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Constructing A New Citizen: The Use of Model Workers in 'New China' 1949-1965.

Presented to the University of Kent School of History
In fulfilment of the requirements for the Degree of Doctor
of Philosophy.

2016.

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Supervised by Professor David Welch.

Abstract.

Having suffered a 'century of humiliation,' a ruinous war with Japan and a highly divisive civil war, China was looking for answers to the problems that had plagued it prior to the Revolution. Politicians, philosophers and film directors of the 1940s had played a key role in identifying exactly what the social problems facing China were. Following the Revolution in 1949 the newly victorious Communist Party of China would show the country what the solutions were.

Whilst Mao's desire to reconstruct Chinese culture has been well documented, less attention has been given to the way in which propaganda was used in a highly integrated way to present this message to the people through a variety of different mediums. This thesis focuses on the use of specific 'Model Workers' to identify and examine the way in which poster propaganda and the cinema were used to further the Party's goals of national unity, cultural reform and the construction of a socialist state prior to the start of the Cultural Revolution in the mid-1960s.

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Translation and language notes.

Throughout this thesis I have used the 'pinyin' language system where possible. Chinese names and locations have all been written using this system, however I have also included, in the first instance, Chinese characters to make each reference as clear as possible. In addition, I have used the English translation where available, with the exception of names and locations. The order is thus:

Pinyin (Characters) - English/Wade-Giles.

For example:

Da Yue Jin (大跃进) - The Great Leap Forward.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

This dissertation examines the concept of the ‘Laodong Mofan’ (劳动模范) - ‘Model Worker’ in Mao’s revolution throughout the period 1949-1964 and the manner in which the Chinese Communist Party disseminated this concept in its propaganda, through a range of communication media. To achieve this, I will be focussing on the use of film, posters, magazines and key policy documents to demonstrate the extent to which the Maoist concept of the Model Worker was to utilise idealised versions of past and contemporary heroes. This was combined with a detailed programme for social reform to aid in the rejuvenation of the nation following ruinous civil and anti-Imperialist wars. Fundamental to Mao’s thinking was the concept of the ‘new citizen.’ This ‘new citizen’ was to be based on core values identified by Mao as being necessary for China to successfully build a new society following imperialist occupation. These values found expression through the creation of a new political structure, the ‘Renmin Minzhu Zhuanzheng’ (人民民主专政) - ‘People’s Democratic Dictatorship,’ implemented following the Revolution of 1949.

Intrinsic to the creation of the ‘new citizen’ was the use of the new ‘Model Worker.’ The emphasis on the political and ideological importance of the ‘Model Worker’ and its importance in Chinese revolutionary propaganda, represents a new direction in Chinese history and offers important new perspectives on the content of Maoist propaganda. Of specific interest is the relationship between the political structure and propaganda; this has been largely ignored in the past. Before I expand on my aims and objectives, it is first necessary to briefly place Maoist thinking in its historical context. The notion of a ‘model citizen’ was not a new concept.

However, the manner in which Mao disseminated his ideas and the implementation of his beliefs in what was becoming an increasingly totalitarian society, represents one of the most extraordinary attempted transformations of a nation and its people in the 20th century.

The Chinese Communist Party (CCP) was not the first political entity in China to advocate and use revolution to further its political aims. Prior to the success of the 1949 Revolution, attempts had been made to redefine the political structure of the Chinese State. These attempts, although built upon by successive governments, had largely failed to gain traction and were eventually swept away by the CCP following the unstable period of the anti-Japanese war and later civil war with the nationalist Guomindang (国民党) - Kuomintang. Governments prior to 1949, had also focussed on the concept of national rejuvenation. Indeed, a focus on a re-evaluation of history and the promotion of national unity within the creation of a reformed social society and the utilisation of new economic systems were not new concepts invented by the CCP. Why then was the CCP considerably more successful, at least in terms of longevity, at promoting its political values than their predecessors? The answer lies in the Party's development and use of propaganda, specifically its focus on emulation campaigns featuring 'Model Workers.'

