arrived in the countryside around Shanghai still felt comfortable airing criticism regarding the new policies. One Shanghai professor, working in a nearby village, asked “can instructors not be instructors anymore?” Some female professors described the unique hardships that they faced due to their new work. In one case, a female intellectual who was on her period asked her supervisor for a break so she could attend to herself, but the cadre in charge of her work team simply “refused to acknowledge her” (*buzhi kefou*). The Shanghai government stepped in and criticized the cadre’s actions, stipulating that women should be allowed to return to school in matters of personal hygiene.⁸¹³ These instances reveal that the harsh climate of the Anti-Rightist Campaign did not persist into subsequent years; intellectuals once again felt empowered to speak up about their issues, and had their cases taken seriously by the government. Much like during Land Reform (see Chapter 2), the evidence tends to suggest that intellectuals were genuinely affected by their experiences and returned to school the following semester with altered viewpoints. For intellectuals sent to the countryside, they partook in the “three autumn jobs”—harvesting, ploughing, and sowing. Reports estimate that, upon returning to their schools, 23.4% of sent-down intellectuals were supportive of the campaign to promote

⁸¹³ Ibid.

physical labor, in contrast to 59.6% of those who simply “went with the flow” (*suidaliu*) and 17% who were actively opposed. By the end of the year, however, those numbers had shifted to 53.2% in support, 38.3% who went with the flow, and only 8.5% who were actively opposed.⁸¹⁴ As such, intellectuals’ experiences in the field seemed to weigh on them over time, and may have produced the kinds of transformation that previous thought rectification efforts had not.

The experiences of Yue Daiyun give a personal account of what it was like to have been sent down to the countryside. In one sense, Yue is atypical: her being sent down was actively in response to her “errors” exposed during the Anti-Rightist Campaign. As such, she was sent on a train to the village of Zhaiting, a rural area still within the greater Beijing municipal area.⁸¹⁵ She began her stay by participating in grueling labor: carrying water from the village wells to public basins, hauling clay from the nearby mountains down to the village, and carrying rocks for construction. She typically ate a bland, meager diet of gruel and steamed buns. In general, those sent down for being rightists were often given the most physically demanding jobs, whereas other intellectuals typically participated in less gruelling activities such as cart-building.⁸¹⁶ Even after a day’s worth of work, Yue still had other duties: “at sunset I felt so exhausted after this first day of strenuous labor that I could hardly move my legs after the final trip down the mountain. Having eaten a quick dinner, I wanted to do nothing but collapse on the *kang* [a heated earthen or brick structure used for sleeping throughout much of north China], but just then the gong sounded, signaling the start of a compulsory meeting in the primary school.”⁸¹⁷ Over time, however, Yue began to adapt to life in Zhaiting. She became physically stronger, and adapted to her new diet regimen. The sharp words of the cadres ceased to bother her; if anything, she found

⁸¹⁴ Ibid.

⁸¹⁵ Yue and Wakeman, *To the Storm*, 54-57.

⁸¹⁶ Ibid., 60-61.

⁸¹⁷ Ibid., 63.

herself making friends with some of the villagers, who seemed to care very little that she had been labelled a rightist.⁸¹⁸ Although Yue's case is not necessarily representative of most sent-down intellectuals, it is telling that she came to enjoy her life and work in the countryside. It is probable that those without political baggage might have adapted even faster. As such, it becomes easier to take the statistics cited earlier—that over half of intellectuals seemed supportive of the sending-down policies—at face value.

An obvious question emerges, however, given the timeframe during which most intellectuals were sent down. The Great Leap Forward had engendered new realities throughout rural China that produced mass famine, and that ultimately were response for the deaths of between 20 and 45 million (predominantly rural) Chinese. Given that many intellectuals had been sent to the countryside around the same time frame, this begs the question regarding the extent to which intellectuals experienced the famines. Of course, there is no data available in Chinese archives relating to intellectuals' open discussions of the famine. Again, however, Yue's memoir can shed light on the topic. Yue notes that the famine settled in at Zhaiting during the fall of 1959, and describes being forced to forage for fruit seeds up in the nearby mountains (away from the prying eyes of the cadres) along with other villagers and sent-down rightist intellectuals. Problematically, Zhaiting barely had enough food to even keep its livestock fed; Yue was placed in charge of finding a solution, and ultimately relied on a rice husk powdered mix to keep the starving pigs alive.⁸¹⁹ Yue describes villagers suffering from constipation, bodies swelling from malnutrition, and elderly peasants generously sharing their little food with sent-down intellectuals out of sympathy. Although she says that “many more people had died in

⁸¹⁸ Ibid., 69-73.

⁸¹⁹ Ibid., 78-81.

Zhaiting that year [1959] than usual,” she does not cite specific numbers.⁸²⁰ In some ways, Yue may have been both worse off and better than other intellectuals. On one hand, she was required to stay in the countryside for the duration of the worst famine months (the second half of 1959, leading into 1960), whereas other documents suggest that most intellectuals had been brought back to the cities by the fall of 1959. At the same time, she spent her time in the countryside near enough to a major city (Beijing) that she may have escaped some of the worst conditions.

To be sure, famine conditions were devastating across wide swaths of rural China. Many of the hardest-hit counties were located in a diverse array of provinces: Anhui, Henan, or Sichuan. But even Shandong Province, situated between Beijing and Shanghai, experienced its fair share of misery. In many of these areas, cadres insisted on unrealistic procurement quotas, starving villagers *en masse* and forcing them to eat bark for bare sustenance. Peasants who spoke out or resisted were often executed. The death rates in these provinces during the famine years generally eclipsed 10%.⁸²¹ Although the Great Leap famine was primarily based in rural China, the villages immediately surrounding large cities were not immune. A number of counties immediately surrounding Chongqing, for example, have been reported to have experienced severe rates of starvation.⁸²² Given the contentious nature of the Great Leap famine, in addition to the famous secrecy of Chinese archives, estimating the total number of deaths is an extremely fraught process.⁸²³ As such, estimating the number of intellectuals who may have experienced the famine—or even perished during the disaster—is nearly impossible. Given the proximity of many intellectuals to the famine, however, questioning how many died remains an important

⁸²⁰ Ibid., 82-90.

⁸²¹ Frank Dikötter, *Mao's Great Famine: The History of China's Most Devastating Catastrophe, 1958-1962* (New York: Walker Publishing Company, Inc., 2010), 306-309.

⁸²² Ibid., 310-311.

⁸²³ Frank Dikötter describes many of the difficulties historians still face in estimating famine deaths; for example, what exactly is meant by an “abnormal” death? Should all cases of starvation be attributed to the Great Leap Forward, when peasants starving to death was not uncommon beforehand? See Ibid., 324-334.

question, albeit one that this present study cannot answer. We can reasonably speculate that a good number of sent-down intellectuals probably died or nearly starved, given the timeframe. Moreover, the onset of severe famine may explain in part why the state sought to return academics to their schools during the fall semester of 1959, to insulate them from the crisis (excepting the rightist intellectuals, who may have been required to stay in the villages for much longer).

Of course, not all intellectuals were sent to work in the countryside, or in a factory. That did not mean intellectuals who stayed at their jobs were unaffected by the triumphalist national mood, however; as part of the larger Great Leap Forward policies, hospitals in Shanghai began pledging to make a “great leap” in terms of the number of patients they saw per day. One doctor reported that his hospital used to see a total of 475 patients every day, on average, before 1959. After the onset of the Great Leap Forward, however, the hospital began seeing an average of 1300 patients per day—although the doctor did not mention whether there had been staff increases to help with these expanded duties.⁸²⁴ Although, based on statements from intellectuals working in the countryside, it appears that some ability to voice concerns had returned after the Anti-Rightist crackdown, intellectuals as a whole still kept any concerns about the Great Leap Forward to themselves. The democratic parties took the fore, offering vigorous support for both the Great Leap as well as the sending-down initiatives. The minor parties called on all intellectuals to recognize their “special privileges,” and to channel their patriotic energy into mass support for the Great Leap.⁸²⁵ In a pair of *People’s Daily* editorials in the spring of 1959, various intellectuals voice their reflections on and support for state policy. The philosopher Feng

⁸²⁴ *Shanghaishi shehuizhuyi xueyuan bianyin de “qingkuang jianbao” 1959 nian di 5 qi*, March 13, 1959, G19-2-2-25, Shanghai Municipal School of Socialism, SMA.

⁸²⁵ *Ibid.*

Youlan argued in an April 25 editorial that he had used to believe that “redness” would take comparatively little time to cultivate, relative to genuine expertise. Now, however, he argued that he had come to appreciate the tremendous effort required to become both red and expert.⁸²⁶

Another editorial, by the scholars Chen Piyang and Tang Chuanchi, lionized the speed of production increases the CCP had engendered. They also argued that the Great Leap Forward represented an opportunity for intellectuals to undergo lasting thought rectification.⁸²⁷

The CCP used the fortieth anniversary of the start of the May Fourth Movement as a pretext for voicing their approval of the intellectuals after a contentious Anti-Rightist Campaign. One editorial praised the intellectual activists who began organizing secret societies or study groups in the aftermath of the May Fourth protests, and argued that supporting the CCP and its policies was the natural extension of this activist energy.⁸²⁸ The Shanghai Association of Philosophy Societies and Science Institutes published a follow-up document that explored the historical relationship between intellectuals and the Communist Party. The document praised intellectuals for ushering in an era of “new democratism” in the aftermath of the May Fourth protests, and noted that intellectuals were responsible for the founding of the CCP. At the same time, the document warned intellectuals to avoid the pernicious influence of right-wing, liberal scholars such as Hu Shi, who had led them astray from their previous revolutionary class spirit. Looking forward to the Great Leap, the document suggested that intellectuals, in assisting the mass production efforts, could reclaim their previous prestige from the May Fourth period.⁸²⁹

⁸²⁶ “*Yi wu zuo fei bian shaonian*”: *Feng Youlan weiyuan tan guanyu sixiang gaizao de yixie tihui*, April 25, 1959, RR.