This thesis will examine the way in which the Communist Party utilised the concept of Model Workers in both cinema and poster propaganda in its effort to promote a political ideology based on the works of Mao Zedong. This political ideology was, I will argue, intended to address three key problems that faced China; national unity, social development and the implementation of a new economic system. I have chosen to examine Model Workers as the method by which this ideology was promoted because central to the Maoist system was a focus on 'thought reform' and the 'remoulding' of the people. The Model Worker thus provided China's citizens with appropriate examples of what the State required of them. Although the use of Models for propaganda purposes was to evolve considerably, three core values, intended to address the problems of national unity, social development and the implementation of a new

economic system, remained constant throughout. Consequently, the purpose of this study is to examine the way in which propaganda was used to promote a political ideology through the use of specific Model Workers across two key aspects of media; the poster and the cinema. During this period, China's propagandists also made extensive use of Lian huan hua (连环画) 'comic books.'¹ Each of the Model Workers that I have selected for study had comic books dedicated to them. This is an area of research I was keen to incorporate into this thesis, however, because of space limitations these have not been included. Nevertheless, this is a further area of study that would prove of value in the future.

My approach will be to examine the way in which political ideology was presented to the people by the new government. Therefore, my intention is not to determine the effectiveness of this propaganda, nor analyse the way in which the system functioned, although these aspects will inevitably be touched upon throughout my thesis.

Consequently, I will examine the way in which political ideology was presented to the people by the new government. To achieve this, I have chosen five specific Model Workers to examine. These have been chosen because of the way in which they represented the political structure of the People's Democratic Dictatorship. This structure was intended to build on the gains of the Revolution by articulating the political and social values of the Party and its chief theorist, Mao Zedong.

Consequently, this study will offer a new perspective regarding propaganda of this era. I will examine the extent to which the structure of the new society, as outlined by the People's Democratic Dictatorship and communicated in the propaganda of the Model Worker, was a key component in the development of the State. This was because it provided citizens with a blueprint by which their position in the new society would be

¹ Appendix Items 5.1, 5.2, 5.3 and 5.4, pp.412-414.

defined, prior to the 'Da Yue Jin' (大跃进) - 'The Great Leap Forward.' Indeed, I will argue that Model Worker propaganda during this period was designed to both engage and appeal to specific sections of society as defined by the People's Democratic Dictatorship. The intention of the new State was to use Model Worker propaganda to simultaneously influence and coerce the population. Models would provide influence by acting as a template of what was expected of an individual within their specified social class. The coercive element of the propaganda campaigns focussed primarily on highlighting 'incorrect' behaviour. This was exposed and vilified and provided a warning to those who strayed from the 'correct' path.

This method of persuasion and coercion was to remain constant through the period 1949-1965. However, political changes were to have a considerable impact on the way in which the Model Worker was deployed, as the People's Democratic Dictatorship became less relevant as a concept following Mao's proclamation that, 'Class struggle has basically come to an end' and following the failure of the Great Leap Forward. Therefore, I will explore the extent to which the use of the Model Worker gained increased prominence following the failure of the Great Leap Forward as the political structure of the nation underwent significant changes prior to the implementation of the 'Wenhua Da Geming' (文化大革命) - Cultural Revolution. I will argue that despite these changes, the core values that dominated Model Worker propaganda, these being, addressing national unity, social reform and the implementation of a new economic system through thought reform, remained unchanged as the propagandists of the new People's Republic attempted to construct a new society.

Historical context.

The first Opium War in 1839 culminated with the signing of the first ‘unequal treaty,’ the Treaty of Nanjing in 1842.² This witnessed a great change in Chinese society. The relationship between China and other foreign, predominantly European powers was, as the treaty epithet states, extremely ‘unequal.’ The link between the development of propaganda during the post-Revolutionary period and that of historical learning during the pre-Revolutionary era can be traced to this time. This link comes with the publication of Liang Qichao’s (梁启超), *Xin Shixue* (新史学) - *New Historiography* in 1902.³ Following the persistent and perceived humiliation of China by foreign powers, scholars such as Liang saw the study of history as a way in which the nation could be united to resist the influence of their imperialist overlords. During the late 1800s, there was considerable debate amongst scholars such as Liang Qichao, Liu Shiwei (刘师培), Deng Shi (邓实) and Ma Xulun (马叙伦) as to how history should be constructed.⁴ Liang argued, at least initially (he was to change his mind in the early 1900s), that China’s tradition of historical writing was flawed because it failed to take into consideration the wider society since it focussed primarily on ruling dynasties. He stated that essentially, China had no real historical written sources and that modern historians needed to create a new history in order that the nation could be more soundly

² This treaty forced China to allow Britain to establish trade ports in Guangzhou, Xiamen, Fuzhou, Ningbo and Shanghai, demanded war reparations from the Chinese for the Opium conflict and ceded the island of Hong Kong to the British ‘in perpetuity.’

³ Liang Qichao (梁启超), was born into the late Qing dynasty in 1872 and worked as a journalist, his most influential work being a journal titled the *Xinmin Congbao* (新民丛报) - *New Citizen Journal*, a bi-weekly publication covering politics, religion, philosophy and current affairs. In addition, he was the head of the translation bureau and taught at the Qinghua Guoxue Yanjiuyuan (清华国学研究院) - Tsinghua Research Institute, in Beijing.

⁴ Liu Shiwei (刘师培), born in 1884 was a historian and economist and contributed to Liang’s ‘*Xinmin Congbao*,’ Deng Shi (邓实), born in 1877 was also a historian and the editor of *Guocui Xuebao* (国粹学报)

- *Journal of National Essence*, a journal dedicated to preserving China’s national culture. Ma Xulun (马叙伦), was born in 1885 and was a prominent contributor to *Guocui Xuebao* and taught at Beijing University.

constructed. The concept of a 'People's History,' conceivably grew from this development.⁵

'Liu Shipai, Deng Shi and Ma Xulun disagreed with Liang and argued for a 'new history' built on the old; a less iconoclastic approach. Although opinions differed, all scholars believed in a strengthening of patriotism in the country in order to confront, more successfully, the problem of imperialism. This was to be achieved by creating greater national unity. This was significant as it meant that there was a shift from what Luo Zhitian (罗志田) described as being 'tongjing zhiyong' (通经致用) - 'mastering the classics for practical ends' to 'tongshi zhiyong' (通史致用) - 'mastering history for practical ends.'⁶ As Liang stated, 'without a revolution in the study of history, our country cannot be saved.'⁷ This focus on the study of history and the 'correct' understanding of what had followed, is crucial to an understanding of the importance of the Model Worker within the propaganda policy of the People's Republic. Depictions of Model Workers, both in the cinematic and poster form, are frequently historical works that illustrate the ascendancy of the people and by extension, the nation. Propagandists were thus most certainly 'tongshi zhiyong.'

There was already a strong precedent for using heroes to promote cultural unity through the study of history. Indeed, by 1902 a state school system was introduced by Zhang Zhidong (张之洞)⁸ that emphasised the importance of patriotism, but also loyalty to the

⁵ B. Moloughney & P. Zarrow (eds), *Transforming History - The Making of a Modern Academic Discipline in Twentieth-Century China*, (The Chinese University of Hong Kong, 2011), pp.1-47.

⁶ L. Zhitian 'The Marginalization of Classical Studies and the Rising Prominence of Historical Studies during the Late Qing and Early Republic: A Reappraisal' in Moloughney & Zarrow, pp.47-75. Luo discusses how the study of 'the classics' began to decline in the late Qing period and that they were replaced by a focus on historical study, but that the traditional methods of research had to be revised as they proved insufficient for the task.

⁷ Zhitian, p.67.

⁸ Zhang Zhidong was born in 1837 and was a reformist politician during the late Qing Dynasty.