⁸²⁷ *Sixiang gaizao yao ganshang xingshi de fazhan*: *Chen Piyang, Tang Chuanchi weiyuan de lianhe fayan*, May 6, 1959, RR.

⁸²⁸ *Zhishifenzi bixu he gongnong jiehe wei gongnong fuwu—jianbao*, 1959, C43-1-57-116, Shanghai Municipal Association of Philosophy Societies and Science Institutes, SMA.

⁸²⁹ *Cong wusi yundong kan zhishifenzi de daolu—“jinian wusi yundong sishi zhounian lunwenji”*, 1959, C43-1-57-155, Shanghai Municipal Association of Philosophy Societies and Science Institutes, SMA.

These pronouncements were not just empty words; the CCP had become more attentive to intellectuals and their views than they had previously, although far from the level of responsiveness the government demonstrated in 1956. At the beginning of June, the national government invited leading economists from around China to attend a conference to present their views on the piece-rate wage system and advice on how to best determine labor value under a socialist system.⁸³⁰ The extent to which these economists' views were actually taken seriously or even implemented is unclear, but the conference demonstrates that the state was, once again, actively listening to the intellectuals.

This renewed closeness between the party and the intellectuals persisted into the summer and the fall. On July 20, for example, the Shanghai government held a conference with intellectuals and allowed them to freely criticize the city's policies toward its intellectuals. Common complaints included an overemphasis on thought rectification, as opposed to fostering a culture of unity between scholars and the state. Others complained that the CCP rarely rewarded "good" behavior from intellectuals, whereas bad behavior was punished stringently.⁸³¹ It is telling, for example, that intellectuals of all political classifications had been deployed to the countryside or the factories, despite the small percentage of actual rightists. The government did make concerted efforts at a return to normalcy for most intellectuals during the second half of 1959, with foreign observers described the summer as unusually relaxed in comparison to the frantic political activity of previous academic breaks. In addition, many intellectuals, at least in Beijing, were seemingly able to enjoy full weekends off from work.⁸³² In the lead-up to the fall

⁸³⁰ Wilson, Telegram No. 405, From Peking to Foreign Office, June 10, 1959, CPR11, 386.

⁸³¹ *Zhonggong Shanghai shiwei dangxiao duanxunban dangjian zu guanyu "zhishifenzi wenti" xuexi qingkuang de zonghe cailiao*, July 20, 1959, A76-1-318-109, Chinese Communist Shanghai Municipal Committee Party School, SMA.

⁸³² Wilson, Telegram No. 448, From Peking to Foreign Office, June 25, 1959, CPR11, 390.

semester, the national government actually put out a set of instructions encouraging schools to focus on “normal” content as opposed to overly political or ideological material. Moreover, school administrations were asked to ensure that students and faculty could enjoy normal summer holidays in the future.⁸³³ Given the rise of pessimistic attitudes toward the intellectuals in previous years (see Chapter 6), these new policies may seem surprising. Whatever their faults, however, intellectuals’ expertise were still vital to the state’s Great Leap Forward production efforts. The practical need for intellectuals had not dissipated, despite the enormous political changes that marked the decade.

For their part, it is unclear if intellectuals were won over by any of these new policies. In assessing the campaign to have intellectuals participate in physical labor, the Shanghai government noted several problems. On one hand, intellectuals who expressed enthusiasm for the new policies were “motivated by principles and ideology rather than practicality” (*wuxu*). As such, the city felt that intellectuals still did not “get it”—and resolved to do better at explaining the practical benefits of the campaign.⁸³⁴ Even intellectuals who had worked in the factories as opposed to the famine-wracked villages still experienced hardships, moreover. One woman had contracted pulmonary tuberculosis (*huan feibing*) due to her work. In addition, she had been working late one evening when a large downpour kept her unable to leave and return home until very late. Her ordeal had caused a significant worsening in her condition.⁸³⁵ Overall, intellectuals ended the 1950s in a state of relative unhappiness. Their social status had almost certainly fallen with respect to previous eras of Chinese history, and they felt increasingly isolated from the younger generation of intellectuals, who by-and-large were far more supportive of CCP policies

⁸³³ Rodgers, Telegram No. 526, From Peking to Foreign Office, July 21, 1959, CPR11, 396.

⁸³⁴ *Shanghai zixingche chang tuanjie jiaoyu gaizao zhishifenzi, jiaoshi de gongzuo baogao*, September, 1959, B105-7-744-1, Shanghai Municipal Bureau of Education, SMA.

⁸³⁵ *Ibid.*

than they were, and who treated them with suspicion and contempt.⁸³⁶ Despite official pronouncements of goodwill, the state nonetheless continued to promulgate mass scrutiny of the intellectuals class through popular musicals such as *Third Sister Liu*, which portrayed intellectuals in a disparaging light.⁸³⁷

Once the dust had settled from the Anti-Rightist Campaign, new questions abounded regarding the status of the older intellectuals. The government seemed less willing to believe that older intellectuals were capable of genuine transformation, but it had to try; as such, the “down to the countryside and up to the mountains” campaign represented a last-ditch effort to get older intellectuals to undergo the kind of remolding expected of them by the party. Although it is difficult to get much sense of how many intellectuals were ultimately sent to the factories and the villages, documents suggest that a considerable number experienced physical labor in some fashion. Intellectuals would be expected to learn from the peasants and workers as they labored alongside them, all while teaching classes in order to help transform their new colleagues into working-class intellectuals. Those sent down to the countryside probably experienced the Great Leap famine, and a good deal may have perished (although it is perhaps almost impossible to calculate). The democratic parties, shaken from the criticism they received during the Anti-Rightist Campaign, offered their full-throated support for all these policies. The state nominally began to re-incorporate intellectuals into public life by meeting with famous scholars and soliciting advice on how to implement Great Leap Forward policies, but it appears that older intellectuals on average had become considerably disillusioned with CCP rule a decade after liberation. It did not have to be this way; the first half of the decade, including Thought Reform,

⁸³⁶ Stewart, Telegram No. 19, March 14, 1960, CPR11, 663-664.

⁸³⁷ See Eddy U, “*Third Sister Liu* and the Making of the Intellectual in Socialist China,” *The Journal of Asian Studies* 69, no. 1 (February 2010): 57-83.

represent a genuine political negotiation between intellectuals and the state, which tended to be responsive to the concerns raised by the scholarly community. Even despite the limited nature of the Anti-Rightist backlash, the bonds of trust between older intellectuals and the state had been severed. Moving forward, the CCP would have to rely on a new generation of intellectuals to provide the expertise it needed.

Cultivating Mass Intellect

In contrast to the system of hierarchical, Soviet-style schools the Chinese state had crafted from 1952-1957 (see Chapter 3), tensions with the Soviet Union encouraged the PRC to “sinify” Chinese education by encouraging more local specialization and reviving the study of Chinese traditions (such as medicine).⁸³⁸ Another form of divergence from the Soviet educational model was through China’s efforts to dramatically expand educational opportunities to workers and farmers. Of course, such efforts were not wholly new in 1958. For most of the decade, the state had been using spare-time schools for workers and peasants, which provided a remedial education that could be used as a springboard to a secondary school or college degree. In addition, the vast expansion of the education system created a wealth of opportunities for the children of the working class to receive a formal education. Despite these policies already in place, it is clear that the government began to double down on these efforts starting in 1958 and continuing through the end of the decade. In part, this was due to a declining sense of optimism regarding the older generation of intellectuals’ capacity for ideological transformation. Additionally, the idea of transforming workers and peasants into scholars reflected the heady utopianism of the Great Leap Forward period. The CCP began drawing up a set of policies

⁸³⁸ Hayhoe, *China’s Universities*, 92-94.

designed to give the working class, as well as young students from a working-class background, advantages to assist them in receiving a formal education. As previously discussed, one method was to have the intellectuals sent to the countryside or the factories teach classes in the evening, although this was only the beginning of the wider effort to create a true class of proletarian intellectuals.

Cadres themselves tended to come from a working-class background, and thus were naturally at the forefront of the new state initiatives. At the start of the year, the Shanghai Education Bureau announced new plans to help local cadres attain an education, usually through spare-time schools or taking “special classes” (*tebie ban*) that the city offered specifically for cadres and family members.⁸³⁹ Cadres often had few opportunities to follow the normal trajectory of attaining a degree; many had schedules packed with work and meetings, and therefore did not have ample time to study or thoroughly review class materials. It would have been very rare for cadres to try and take an entrance examination for higher education, and any who did typically performed poorly. These less-than-stellar results were not from a lack of effort, however; it appears that cadres made up around 60% of the enrollments in Shanghai spare-time classes.⁸⁴⁰ Considering that spare-time schools had been around since the beginning of the decade, their track record at producing successful college applicants was especially dismal. The city was undeterred, however, and announced new policies in late January that required local universities to admit anyone with a degree from a spare-time school directly, without any requirements of taking the entrance exams. Applicants who had come from normal secondary schools still had to take these exams, however.⁸⁴¹ These changes signal an institutional shift

⁸³⁹ *Shanghaishi disan zhigong yeyu zhongxue juban ganbu tebie ban de jige tihui: wei peiyang gongnong zhishifenzi xianchu lilian*, 1958, B105-7-443-9, Shanghai Municipal Bureau of Education, SMA.

⁸⁴⁰ *Ibid.*

⁸⁴¹ Shanghai Political and Economic Summary No. 2, January 16-January 31, 1958, CPR11, 19.

away from providing assistance to the working class and toward directly advantaging workers in order to correct for past inequalities in educational outcomes.