Emperor. The concept of a hero, that the people should follow and aspire to for the benefit of the nation, was clearly an important component of this new focus and was explained by the Ministry of Education. It was made clear that, 'knowledge of history would foster loyalty to the Emperor, while knowledge of the great deeds of heroes and the blessings of the cosmos would inoculate students against revolutionary heresies.'⁹ After the fall of the Qing dynasty, all references to the Emperor were removed, but the more nationalist sentiments remained. In the future, Mao's propagandists would also use knowledge of the great deeds of heroes, not simply to inoculate the population against future rebellion, but to support the project to rebuild China and make it great again. Traditionally, the study of the Confucian classics had been used to provide 'political and moral lessons to rulers' through an explanation of the values of Chinese society.¹⁰ The propagandists of the Revolution were following this tradition. However, they replaced the use of the Confucian classics, formerly used to inspire the rulers of China, with political and moral lessons for the whole population. In theory, these were the new 'rulers' of the country. The people would study an idealised 'People's History' that would provide the bedrock for greater unity of the people in China's new era. Chinese propagandists were evolving an already existing form of instruction; the use of historical events to promote unity.

The extent to which Mao, in particular, was influenced by Liang Qichao's work, can be seen in his earlier ideological writing. Paul Pickowicz states that Qu Qiubai (瞿秋白)¹¹

⁹ Moloughney & Zarrow, p.12.

¹⁰ M. Y. Dong, 'Creating Academic Qing History: Xiao Yishan and Meng Seng,' in Moloughney & Zarrow, pp.209-241. This is in reference to the way in which historical study began to focus on a 'Han narrative.' As an extension of this, it is conceivable that Post-Revolutionary propagandists thus focussed on a 'People's narrative' that would convey the values of the New society to the people through the representation of historical events. A. Dirlik, 'Marxism and Social History,' in Moloughney & Zarrow, pp.375-403, argues that Marxist historiography was a direct offshoot of the revolutionary movement, that it was answering calls for nationalism that Liang Qichao had already set out.

¹¹ Qu Qiubai (瞿秋白), was born in 1899 and was leader of the Communist Party of China in the late 1920s and was a mentor for Mao Zedong.

was one of the most influential scholars to have an impact on Mao's thinking.¹²

However, I would argue that although Mao's interest in Qu Qiubai's ideas, particularly concepts relating to the issue of intellectuals being divorced from the masses did shape his later thinking, they were not at this stage new concepts. Indeed, Mao had already considered the core ideas behind the use of culture for instructional purposes. Prior to joining the Communist Party, Mao had begun a 'study society' in Hunan that he named 'Xinmin Xueshe' (新民学社) - 'New People's Study Society.'¹³ This was named after Liang Qichao's essay collection, titled *Xinmin Shuo* (新民说) - *Renewing the People*.¹⁴ This detailed why social reform was an essential component of any process to rebuild the nation. Whilst Liang's 'new citizen' would take the best of existing Chinese culture and augment it with new ideas from foreign countries, Mao's 'new citizen' would be far more radical. This 'New Citizen' would not build upon the past. The concept of the 'New Citizen' would redefine it, in order that something new, but still distinctly Chinese, be constructed. The evidence for this can be found in the extremely didactic nature of the work that Mao produced during his time at Yan'an. This became the guide by which the Model Worker would be framed, as I shall examine.

The obsession with creating a 'New Citizen' did not begin with Liang Qichao and end with Mao Zedong. Throughout the period that led to the revolution started by the Communist Party, others also attempted to define and promote concepts of the ideal citizen. This was happening as the country struggled to defend itself against foreign

¹² P. Pickowicz, 'Ch'u Ch'iu-pai and the Chinese Marxist Conception of Revolutionary Popular Literature and Art,' *The China Quarterly*, no. 70, June (1977), pp. 296-314. In this article, Pickowicz details the importance of Chu'u Ch'iu-pai (Qu Qiubai, Pickowicz uses the 'Wade-Giles method of spelling) and argues that he has been under appreciated as when considering the link between literature and revolution most scholars tend to focus on Lu Xun. Whilst I would agree with this, Pickowicz over argues this point and does not take into consideration Mao's earlier exposure to the arguments that existed between Liang Qichao and other scholars about the path of Chinese nationalism.

¹³ This study society was established in 1918, however in the early 1920s it faded away.

¹⁴ The collection was published between 1902 and 1906.

imperialist aggression. Indeed, Sun Zhongshan (孙中山) - Sun Yatsen had been working on solutions to China's problems since 1885. These became the principles of the Guomindang Party. These 'Sanmin Zhuyi' (三民主义) - 'Three Principles of the People' were based on the following concepts. Firstly, nationalism, explained by Sun as being the 'emancipation of the Chinese nation' and the equality of all those within it. Secondly, 'popular sovereignty,' that is, national involvement in politics. Thirdly, the principle of 'people's livelihood.' This principle focussed on the regulation of land and capital. There are clear similarities with some aspects of the Three Principles and what was later to inform the values of the Model Worker. Both concepts focus on the need for education so that the people can be more actively engaged in efforts to improve the nation. However, there are a number of fundamental differences, specifically related to the way in which 'popular sovereignty' would find expression within the country under Mao and the development of the 'Qunzhong Luxian' (群众路线) - 'Mass Line.'¹⁵ Sun's principles, although now considered to be central to the founding of the Chinese Republic are not without their critics. American Professor John Israel¹⁶ and British historian, Professor Rana Mitter argue that the Three Principles of the People were poorly defined.¹⁷ Israel further argues that they offered no concrete guide to action.

In response to Sun Zhongshan, the 'Xin Wenhua Yundong' (新文化运动) - 'New Culture Movement' (1911-1937) attempted to offer a rather different approach to revitalising society. This movement was essentially an effort to understand how the

¹⁵ The 'mass line' is a leadership method developed by the CCP that details the way in which the people's opinions and suggestions are elicited and then reinterpreted according to Marxist-Leninist precepts, policy is then developed according to the suggestions of this 'mass line.'

¹⁶ J. Israel, 'Continuities and Discontinuities in the Ideology of the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution,' in C. Johnson (ed), *Ideology and Politics in Contemporary China*, (University of Washington Press, 1973), pp.40-41.

¹⁷ R. Mitter, *A Bitter Revolution: China's Struggle with the Modern World*, (Oxford University Press, 2010), pp.141-142.

West and Japan had developed. This would help to create a new social and cultural system that would benefit China.¹⁸ Those who promoted the ideas of ‘New Culture,’ such as the writer Lu Xun (鲁迅), rejected the idea of repurposing the old Confucian system, arguing that it was anachronistic and ill-suited for the development of a modern country.¹⁹ As with the ‘Three Principles of the People,’ there existed in the New Culture Movement a number of common elements, particularly focussing on the need for education to improve the nation. Indeed, American historian Professor Arif Dirlik argues that, ‘The main thrust of the New Culture Movement was that the minds of people had to be transformed before any significant and lasting changes could be achieved in the political organisation of the country.’²⁰ However, the overall goals of the New Culture Movement, although influential with respect to the efforts of the Communist Party to rebuild the nation, did not entirely agree with Mao’s own vision. He was critical of the movement, believing that overall, the intellectuals at its heart did not speak for the vast majority of the citizenry, who were represented by the peasants in the countryside. Therefore, an alternative method to rebuild society was required. The New Culture Movement fell into decline by 1937.²¹

Towards the end of the New Culture Movement era, Jiang Jieshi (蒋介石) - Chiang Kai-Shek, leader of the Guomindang, produced his own campaign to rejuvenate the nation. The name given to this was the ‘Xin Shenghuo Yundong’ (新生活运动) - ‘New Life Movement.’ The Movement was launched on the 19th of February 1934 and was designed primarily to reform Chinese society by encouraging individuals to act in a

¹⁸ L. Sullivan & R. Solomon, ‘The Formation of Chinese Communist Ideology in the May Fourth Era: A Content Analysis of Hsin ch’ing nien,’ in C. Johnson (ed), *Ideology and Politics in Contemporary China*, (University of Washington Press, 1973), p.120.

¹⁹ For a more detailed account of the perceived problems with Confucianism and the development of the New Culture Movement, see Mitter, pp.3-12.

²⁰ A. Dirlik, *Revolution and History: The Origins of Marxist Historiography in China, 1919-1937*, (University of California Press, 1978), p.38.