Other major municipalities followed Shanghai's lead during the first half of the year. In late May, Tianjin announced new policies whereby state-run enterprises operating in the city would be required to establish work-study programs. Workers would have to accept a pay cut in order to attend these work-study classes, although the cuts would probably not have been severe—a *People's Daily* article estimated the average cut in wages at about 6.25%.⁸⁴² In Beijing, the city government went beyond the spare-time school model and established “accelerated secondary schools” (*xucheng zhongxue*) specifically for workers and peasants. These accelerated programs offered three-year degree courses, and—given the state's sweeping definition of “intellectual”—meant that workers could quickly become official intellectuals in a matter of years. These accelerated programs were quite popular, boasting 22,200 enrollments by the summer of 1958.⁸⁴³ Although these efforts, in concert, were aimed at combating generational inequalities, a rural/urban divide persisted in terms of access to remedial education. Whereas urban workers often had a full array of spare-time classes, accelerated programs, or special classes, rural peasants were often reliant on receiving informal supplementary education from sent-down professors. Moreover, there were gaps in terms of the quality of teachers who were sent to the villages or urban factories; in general, it appears that the most qualified intellectuals invariably ended up in the factories as opposed to the countryside.⁸⁴⁴ As such, remedial education initiatives may have disproportionately advantaged industrial laborers in contrast to

⁸⁴² Shi Jian and Zhu Zemin, *Peiyang gongren jieji de zhishifenzi de xin tujing: Tianjin guo mian yichang juban bangongbandu xuexiao*, May 29, 1958, RR.

⁸⁴³ *Xin zhishifenzi duiwu zengjia sheng li jun: quanguo wushiba suo gongnong sucheng zhongxue erwan duo xueyuan biye*, June 26, 1958, RR.

⁸⁴⁴ Wilson, Telegram No. 313, From Peking to Foreign Office, June 17, 1958, CPR11, 215.

rural peasants. This went beyond the remedial education movement; in general, rural intellectuals who had already received a formal education at the outset of the PRC period fared significantly worse than their urban counterparts. Although available documentary evidence is currently lacking, there is some evidence that rural intellectuals were disproportionately targeted as rightists during the 1957 crackdown in contrast to their urban colleagues.⁸⁴⁵ As such, the remedial education movement was rooted in continuing rural/urban inequalities.

Shanghai took the lead in pushing the envelope on educating workers through the end of the year. In October, Shanghai schools and universities began forming special connections with local factories, nearby agricultural cooperatives, and handicraft production shops. These relationships were somewhat akin to the “sister school” phenomenon, in the words of foreign observers; workers and peasants were given the ability to take classes at their corresponding school or university, whereas students were expected to do physical labor in their school’s associated factory, shop, or co-op.⁸⁴⁶ In an end-of-the-year report, the city announced that its programs for remedial worker education had been quite popular thus far. Over 6200 Shanghai laborers were enrolled in a spare-time school at that time, whereas a full 1,090,000 workers had taken classes within the formal school system.⁸⁴⁷ In order to cultivate public support for remedial education programs, the city made a pragmatic pitch; workers who already had career experience in the factories could only benefit from additional scientific or technological expertise. This in turn meant that formally educated workers could be critical in spurring further production increases.⁸⁴⁸ Unlike in Beijing, where workers typically took pay cuts in order to attend remedial

⁸⁴⁵ See Cheek, *The Intellectual in Modern Chinese History*, 209-210.

⁸⁴⁶ Shanghai Political and Economic Summary No. 19, October 1-October 16, 1958, CPR11, 168.

⁸⁴⁷ *Shanghaishi gaodeng jiaoyu ju guanyu “xiangzhe laodong renmin zhishihua, zhishifenzi laodonghua de weida mubiao qianjin” de cailiao*, 1959, B105-7-541-75, Shanghai Municipal Bureau of Education, SMA.

⁸⁴⁸ *Ibid.*

classes, workers in Shanghai did not get any time off from their regular workdays; on the contrary, the city announced a plan to increase the average working hours from 7 to 7.5 in 1959. This meant that Shanghai workers who attended a remedial education program, where the average time spent was three hours per day, were either working or studying nearly half of the day.⁸⁴⁹

With more and more workers and peasants attaining formal degrees, the party's plans to admit intellectuals into the CCP could increasingly draw from this new pool of intellectuals as opposed to older scholars. In January 1959, *People's Daily* announced that a total of 16,000 party admittances had been approved across the cities of Beijing, Tianjin, Shanghai, Guangzhou, and Shenyang. Many of these 16,000 were intellectuals, suggesting that the CCP had reversed course again from its more skeptical attitude toward admitting intellectuals during 1957 and 1958. That being said, these numbers mask a changed reality on the ground; in fact, more than 80% of intellectual admittances had gone to either former workers or students from a working-class background.⁸⁵⁰ This meant that the state could tout its numbers without actually opening its doors to admittances of older scholars as fully as it had in 1956. As 1959 wore on, plans to continue the push for remedial education showed little signs of dying down. In early April, the PRC State Council announced new plans for spare-time schools across the nation. Moving forward, they would gradually transition into part-time schools, which would include technical job training in addition to general education classes. Still, part-time schools would not be as intensive as full-time secondary schools, allowing workers and peasants to continue doing time at their jobs.⁸⁵¹

⁸⁴⁹ Ibid.

⁸⁵⁰ *Xuduo chengshi jiaqiang jiandang gongzuo: dapi youxiu gongren rudang, bushao gaoji zhishifenzi bei xishou jia rudang de duiwu*, January 9, 1959, RR.

⁸⁵¹ Wilson, Telegram No. 213, From Peking to Foreign Office, April 1, 1959, CPR11, 369.

There is little hard data on what kinds of workers might have participated in these remedial education programs, although a report from the Shanghai Education Bureau does allow for some speculation. Factory jobs in Shanghai, at the very least, tended to be a young man's game; at one factory, a full 82.5% of its 3213 employees were described as being in the "prime of their lives" (*qingzhuangnian*).⁸⁵² Receiving an education clearly opened doors, allowing for both career advancement as well as possible candidacy for CCP membership. As such, the prospects of remedial education might have been especially attractive to young workers. Moreover, the push to have current students and teachers partake in physical labor inadvertently may have inspired some workers to pursue remedial education. At the Shanghai Bicycle Factory, a relatively congenial atmosphere existed between the workers and the intellectuals sent to work there. Sometimes informally, intellectuals would even help the factory's workers cultivate academic skills such as arithmetic, furthering the sense of goodwill between classes.⁸⁵³ As such, exposure to intellectuals in academia may have been a source of inspiration to some workers, and they also may have informally picked up skills that might have helped them advance faster in remedial education courses. Although speculative, we do know that factories perceived remedial education as quite beneficial to production, and began contributing funds toward the construction of new part-time schools in Shanghai by the end of the decade.⁸⁵⁴

Although the idea of remedial education was far from new, efforts to educate the working masses gained new urgency due to a confluence of factors in 1958. Efforts to expand and formalize remedial education programs occurred at both the national and municipal levels, and continued steadily over the course of 1958 and 1959. Schools and factories (or village co-ops)

⁸⁵² *Shanghai zixingche chang tuanjie jiaoyu gaizao zhishifenzi, jiaoshi de gongzuo baogao*, September, 1959, B105-7-744-1, Shanghai Municipal Bureau of Education, SMA.

⁸⁵³ *Ibid.*

⁸⁵⁴ Shanghai Political and Economic Summary No. 19, October 5-October 18, 1960, CPR11, 529.

began to establish special “sister” relationships to facilitate the easy transferral of students, faculty, and workers between them. Additionally, spare-time schools—which had already become quite popular—began to expand their academic offerings and became part-time schools in their own right. By the end of the decade, the percentage of students from a working class background in China’s universities had to 48%, while that number was even higher in secondary schools at 75.2%.⁸⁵⁵ These programs were popular enough that factories began to directly invest into new school construction. Although remedial education was quite popular (in some areas, millions of workers were able to pursue formal degrees thanks to the reforms) and served as an effective way of redressing generational inequalities, there were still gaps between rural peasants and urban workers. Factories often received a disproportionate share of the most qualified sent-down intellectuals, who may have played a large role in encouraging workers to pursue remedial education. Nevertheless, remedial education at the very least proved to be a significant step forward in the CCP’s plans to educate the masses.

The Next Generation: The Ascendance of Revolutionary Youth

Much like the party’s initiative to provide remedial education for workers, thereby transforming them into proletarian intellectuals, the idea of raising a generation of revolutionary young intellectuals was not new.⁸⁵⁶ As previous chapters have shown, the CCP always showed a fair amount of concern for ensuring that students, recent graduates, and young professionals were provided with ample opportunities—and that they grew up with the proper revolutionary mindset. After the tensions between the party and the older generation of intellectuals exploded

⁸⁵⁵ Chen, *Chinese Education since 1949*, 83.

⁸⁵⁶ See, for example, Merle Goldman’s discussion of government initiatives to replace older intellectuals with young, ideologically-zealous scholars in the mid-1950s in *Literary Dissent in Communist China*, 118.

in 1957, however, party initiatives to cultivate a new generation were given added weight. Even if the party backed off from the height of the Anti-Rightist Campaign and still relied on the expertise of older scholars, neither the state or the wider intellectual community could return to the cooperative politicking of the earlier 1950s. As such, ensuring that China had an ample pool of academically credentialed, politically loyal youth became a paramount goal of the state.