²¹ Mitter, p.19.

more socially responsible way. However, unlike similar Maoist attempts at social reform, 'New Life' was based principally on promoting the virtues of ancient China. Indeed, as Mitter notes, the New Life Movement made attempts to recycle Confucian language mixed with aspects of social Darwinism.²² The virtues promoted focussed primarily on issues related to personal behaviour, justice for all, integrity in personal and business life and respect for others.²³ Furthermore, Madame Chiang Kai-shek²⁴ argued that the reason that China had found itself in such a difficult position was because of 'hundreds of years of Manchu misrule'.²⁵ She argued that this caused the people to become apathetic because they were not engaged with the political system. Her rather positive portrayal of the New Life Movement runs counter to other narratives, some of which focus on the more fascist elements that were part of it.²⁶ Throughout the period that the New Life Movement was promoted, China was facing threats on numerous fronts. The issues upon which the movement focussed were thus considered to be rather trivial, given the threats to security that the country was facing.²⁷ The method by which the ideals of the movement were communicated to the people was also largely coercive, this added to its unpopularity.²⁸

Each of these movements had elements of success, but also of failure. Prior to gaining power in 1949, the Chinese Communist Party, through the theoretical work of Mao Zedong, had already developed a blueprint for how the nation could be rebuilt following a successful revolution. Earlier, non-CCP campaigns had contained rather vague goals,

²² Mitter, p.115.

²³ A. Lawrance, *China Since 1919: Revolution and Reform: A Source Book*, (Routledge, 2004), p.61.

²⁴ Song Mei-ling (宋美龄), also known as 'Madame Kai-shek' was the First Lady of the Republic of China between 1948 and 1975. She died in 2003 aged 105 in New York City, United States.

²⁵ Lawrance, p.61.

²⁶ L. Eastman, 'Nationalist China during the Nanking decade 1927-1937,' in J. Fairbank & A. Feuerwerker (eds), *The Cambridge History of China Volume 13: Republican China 1912-1949, Part 2*, (Cambridge University Press, 1986), pp.146-147.

²⁷ Mitter, p.111.

²⁸ K.S. Karol, *China: The Other Communism*, (T Hill & Wang, 1968), pp.212-214.

something that Mao was keen to avoid. Consequently, propaganda aimed at national rejuvenation would be based on three core concepts; nationalism, social reform and the development of socialism. The Model Worker concept would be employed to promote these core ideas. The CCP would provide the people not simply with educators, but also real fellow citizens of whom they could be proud. Mao's theoretical work prior to gaining power, reveals the extent to which these three core concepts were to dominate the development of Model Worker propaganda throughout the period. However, before examining these key documents I must first define what is meant by 'nationalism,' 'social reform' and 'the development of socialism.'

The values of the Model Worker: Nationalism, social reform and the development of socialism.

Sun Zhongshan argued that a commitment to the ideology of nationalism was essential for the people of China to be emancipated.²⁹ However, the CCP's commitment to the use of nationalism for the purpose of nation building goes rather deeper than simply emancipation of the people from foreign rule. John Hutchinson and Anthony Smith in their work 'Nationalism', offer insight into the highly complex and subjective nature of its study. They agree with Sun Zhongshan that 'freedom and sovereignty' are the key aspects of any nationalist cause, but further add that this doctrine is underpinned by three elements, 'autonomy,' 'unity,' and 'identity.'³⁰ The nationalist aspect of Model Worker propaganda most certainly contains these three elements. The ability for the nation to act autonomously, without the assistance or control of others is a major theme as the inherent strength and ingenuity of the people is promoted. In addition, the unity of the people when facing either foreign or class enemies is a significant component.

²⁹ Chapter 1, p.9.

³⁰ J. Hutchinson & A. D. Smith, *Nationalism*, (Oxford University Press, 1994), p.5.

Finally, the third element ‘identity’ is addressed by Model Worker propaganda in a number of ways, most notably by the consistent use of historical figures to communicate to the people a sense of positive collective history. Moreover, specific Model Workers were selected from the social classes of the new ‘People’s Democratic Dictatorship.’ Consumers of CCP propaganda were consequently presented not only with idealised class identities but also with an overarching national identity defined, at least initially, by the People’s Democratic Dictatorship. Nationalism of this period thus promoted the autonomy of the Chinese nation, guided by the CCP. Furthermore, the creation of a strong national identity was based upon the promotion of heroes of the past.