In some respects, the twin goals of cultivating a new generation of young intellectuals and a new class of proletarian intellectuals cannot be separated. The dramatic expansion of education system, along with exponentially increasing enrollments, meant that non-elite youths had unprecedented opportunities to receive a formal education in the 1950s. Indeed, the state announced at the beginning of the 1958-1959 academic year that enrollments had doubled the numbers from the 1957-1958 academic year.⁸⁵⁷ Nationally, enrollments in higher education jumped from 155,000 total in 1949 to 660,000 by 1959; in secondary schools, from 1,496,000 to 8,520,000; and in primary schools, from 23,683,000 to 86,400,000.⁸⁵⁸ In early January, the Shanghai government released estimates that a full 70% of all young intellectuals would be from a working class background within the decade.⁸⁵⁹ Even for the children of elites, this meant that they were attending school alongside plenty of other youths without the kind of privileged socioeconomic backgrounds they had enjoyed, and therefore they were exposed to a broader range of perspectives than the older generation of intellectuals. Due to shifts in education and cultural policies, young intellectuals grew up with mastery of simplified Mandarin characters, unlike the older generation. Young intellectuals who took the lead in educating peasants and

⁸⁵⁷ Shanghai Political and Economic Summary No. 16, August 17-August 31, 1958, CPR11, 153.

⁸⁵⁸ Chen, *Chinese Education since 1949*, 83.

⁸⁵⁹ Shanghai Political and Economic Summary No. 1, January 1-January 15, 1958, CPR11.

workers were significant conduits through which the Chinese language itself changed.⁸⁶⁰ Much like their parents were heavily involved in activism in the wake of the May Fourth Movement, the next generation of intellectuals sought to bridge the gap between the academy and the masses in the nation's interests. Art students were performing revolutionary plays in front of working-class audiences in urban theaters, medical students would volunteer in rural clinics, all while schools began to develop closer relationships with factories to give students practical work experiences.⁸⁶¹ Although this kind of student-led activism seems hardly new, there was one crucial difference. Previously, elite intellectuals saw themselves as having the unique ability to serve the public through leadership; by 1958, that impulse had been tempered by actual exposure to the working class. Moving forward, learning would go both ways.

Well in advance of the exodus of the older generation of intellectuals to the factories and the villages, educated youths were participating in physical labor in force. An estimate from late April 1958 suggests that 22,000 Shanghai students set to graduate at the end of the spring had plans to go work in rural Hubei and Anhui Provinces.⁸⁶² Considering these estimates were provided by the city, it suggests that all of them voluntarily “enlisted” in the campaign to go to the countryside. In reality, it is doubtful that all students going down to the villages did so willingly—a mix of genuine revolutionary zeal, peer pressure, and institutional encouragement from their schools and the government were all important factors. What is less uncertain is the sheer scale of student participation in physical labor. The national government released a report in mid-July that estimated that 82% of 1958 graduates, nationwide, had gone into productive

⁸⁶⁰ *Peihe gongnong zhanxian de dayuejin, wenhua gongzuo bixu gongkuai zhuishang qu: renmin daibiao qiangdiao zhishifenzi ying jiakuai gaizao bufa cujin wenhua gaochao*, February 9, 1958, RR.

⁸⁶¹ Shanghai Political and Economic Summary No. 3, February 1-February 16, 1958, CPR11, 30.

⁸⁶² Shanghai Political and Economic Summary No. 8, April 16-April 30, 1958, CPR11, 85.

activities after graduation, either in co-ops or factories.⁸⁶³ Even this high figure may be underestimating the total involvement of students with the Great Leap Forward, however. Even those who did not engage in hard labor may have mobilized in other ways. For example, music students began to produce a slew of folk songs praising the leadership of the Communist Party.⁸⁶⁴ It may be easy to write off these patriotic activities as evidence of political pressure from above, but other evidence suggests that a great many students were true believers in the regime. For example, two-thirds of 1958 graduates were either members of the Youth League or full-fledged CCP members.⁸⁶⁵ Considering the career benefits provided by political affiliation with the party, it is certainly possible that cynical careerism may have driven some of these students to apply for membership. But with numbers that large, there is more than enough room for many true believers.

Participating in physical labor went all the way to the top of China's hierarchy of elite universities. At the prestigious Qinghua University, elite students began to work on developing a working-class consciousness even before graduation, through the university's late-1950s policy of "real knives and guns" projects required for a degree. Students in engineering would draw up plans for reservoirs or other public projects, as well as for new machinery and technology. After graduating, Qinghua students then had the opportunity to work directly in realizing their projects through participation in construction labor.⁸⁶⁶ During the spring of 1958, 6500 intellectuals from Qinghua (mainly students) journeyed to the outskirts of Beijing to begin construction on a new reservoir project, hauling earth via wheelbarrows for much of the workday. Others traveled far and wide to assist farmers in harvesting crops. The Qinghua administration also invested in the

⁸⁶³ Wilson, Telegram No. 379, From Peking to Foreign Office, July 15, 1958, CPR11, 221.

⁸⁶⁴ Shanghai Political and Economic Summary No. 16, August 17-August 31, 1958, CPR11, 152.

⁸⁶⁵ Shanghai Political and Economic Summary No. 15, August 1-August 16, 1958, CPR11, 146.

⁸⁶⁶ Andreas, *Rise of the Red Engineers*, 53.

construction of on-campus factories, allowing students to work in industry without having to leave their dorms.⁸⁶⁷ And while the free expression of the older generation had been significantly curtailed during the Anti-Rightist crackdown, Qinghua students still clearly had the ability to engage in spirited debate with each other. The campus newspaper was filled with student-written editorials centered on big questions like what the role of a prestigious institution like Qinghua in an egalitarian society should be, how material goods should be most efficiently allocated under socialism, or what the utility of manual labor to intellectuals was.⁸⁶⁸ The revolutionary mood among students was all-encompassing, from new people's universities to established municipal colleges to elite institutions like Qinghua.

Young intellectuals could also engage with lively debates through the magazine *Chinese Youth* (*zhongguo qingnian*), an official publication from the Youth League. Although the issues published during 1956 and early 1957 probably allowed for a greater range of free expression, debate did not cease in 1958 and 1959. Writers could not criticize party policy directly, but there were a decent number of articles describing the personal effects that government policies may have had on their lives. For example, some letters to the editor described a feeling of discouragement about their abilities or a sense of skepticism about the value of all-out heroic sacrifice. Invariably, these doubts were met with exhortations to continue the struggle; however, this shows that the magazine publishers were more interested in providing encouragement for youth rather than chiding them if they were not fully onboard with the Great Leap Forward.⁸⁶⁹ Overall, however, the message of the magazine had undergone significant shifts from the earlier years of the decade. Whereas triumphalist articles of the early 1950s saw a socialist utopia

⁸⁶⁷ Ibid.

⁸⁶⁸ Ibid., 54.

⁸⁶⁹ Townsend, "Revolutionizing Chinese Youth," 458.

around the corner, articles in 1958 and 1959 were more measured in tone. Without vigorous and continuing action by the masses, China risked turning away from the revolutionary project. The magazine was littered with stories about students and young faculty going to the factories and villages for work, helping to popularize the idea among others. These actions were no longer just necessary for raising one's consciousness; they were necessary for national survival.⁸⁷⁰ It is impossible to fully assess the effect of the magazine on the students of the 1950s, but the popularity of the magazine is indicative of its wide influence. For impressionable youth, devoting all their energy to the continuing project of building socialism would be the crusade of their generation, and a way to realize their status as intellectuals.⁸⁷¹ Unlike the older generation, however, that came of age in the aftermath of the May Fourth Movement, the way forward seemed quite clear to young intellectuals of the 1950s. Differing views on the proper course of national salvation helped further divide the new and old generations of intellectuals.

Heading into 1959, young intellectuals were kept busy with packed schedules. In Shanghai, a report gives a portrait of how university students spent most of their days. Although students were allocated a full 8 hours of sleep, plus an additional 4 for meals and leisure, they were expected to be working for the other 12 hours of the day—both studying as well as doing physical labor.⁸⁷² Things changed in the early months of 1959, however, as an increasing number of older faculty began to join students in the factories and the villages. Students played a significant role in urging their professors to also partake in manual labor. The Shanghai government saw the city's student community as “buzzing with activity” (*rehuo chaotian*),

⁸⁷⁰ Ibid., 458-460.

⁸⁷¹ Ibid., 471-472.

⁸⁷² *Shanghaishi gaodeng jiaoyu ju guanyu “xiangzhe laodong renmin zhishihua, zhishifenzi laodonghua de weida mubiao qianjin” de cailiao*, 1959, B105-7-541-75, Shanghai Municipal Bureau of Education, SMA.

whereas many older intellectuals in the city were “resigned to mediocrity” (*ganji zhongyou*).⁸⁷³ Student activists would still frequently use big-character posters to criticize rightists, and, through association, the entire older generation of professors at their school. One poster in Shanghai asked, accusingly, “the quality [of instruction] has fallen for certain—what is the basis for this?” Other activists offered encouragement for professors who were going to the countryside; one blackboard message celebrated professors “vigorously soaring into the open country” (*ganjin chongtian de ye laoshi*). Other activists simply wrote the common “Go! C’mon!” (*jiayou! jiayou!*) on classroom blackboards.⁸⁷⁴ The Shanghai government observed these instances with approval, hoping that “a democratic equality between professors and students is taking shape, step-by-step.”⁸⁷⁵ The CCP’s dreams of a technically-proficient, ideologically left-wing generation of intellectuals seemed in reach.

Young intellectuals also enjoyed greater opportunities to air their views in public. Ever since 1956, city governments had been using conferences and meetings with representatives from local intellectuals in order to better solicit the views of the scholarly community, and foster state-intellectual cooperation. There were signs that students and recent graduates began to attend these meetings in 1959, however, in a clear sign of institutional recognition for generational change. At a Shanghai conference in early April, a student at Number Two Medical School in Shanghai, Zheng Ping, had the opportunity to attend and talk about his own experiences in the countryside. Zheng said that he, like many students, only half-heartedly participated in previous political campaigns, memorizing slogans without really comprehending

⁸⁷³ *Cong shisheng guanxi kan women guanche zhishifenzi zhengce zhong de wenti*, March 6, 1959, A23-2-429-30, Chinese Communist Municipal Government of Shanghai Education and Hygiene Work Bureau, SMA.

⁸⁷⁴ *Ibid.*

⁸⁷⁵ *Ibid.*

them (*siji yingbei*).⁸⁷⁶ Zheng's speech was in many ways reminiscent of a coming-of-age story; he describes, for example, his ideological growth as he came to realize that many of the teachers, mentors, and professors he had previously admired were rightists. His own views began to shift during his work in the countryside, where his classmates criticized his injection technique while treating the peasantry (apparently, the shots Zheng gave hurt more than they were supposed to). Zheng blamed an "individualist mindset" for his poor technique.⁸⁷⁷ Fresh from the countryside, Zheng offered a forceful defense of the sending-down policies, as well as the CCP's "both red and expert" model for intellectuals. He said that he had passively inherited ideas about "chasing fame and fortune" from his parents and the older generation of scholars, and that hands-on work in the villages had finally forced him to confront these notions.⁸⁷⁸

By the end of the year, it seemed that young intellectuals were in ascendance across China. Some prestigious research institutes drew a majority of their employees from the youth population, for example.⁸⁷⁹ But the changes went even farther than that. At the end of the year, and during the first few months of 1960, the CCP began to encourage students participating in physical labor to return to their places of origin (if they were in the countryside). The expansion of the education—most notably, the shift from spare-time schools to part-time schools for the working class, as discussed in the previous section—meant that more and more teachers were required. Students previously engaged in manual labor made for a natural pool of new teachers. Even those staying in the countryside might shift from agricultural production to teaching in a rural school.⁸⁸⁰ Students still enrolled in universities saw education as a career path with decent

⁸⁷⁶ *Xiang gongren jieji xuexi, lizhi zuo youhong youzhuan de gongren jiejie zhishifenzi—Shanghai dier yi xueyuan xuesheng zheng ping zai shanghai shi dazhong xuesheng dushu, laodong, sixiang san yuejin dahui shang de fayan gao*, April 5, 1959, C21-1-697-113, Chinese Communist Youth League Shanghai Municipal Committee, SMA.

⁸⁷⁷ *Ibid.*

⁸⁷⁸ *Ibid.*

⁸⁷⁹ *Qingnian zhishifenzi nuli de fangxiang: Zhou Li weiyuan de fayan*, May 9, 1959, RR.

⁸⁸⁰ Shanghai Political and Economic Summary No. 3, January 16-January 31, 1960, CPR11, 474.

prospects; despite the state's push to increase the population's scientific literacy, only 21% of the graduating class of 1960 had engineering degrees, and a full third of engineers instead went on to become teachers instead.⁸⁸¹ Even despite the intensity of the Great Leap Forward and the resulting famine, enrollment increases continued every year, ranging from 10% to 20% per year during the end of the decade across all levels of educational institutions. The state had achieved near-universal primary school enrollment for children once they turned 7.⁸⁸² The education system expanded in part by feeding on itself, transitioning recent graduates into teaching roles. A new generation of red experts would hopefully, in the state's view, produce more red experts.

Young intellectuals were the CCP's best hope for red experts; older intellectuals seemed to lack the ability for full transformation, as the events of 1957 had showed. Moreover, a decade's worth of seismic shifts in education policy had produced a full-fledged mass education system, with the children of workers forming the majority of students in both primary and secondary schools. Even if universities had not quite caught up, they could be expected to in the coming years. Students made up the first wave of sent-down intellectuals in order to fully inculcate revolutionary values in the new generation; although certainly not all became committed true believers over night, there is some evidence that intellectual youths were genuinely affected by their experiences in the countryside and the factories—much like their professors had been during Land Reform. They did not stay in their new places of work indefinitely, however; continuing enrollment increases and other shifts (like the movement to transform spare-time schools for workers into part-time schools) meant that the demand for new teachers was higher than ever before. Recent graduates made for ideal candidates for teaching jobs. With both impeccable academic and ideological credentials, young intellectuals could be

⁸⁸¹ Shanghai Political and Economic Summary No. 16, August 15-August 29, 1960, CPR11, 518.

⁸⁸² Shanghai Political and Economic Summary No. 14, July 16-July 31, 1960, CPR11, 512.

counted on to continue to push forward the CCP's efforts to produce genuine red experts. As such, students inherited a revolutionary system from a decade of politicking between older intellectuals and the party-state. More than that, however, they made it their own. Young intellectuals were filling prestigious research positions, attending conferences alongside their older colleagues, and making up the bulk of the education workforce by the end of the decade.

Conclusion

The first decade of the People's Republic's existence ended with the question of how intellectuals would fit into the new society still unanswered. In recognizing that its previous policies were not sustainable, the state provided new answers that would continue to reshape the lives of intellectuals heading into the next decade. The Anti-Rightist backlash gradually lost strength. Only a small percentage of intellectuals were targeted as rightists; even then, only a small percentage of these "rightists" were punished severely. Even those who lost jobs might regain them at a later date. Although the Anti-Rightist Campaign was somewhat limited in scope, it unraveled the close relationship between the state and (older) intellectuals. Moving forward, the CCP began to question whether its previous policies promoting thought rectification were all that effective. More sweeping alternatives to thought reform emerged in 1958 and 1959, with intellectuals being sent to the factories or the countryside for manual labor alongside the working class. In addition, the state expanded its efforts to offer remedial education programs to workers and peasants. Some universities began waiving exam requirements for admission if an applicant was a worker or a peasant, for example. The popular spare-time schools transformed into part-time schools, expanding curricula and offering a path to a formal education. As such, the state sought to have intellectuals work while cultivating the intellect of workers. These policies were

designed to promote both ideologically and academically proficient intellectuals. But the most important change was the ascendance of a new generation of young intellectuals, inculcated with the party's message and its values during their formative years. Students tended to make up the bulk of the sent-down intellectual population until the early months of 1959, after which they gradually returned to their places of origin. A decade's worth of education policy shifts—in addition to recent changes—meant that students' skills were in higher demand than ever before. As young intellectuals began to replace the older generation as teachers, engineers, or prestigious researchers, the CCP hoped that this new generation of red experts might reproduce itself.

The 1958 and 1959 years thus represented a period of significant change—alongside important continuities. Previous chapters have shown that, even as intellectuals and the state engaged in a series of political negotiations regarding the former's status and professional treatment, the cadre class began to grow resentful of what they saw as institutional privilege for the scholarly community. Although the state's recalculation in the form of the Anti-Rightist Campaign was an attempt, in part, to alleviate the frustrations of the cadres, the partial nature of the campaign meant that the full range of cadre concerns went unanswered. The 1958-1959 years, with reports of even fired rightists getting their jobs back, meant that cadre frustrations seemed to have little lasting political influence. To the extent that the state developed new policies with the cadres in mind, it came in the form of remedial education programs, which sometimes but not exclusively benefitted cadres (as well as their offspring)—by offering the promise of becoming an “intellectual.” The message of the end of the decade was clear: institutional favoring of intellectuals was here to stay. That did not mean that intellectuals themselves experienced no change, however. A generational gap had slowly been growing over the previous years, with younger intellectuals seemingly showing greater willingness to embrace

the Communist Party and its policies than older scholars. The gap widened dramatically in 1958 and 1959, with some student activists beginning to feel more comfortable levying criticism at the professoriate and urging them to participate in manual labor.

The following year, the CCP declared victory in its ten-year endeavor to transform the intellectuals. At a June 1, 1960 meeting of the National People's Congress, speakers triumphantly declared that the era of the bourgeois, exploitative intellectual had finally come to a close. The party's decade-long efforts had culminated in the "proletarianization" of the intellectual class, while offering unprecedented opportunities for education among the working classes.⁸⁸³ In some respects, this celebratory mood was appropriate. PRC politics had been transformative, producing changes that empowered both students and workers while at least exposing older intellectuals to (if not always convincing them of) alternative perspectives. However, this study has instead offered a different model for how intellectuals, the state, and its cadres engaged in politicking during the PRC's first decade. Intellectual support for the CCP was crucial in its formative early years; scholars were more supportive of the Korean War than the masses, for example. In return, the CCP found it necessary to design policies to reward intellectuals and respond to their concerns. This close cooperation continued despite the CCP takeover of the school system, although such moves introduced a third actor: low-level cadres, who were often more hostile to intellectuals than national political figures. Cadre resentment turned to active resistance when the state began to disproportionately favor intellectuals during the reforms of 1956. Even though the Anti-Rightist Campaign reflected cadre hostility, the crackdown did not go as far as cadres would have liked. And by the end of the decade, the

⁸⁸³ Lin Feng, *Da gao wenhua geming, shixian gongnong qunzhong zhishihua, zhishifenzi laodonghua—yi jiu liu ling nian liuyue yiri zai quanguo jiaoyu he wenhua, weisheng, tiyu, xinwen fangmian shehuizhuyi jianshe xianjin danwei he xianjin gongzuozhe daibiao dahui shang de baogao*, June 2, 1960, RR.

intellectual community and the state remained as close as before—even if the demographic profile of the intellectual class had changed. The end of the decade was not a moment of triumph for the CCP and its intellectual policies, but rather a testament to the tense politicking between various factions of intellectuals and party officials that defined the 1950s.

CONCLUSION

The People's Republic exited its first decade of existence at the height of a brewing catastrophe. The Great Leap Forward had led to severe famine in the countryside, with millions having perished by 1960 (the exact number being debated, although estimates generally range from 20 to 45 million). The CCP could not ignore the deadly failure of the Great Leap for long, and sought to swiftly correct course in the early 1960s. Mao Zedong, arguing that the failure of the Great Leap was due to shoddy investigations during the planning phase, declared 1961 to be the year of "investigative research." Accordingly, the State Planning Commission, headed by Li Fuchun, was tasked with recruiting prominent Chinese economists to staff a task force to recommend various economic policy shifts that could correct the Great Leap Forward and prevent another round of famines in the future. The task force of economists ultimately produced a report on the Great Leap failure several hundred pages' long, and recommended a variety of policy changes. Although few economists were willing to attack the fundamental character of the Chinese economy, there was some degree of tolerance for more radical critiques. One task force member, Sun Yefang, argued that the statistical methods China used for assessing material growth were fundamentally flawed.⁸⁸⁴

Although the task force's recommendations were not fully implemented until after Mao's death in 1976, this episode is a testament to both the changes and continuities that defined the 1950s. On one hand, intellectuals had only a partial ability to influence state matters—as had been the case for much of the previous decade. It seems clear that high-ranking party officials took the economists' report seriously, although there was little political will to actually try to implement anything. As such, intellectuals had about the same amount of political influence as

⁸⁸⁴ The material in this section was drawn from Nina Halpern's chapter "Economists and Economic Policy-Making in the Early 1960s," in *China's Intellectuals and the State*, 45-63.

they had over the course of the 1950s; they had the opportunity and freedom to criticize state policy, but there were few guarantees that the state would listen to them. On the other hand, the fact that intellectuals were able to at least attempt to set the policy agenda represented a remarkable shift from the pre-liberation years, where party officials largely drew up policies on their own. To the extent that intellectuals were able to partake in policymaking, it was usually to offer their endorsements of CCP imperatives, such as land redistribution (see Chapter 1). Intellectuals had thus been able to assert themselves and curry a greater degree of influence in the political establishment than they had at the beginning of the 1950s. Even if political representatives had declared that 1960 represented the end of the “bourgeois intellectual,” it was clear that influence went both ways. The party’s attempts to transform intellectuals had thus opened the doors for intellectuals to try and transform the party. Even if their attempts at enacting institutional changes were not ultimately successful in the 1960s, they would get their chance again a decade later.

However, changes underway during the 1950s under the surface would continue to reshape Chinese education, politics, and society for decades. The CCP made little secret of its preference for young intellectuals, who had little memory of China’s pre-revolutionary past and who received their formal education largely after the formation of the PRC. The state’s efforts to empower the new generation created a rift within the intellectual community between younger and older scholars, whose interests and worldviews were sometimes in conflict. I do not wish to attribute the widening of the generational gap to any nefarious “divide-and-conquer” strategy from the CCP. The logic of education expansion simply meant that the demand for a new generation of intellectuals was extremely high, and it was clear that young intellectuals had more natural affinity for the CCP’s agenda than their older counterparts. With declining levels of trust

in the party on the part of older intellectuals, they began to look toward their younger colleagues with suspicion. Students and younger faculty were often allies in extending the reach of the state on campus, and they were often behind accusations of being “rightists” or “anti-party” that were levelled at older intellectuals during the Anti-Rightist Campaign. Additionally, political efforts to expand education access to the working class meant that the intellectuals who came of age in the 1950s had very different socioeconomic experiences from older intellectuals. No matter the CCP’s attentions, its education policies in the 1950s exposed clear generational fault lines.

Reimagining Intellectual-State Cooperation

Intellectuals’ cooperation with various Chinese states extends back by a good many centuries. Service in the imperial-era bureaucracy was one of the defining characteristics of intellectual life in China, until the twentieth century. However, the linkages between the bureaucracy and the intellectual class gradually eroded in the second half of the nineteenth century, until they were eliminated entirely at the dawn of the twentieth. One way of understanding intellectuals’ class interests in the 1900s, across multiple different political circumstances, is their push to recreate the ties between the scholarly community and the organs of governance that had existed previously. During the 1920s, many intellectuals flocked to Guangzhou to assist the Guomindang as it prepared to mount a campaign to reunify China. After the GMD had successfully taken power, a good number of intellectuals then moved to Nanjing to assist the new government.⁸⁸⁵ However, the GMD regime embraced a strategy of severe suppression in the 1940s, imprisoning or even executing intellectuals who had expressed

⁸⁸⁵ John Fitzgerald’s *Awakening China* and Lloyd Eastman’s *The Abortive Revolution* touch on intellectual support for the Guomindang in the 1920s and 1930s, respectively.

sympathy for the Communists. As such, intellectuals soured on the GMD and the prospects for future collaboration with the Nanjing government.

All that changed with the Communist victory in late 1949. Intellectuals generally found the new regime amenable to their views and interests, and assisted the state in carrying out its earliest agrarian collectivization drives in 1950 and 1951. In the early years, the CCP sought to develop close ties with prominent intellectuals, inviting them into the inner political circles of Beijing and allowing them significant influence in the new government.⁸⁸⁶ However, the new government's care for intellectuals went beyond a small number of famous, "high-level" intellectuals. One of the most pressing urban issues Beijing faced in 1950 and 1951 was the unemployment crisis, necessitating the formation of new work assignment programs that linked up city dwellers with suitable jobs. Although intellectuals were not necessarily harder hit, collectively, by the unemployment crisis, the CCP went further in helping them by setting up specific municipal bureaus to assist intellectuals find jobs. Those who were not assigned to academia instead found good jobs as engineers, technicians, medical professionals, or producers of culture. In general, a spirit of cooperation existed between intellectuals and the state in the early 1950s, which may explain, in part, why intellectuals accepted the CCP's takeover of the education system and its new policies on thought reform. Although intellectuals could get away with neglecting political study or refusing to write a "confession" in theory, few did. By the end of 1952, the state had sweeping control over China's schools—a feat that had been accomplished in part thanks to the acquiescence of the intellectuals.

When intellectuals found themselves unsatisfied with their new arrangements—for example, being dissatisfied over wages, housing, or the amount of "power" they had in their jobs

⁸⁸⁶ See U, "Dangerous Privilege."

relative to their responsibilities—they turned to the cooperative relationship they had built with the CCP in order to address these problems. From 1953 to 1955, intellectuals began to voice their misgivings about their working and living environments to party officials, sometimes through group meetings or occasionally through the writing of letters to municipal (or even national) figures. Beijing was relatively sympathetic to intellectuals at this juncture, and often sent representatives to various schools and universities around the nation to get a better sense of the problems intellectuals were facing. When the national government responded to intellectuals concerns in 1956, it made efforts to comprehensively address intellectuals' needs, from housing to wages to transportation. In addition, the state went a step further by launching new initiatives aimed at increasing available materials at libraries and museums, as well as expanding funds for research equipment and laboratory space. The party even made efforts to remove one of the main barriers between intellectuals and the state in the form of actual party membership. From late 1955 onward, many intellectuals were given the opportunity to apply for CCP membership, thus becoming “establishment intellectuals.”⁸⁸⁷ The reforms from the middle of the decade suggest that both intellectuals and the state continued to build on the cooperative relationship begun during the early 1950s, and that intellectuals were able to strategically utilize this relationship in order to successfully advance their interests.

Cooperation did not mean the same thing as fully reconstructing the intellectual-state ties from the imperial era, however—a reality that became apparent in 1957, when the state enacted a partial crackdown on intellectuals during the Anti-Rightist Campaign. Among intellectuals, there was a sense that the 1956 reforms had only partially addressed their issues (and they were

⁸⁸⁷ The topic of “establishment intellectuals” is covered in Goldman et. al.’s edited volume *China’s Intellectuals and the State*, Hamrin and Cheek’s edited volume *China’s Establishment Intellectuals*, as well as Cheek, *The Intellectual in Modern Chinese History*, 130-147.

generally correct; writers and artists, for example, had seen few improvements in their situations). To encourage the CCP to continue pushing forward with the reforms, intellectuals relied on the same strategies they had used previously: petitioning government officials, raising issues in meetings, and even writing articles or editorials in public media thanks to the liberalization of expression. Although some intellectuals used this opportunity to directly challenge the CCP's legitimacy to rule, it is my sense that this represented a small sliver of the total population of intellectuals. Most were more broadly concerned with solidifying the gains of 1956. The Anti-Rightist crackdown only targeted a small fraction of intellectuals as "rightists," accordingly, although even then it is clear that the state's criteria for determining who was a "rightist" were arbitrary and unreasonable. For the majority of intellectuals, there were actually signs that the state was making efforts to continue pushing forward with the 1956 reforms; in particular, regarding research investments and access to party membership. The end of the decade brought another sign that cooperation had its limits, as the state launched new initiatives to have intellectuals participate in hard labor in the villages or the factories. Intellectuals had thus made a good degree of progress at reforging the state-scholar linkages of the imperial era, but limits to those successes existed—a pattern that continued into the 1960s.

In truth, the project of building the modern Chinese state was a project that had been underway for nearly a century and a half, extending back into the Qing years and encompassing a wide variety of governments—Qing, warlord, Guomindang, and finally Communist. The success of the Communists was due, at least in part, to the party-state's successful management of its relationship with the intellectual class. The Communist Party rejected the full utilization of intellectuals as scholar-bureaucrats as seen in the early Qing, while still looking after their livelihoods, as the Qing did not after the elimination of the civil service exams. The CCP also

held back from the scale of repression the GMD had used to cajole intellectuals in the 1940s. Considering the various attempts at restructuring the Chinese state, some scholars have suggested that China suffered from “state involution” in the early twentieth century, where expenditures on new bureaus were greater than new revenues collected.⁸⁸⁸ Although discussions of state involution have usually focused on rural China, a similar question could be posed regarding urban China: did the massive state investments into education produce any tangible benefits? Although this study has not focused on the question of revenues, I suggest that the CCP helped ensure its longevity through its policies on education and intellectuals. The party-state had managed to establish a system that could continue to employ intellectuals, all while ushering in social change by expanding access to education. Intellectuals loyal to the regime could in turn spread its message to large incoming numbers of young students. Intellectuals managed to get quite a lot in return, to be sure, although the price of pro-intellectual reforms was participation in a system that undergirded the new regime.

The Survival of Institutional Inequalities

Despite the CCP’s roots as a relatively small movement for radical, educated youth, the path to power necessitated a recalculation in its appeal. During the late 1920s and 1930s, the CCP shifted toward representing the interests of peasant populists rather than young, intellectual leftists. As such, Chinese Communism diverged sharply from the Soviet model and instead attempted to present itself as the successor to previous peasant uprisings, such as the mid-

⁸⁸⁸ Huang introduces the concept of “involution” to refer to agricultural production in *The Peasant Economy and Social Change in North China* and *The Peasant Family and Rural Development in the Yangzi Delta, 1350-1988*; Duara coins the term “state involution” in *Culture, Power, and the State*; Li offers commentary in *Village China under Socialism and Reform*.

nineteenth century Taiping Rebellion.⁸⁸⁹ The CCP recruited heavily from poor, war-ravaged villages in the Chinese north during World War II, with these recruits becoming the backbone of the party's cadre corps after the revolution. During the waning years of the civil war with the Guomindang, the CCP faced new challenges as a result of its battlefield victories: holding and commanding China's large, coastal cities. Rural cadres struggled with urban administration, to the point that the CCP initially had to rely on former Guomindang officials to administer urban areas. Alternatively, the PLA would manage some cities as a sort of military occupation government. Over time, however, the new party-state gradually made inroads into denting the power of the urban elite. Corporations were taken over, while the state managed capital. Unlike private businesses, however, the "other" urban elite—the intellectuals—proved far more problematic for the CCP's egalitarian aims. Knowledge capital could not be so easily redistributed; even if the schools could be placed under CCP control and limits placed on the free expression of intellectuals, their work and research was still critical to the practical aims of the state. As such, the question of intellectuals' place in the new society necessarily involved a stalling out of the redistributionist project—something the cadres were well aware of, and rebelled against.

The first interactions between cadres and intellectuals occurred as a result of the party's moves to assert control of the education system in 1952, alongside the Thought Reform Campaign. By allying with pro-CCP elements within schools and universities, the party gradually managed to install its cadres in administrative positions across China's academic system. At first, cadres' new jobs involved simply centralizing previous practices. Intellectuals and students had already been engaging in reformative self-study; however, these sessions would

⁸⁸⁹ For an account of the CCP's myth-making project, particularly with relationship to the 1930s, see Shuyun Sun, *The Long March: The True History of Communist China's Founding Myth* (New York: Doubleday, 2006).

now be directed by cadres, who in turn required intellectuals to submit “confessions” as a part of the Thought Reform Campaign detailing their political histories, ideological positions, and potential areas for future improvement. The cadres also used study sessions as opportunities to vent their class grievances against the intellectuals. The national government received multiple reports (and complaints from intellectuals) about overly harsh treatment and criticism from the cadres. The central government even had to issue new instructions during the second half of 1952 reprimanding cadres for their treatment of intellectuals, and expressly prohibited the arrest of intellectuals for any right-leaning beliefs or the use of violence as punishment. My study sees these tensions as the logical outcome of the CCP system. It could not afford to alienate the intellectuals, but it had nevertheless empowered those who saw intellectuals as clear social “haves” in contrast to their own social upbringings. Avoiding a culture clash was impossible.

Nonetheless, the CCP decided to avoid addressing the issue for much of 1953 and 1954. Cadres and intellectuals’ working relationships, however, continued to deteriorate. The central government only began to address the problem in early 1955, and even then it did so cautiously. The government’s plan was to have intellectuals and cadres participate jointly in a new political campaign, focused on promoting Marxist materialism. Having both intellectuals and cadres participate as equals yielded few tangible results, however, and the pressure to provide real reform for the intellectuals only mounted on the central government. In 1956, the central government instructed its cadres to assist in improving the livelihoods of intellectuals. From a cadre perspective, intellectuals’ concerns amounted to demands for unequal privilege from a class whose collective status had never truly been brought down to size. Cadres’ reaction was to be expected: they resisted the new policies where possible. Refusing to carry out the central

government's new reform initiatives was the best way for the rank-and-file to send a message to Beijing that its agenda for intellectuals was unacceptable to them.

The Anti-Rightist Campaign was as much a concession to the cadres as it was a response to intellectual overreach. But even if cadres may have supported a hypothetical Anti-Rightist Campaign, they were less than enthusiastic about the actual outcomes. Relatively few intellectuals were actually targeted, and punishments were usually relatively benign. The party-state followed up with a campaign to have intellectuals participate in hard labor, but that did little to address the status of the intellectuals as cultural elites. The most significant moves the central government made to address cadres' continuing concerns in the 1950s was its policies on encouraging workers, peasants, as well as working-class children to go to school and earn formal degrees. Even if cadres themselves might never become elites in their own right, their children had new opportunities to upend a self-perpetuating system of class privilege. By the end of the decade, the central government had shown a general unwillingness to address issues of inequality related to intellectuals. For low-ranking cadres, the message was clear: the path to advancement was not through an equalization of status with the intellectuals, but through an inter-class merging effort.

The CCP began to popularize its vision of future generations of intellectuals as “red experts” toward the end of the 1950s. For cadres and intellectuals on the ground, realizing these aims was the story of class convergence, described adeptly by Joel Andreas.⁸⁹⁰ Cadres' children would make up the backbone of the future class of intellectuals, thus ensuring the proper “redness” of the next generation. Intellectuals would in turn provide the necessary instruction to cadres' children, ensuring their expertise. Andreas describes this process, which played out

⁸⁹⁰ See *Rise of the Red Engineers*, especially 61-83.

during the late 1950s and the 1960s, leading up to the Cultural Revolution, as the convergence between cultural elites (the intellectuals) and political elites (the cadres). I see this process—the natural outcome of the political drama of the 1950s—as a tacit acknowledgement of the limits of egalitarianism under the CCP. Even if the Communist government had made strides in addressing landholding and gender inequalities, the statebuilding project stopped well short of a truly egalitarian, classless utopia. Indeed, the CCP institutionalized urban-rural inequalities through the advent of the *hukou* (household registration) system, which heavily restricted intranational migration from the villages to the cities—all while the new government’s tax regime involved a heavily extractive flow of material from rural China to urban areas.⁸⁹¹ A decade on from its military victory over the Guomindang, the Communist Party had solidified its position at the apex of Chinese politics—at the cost of affirming institutional inequality.

The Beginnings of Intergenerational Enmity

The CCP did not, of course, introduce the idea of a generational divide into the ranks of the intellectuals. However, the evolution of intellectuals and intellectual policies during the 1950s had enormous implications for a gradual social change underway since the beginning of the century. Under the old Confucian model of educational attainment, students’ jobs were to be students and students only. Learning, not politics, was the sole priority of the young, aspiring Chinese scholars of yesteryear. Only after students received their degrees and entered the formal organs of government would they finally have an opportunity to shape politics. This model came undone in the early twentieth century with the collapse of the civil service examinations, and young intellectuals responded in kind. In a series of demonstrations beginning on May 4, 1919,

⁸⁹¹ Jeremy Wallace describes rural material extraction and the *hukou* system in *Cities and Stability*, especially 72-79.

students from Beijing University flooded the streets of the capital to protest Japanese seizure of the Shandong Peninsula (as well as the ratification of these moves at Versailles). The demonstrations morphed into a much larger movement, however, where students would give impromptu street lectures calling for mass action against the corrupt warlord government of the city. Even after the resulting “May Fourth Movement” came winding down in the capital, students continued to pursue political activism and radicalism. The May Fourth Movement thus represented a break with the past; students had now become associated with a certain brand of political action, and they had far more options—even expectations—for speaking out than they had during the long imperial era.⁸⁹² Outside the capital, some young intellectuals continued to press forward, organizing strikes, publishing radical critiques in student-run magazines, and creating secret societies.⁸⁹³

Therefore, the CCP inherited social circumstances that were already in flux. Predictably, the party-state sought to centralize and control the means of discourse among students, replacing previous campus magazines with an umbrella publication known as *Chinese Youth*. In addition, the party-state sought to mobilize students and young intellectuals via the creation of the Youth League.⁸⁹⁴ Events in the early years of the People’s Republic suggested that students who came of age in the 1950s had a good deal of affinity for their new government. Students were often the backbone of public support for intervention in the Korean War, and a good number were willing to back up their words with action by enlisting in the military. Although students who enlisted were only rarely deployed to the front lines, serving in Korea was still hazardous even to

⁸⁹² Fabio Lanza describes how the May Fourth Movement led to a readjustment of the social marker of “student” in “Of Chronology, Failure, and Fidelity: When did the May Fourth Movement End?” *Twentieth-Century China* 38, no. 1 (January 2013): 53-70.

⁸⁹³ See Rahav, *The Rise of Political Intellectuals in Modern China*.

⁸⁹⁴ Townsend, “Revolutionizing Chinese Youth.”

logistics officers. Older intellectuals, by contrast, tended not to speak out against the war to any significant extent but were much more likely than students to “admire America” (*chongmei*). Even the intellectuals who had been active politically in the May Fourth period were now well into middle age and more often politically liberal than radical, and as such saw more in the US system to emulate than the new generation of intellectuals. The CCP’s connection with educated youth proved critical to the success of its takeover of education; government instructions to cadres often instructed them to form alliances with student activists as well as local Youth League chapters in order to accomplish their objectives. Although older intellectuals did not resist the CCP takeover of their schools, they came to have a tense relationship with their new administrators. From 1950-1952, the most pressing issues of the new era found older and younger intellectuals more politically divided than previously.

During the middle years of the decade, when older intellectuals began to employ new strategies of political engagement, they focused on issues pertaining to their generation. Many of the primary concerns raised by intellectuals were less relevant for students: wages, a lack of career advancement opportunities, support for research projects, or the ability of (explicitly) older intellectuals to apply for CCP membership. If anything, some of the complaints leveled by older intellectuals included veiled criticism of the newer generation. For example, professors might complain about the explosion of class sizes, whereas some criticized the current batch of students for not offering them due respect and being largely unmotivated. Due to the popularization of education, schools and universities were crowded with the kinds of youth who might have never had the opportunity to receive an education until the CCP’s reforms. In contrast, older, established intellectuals usually tended to come from a well-off socioeconomic background. Even if intellectuals’ concerns did not necessarily address the needs of younger

scholars and students, the new generation did not speak out or oppose the proposed reforms. As such, the intellectual class presented itself as, largely, a unified front in the middle of the decade. Intellectual solidarity thus forced the party-state to the negotiating table. Much like the concerns intellectuals raised, however, the government's reforms in 1956 and the first half of 1957 largely benefitted older intellectuals.

Some of the tensions brewing between generations of intellectuals exploded during the Anti-Rightist Campaign. Sometimes, savvy students used accusations of being a "rightist" to target professors who they felt had wronged them, while junior faculty accused older colleagues they saw as impediments to their own careers.⁸⁹⁵ Students began to voice concerns about the political "conservatism" of their teachers and professors, and often wrote messages offering support for sending older faculty to the countryside as a means of continuing ideological reform. From a student perspective, they had been participating in hard labor long before the party-state decided to extend the policy to include older intellectuals—what did their instructors have to complain about? As the "down to the countryside and up to the mountains" campaign began to wind down, the CCP doubled down on its policies of encouraging social change within the intellectual class. Entrance standards to universities were waived based on socioeconomic background, allowing more working-class children to successfully enroll in a college degree program. As the education system began to expand, the CCP was reliant on the new generation of intellectuals to staff the new schools. Given their political loyalism to the CCP, as well as their zeal, they could be counted on to inculcate the regime's values in the generation following them as well. Although fault lines had existed between generations of intellectuals for some time, the 1950s saw the actual splitting of intellectual solidarity along age lines.

⁸⁹⁵ Yue Daiyun describes this very thing happening to her in *To the Storm*, 29-32.

Toward and Beyond the Cultural Revolution

Statebuilding in the 1950s was a collaborative process, involving input from intellectuals, cadres, and the party leadership. Naturally, any kind of large-scale politicking would produce a system of unsustainable compromises and internal contradictions. Although the political drama surrounding intellectuals had begun to die down by the early 1960s, it emerged again with a vengeance in the second half of the 1960s with the onset of the Cultural Revolution. By then, however, one key feature of the 1950s had disappeared: the general spirit of solidarity among the intellectuals. Whereas scholars had generally put up a united front during the 1950s, strengthening their negotiating position with the party-state, intellectuals were divided sharply by age and class by the time of the Cultural Revolution. Older intellectuals and their overseeing cadres had entered into a marriage of convenience, Andreas has shown, fashioning a new class of political-cultural elites that had become entrenched by the late 1960s.⁸⁹⁶ Students and younger scholars, meanwhile, had very different political worldviews and assumptions than the older generations. Whereas the 1950s features foreshadowings of the kind of revolutionary zeal that animated left-wing, educated youths, the Cultural Revolution channeled these frustrations into a cataclysmic mass movement that reshaped modern China.

The standard understanding of the Cultural Revolution in the West has been articulated best by Roderick MacFarquhar and Michael Schoenhals' *Mao's Last Revolution*: an account that highlights the all-too-familiar chaos of the Cultural Revolution—radicalized students beating their professors, attacking anyone suspected of being a “rightist,” overthrowing local governments, or smashing relics from China's past.⁸⁹⁷ Although not incorrect, this portrayal of

⁸⁹⁶ Andreas, *Rise of the Red Engineers*, 87-130.

⁸⁹⁷ See MacFarquhar and Michael Schoenhals, *Mao's Last Revolution* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2006).

the Cultural Revolution is incomplete and obscures its historical roots. As Elizabeth Perry and Li Xun have shown, radical students (known as Red Guards) sought to build a real alliance between the intellectuals and the working class, with Red Guards overthrowing local CCP bureaus in the interest of placing workers themselves in charge. Red Guards may have unleashed chaos, but they did have quantifiable political goals and had a genuine belief in the broader project of building socialism.⁸⁹⁸ Yiching Wu has gone further, suggesting that the Cultural Revolution represented an earnest outpouring of public anxieties over the bureaucratization of the revolutionary state. Rebel students sought to seize on the potentialities offered by ideological Maoism, Wu argues, in the face of an increasingly hierarchical, stratified political system. Radical youths perceived that China's communist revolution was on the brink of failure by the late 1960s, and that only concerted action could revive the governing rationale of the CCP.⁸⁹⁹ Common to these more nuanced takes on the Cultural Revolution is the sincere belief among young intellectuals was that they were doing whatever it took to save socialism in China. My own study has traced how intellectual youths inherited that mission through the politics of the 1950s.

In a political sense, the Cultural Revolution may have come to an end by the end of the decade; party officials, especially Mao, were no longer calling on radical activists to overthrow local organs of CCP governance. The military had managed to quell the most severe outbreaks of unrest, and the unruliest Red Guards had been exiled to the countryside to temper them. For the intellectuals who had fully embraced the Cultural Revolution, however, the movement did not end—it simply morphed. Former Red Guards returning from the countryside played significant

⁸⁹⁸ See Perry and Li Xun, *Proletarian Power: Shanghai in the Cultural Revolution* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1997), especially 7-29.

⁸⁹⁹ See Yiching Wu, *The Cultural Revolution at the Margins: Chinese Socialism in Crisis* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2014).

roles in the Democracy Wall movement in the late 1970s, placing up big-character posters on a wall on Beijing University's campus calling for elections, formal human rights, and a series of liberalizing reforms.⁹⁰⁰ Although the leadership that took power after Mao's death probably had little intention of giving in to intellectuals' demands for democracy, the broader reformist energy of intellectual activists in the 1980s served the state's modernizing efforts—for a time. The unsustainability of the intellectual-state cooperation in the 1980s came to a head in the summer months of 1989, when students from across China journeyed to Tiananmen Square in the interests of promoting further reforms.⁹⁰¹ The Tiananmen Square protests were almost exactly alike the protests that spawned the Cultural Revolution, even down to the venue—except for one crucial difference. Rather than embracing the students' desires for reform, as Mao had (perhaps to a fault), the CCP instead closed its doors and sent in the military. For the first time in the history of the PRC, the state had rejected any political engagement with its intellectuals. The prospects for future intellectual-state cooperation—a defining trait of the first four decades of PRC history—were crushed beneath the treads of PLA tanks.

After 1989, many traditional aspects of intellectual life in China were reevaluated. The post-Mao party-state increasingly turned away from employing intellectuals as advisers or bureaucrats, thus perhaps severing the idea of a “public scholar” that has been central to the meaning of what it means to be a Chinese intellectual for so long. Modern, educated Chinese have sometimes begun to question whether the label of “intellectual” still applies; some have begun instead preferring the term “scholar” (*xuezhe*), for example. Intellectuals remain divided

⁹⁰⁰ Merle Goldman describes the evolution from Cultural Revolution activists to democracy activists in *From Comrade to Citizen: The Struggle for Political Rights in China* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2005), especially 25-50.

⁹⁰¹ Although many Tiananmen Square activists were interested in Western-style democracy, others were interested in practical livelihood improvements—much like their forebears in 1956. See Craig Calhoun, *Neither Gods nor Emperors: Students and the Struggle for Democracy in China* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994).

among ideological lines. Some intellectuals have begun criticizing the CCP's embrace of economic neoliberalism, suggesting that the government has abandoned even the good parts of Maoism. Others continue to push for liberal democratic rights, along the lines of students who participated in the Democracy Wall movement or the Tiananmen Square protests. Others have even begun to embrace a form of Chinese nationalism, advocating for a revival of Chinese militancy and aggressiveness on the international stage. Aggrieved ethnonationalism from some educated Chinese has provided an academic justification for the assertiveness of Xi Jinping's government.⁹⁰² Intellectuals are hardly a monolith in contemporary China, although the extent to which they engage the modern Chinese state has been significantly curtailed.

But if this study is any indication, Chinese intellectuals have been adept at finding new methods of political engagement in a variety of different circumstances. Intellectuals have both weathered—or even embraced—the advent of the Maoist state, the Cultural Revolution, the modernizing reforms of the 1980s, and the post-Tiananmen crackdown. The contemporary Chinese state faces its fair share of problems, such as tremendous material inequality, ethnic tensions between Han and non-Han peoples, as well as articulating China's place in the world. Contemporary Chinese intellectuals express a wide array of opinions, often in conflict with each other, on how best to deal with the issues of the present. As has always been the case, the China of the present is ripe with internal contradictions that promise future instability. We are waiting to see how the current crop of intellectuals will rise to the occasion.

⁹⁰² The material in this section was drawn from Cheek, *The Intellectual in Modern Chinese History*, 262-314.

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