The cause of social and cultural reform in China had been a preoccupation of intellectuals and governments throughout the early twentieth century. Jiang Jieshi’s ‘New Life Movement’ was intended to provide solutions to the perceived problems within society, but had largely failed.³¹ CCP propaganda that dealt with social and cultural reform took a different approach and focussed largely on instruction by example and encouragement. The Model Worker was crucial here as the people were presented not simply with heroes, but contemporaries, individuals of whom they could be proud and who were thus more likely to be emulated. Rather than focussing on specific issues, the CCP’s social reform agenda focussed instead on the promotion of six specific behaviours. These were, empathy, community spirit, selflessness, hard work, self-criticism and the desire to fight. Each of the Models that form part of this study exhibit various aspects of these characteristics in both poster and film propaganda. The development of socialism throughout the period 1949-1965 underwent a number of

³¹ Chapter 1, p.10.

significant changes, but the social reform agenda remained and was reinforced following the later introduction of the ultimate Model Worker, Lei Feng (雷锋).³²

Following the Revolution the development of socialism and eventual transition to communism was a core aim of the new Chinese State. The Model Worker was utilised at each strategic juncture to offer support in this endeavour. Models were used to reinforce the structure of the new government and social class system. They promoted the benefits of land reform,³³ the Great Leap Forward³⁴ and the ‘Shehuizhuyi Jiaoyu Yundong’ (社会主义教育运动) - ‘The Socialist Education Movement.’³⁵ Despite considerable policy upheavals, particularly towards the end of the nineteen-fifties, the Model Worker was there to articulate to the people the benefits of socialist development.

Creating the model worker, Mao’s concept of the ‘New Citizen.’

The core values of the Model Worker, nationalism, social reform and the development of socialism, were key components of policy decisions made following the success of the Revolution. However, the origin of these values can be found in Mao’s earlier work that he undertook whilst he was in Yan’an. Indeed, the ‘genesis’ of the core elements of Model Worker propaganda can be found specifically in, *Jinian Bai Qiu’en* (纪念白求恩) - *In Memory of Norman Bethune*, *Wei Renmin Fuwu* (为人民服务) - *Serve the People* and *Yugong Yishan* (愚公移山) - *The Foolish Old Man Who Removed the Mountain*. In these articles, Mao laid out the attributes that would later be represented in Model

³² Ibid, p.23.

³³ Chapter 2, p.65.

³⁴ Chapter 3, p.104.

³⁵ Chapter 3, p.126.

Worker propaganda. A closer examination of these articles reveals the extent to which there was, even at this early stage, a consistent focus on nationalism, social reform and the development of socialism.

In Memory of Norman Bethune. (1939).

Mao originally addressed the issue of social reform in an article written in 1939 and entitled, 'In memory of Norman Bethune.' In addition to social reform, Mao highlighted the importance of nationalism in the service of the greater liberation to come. Earlier scholars such as Liang Qichao had tried to apply the linear model of history to their study of China's past.³⁶ This theory stated that all societies go through certain stages of development before becoming advanced. *In Memory of Norman Bethune* demonstrates the extent to which Mao had been inspired by this idea.

Although the document initially appears to promote the idea of international socialism, there is an important caveat to consider. Mao states, 'It is the spirit of Internationalism, the spirit of communism, from which every Chinese communist must learn.'³⁷ Although Mao writes of Internationalism, colonialism is also mentioned frequently. When the concept of the linear model of history is considered, it can be argued that although international socialism may have been a long term goal, for the period under consideration, national liberation was clearly a more pressing concern. Nationalism was the engine by which China could move from its current feudal state to one more advanced. Mao states, 'this is the only way to overthrow imperialism, to liberate our

³⁶ F. Wang, 'The Impact of the Linear Model of History on Modern Chinese Historiography' in B. Moloughney & P. Zarrow (eds), 'Making History Modern: The Transformation of Chinese Historiography', *Transforming History – The Making of a Modern Academic Discipline in Twentieth-Century China* (The Chinese University Press, 2012), pp.135-169.

³⁷ Z. Mao, 'In Memory of Norman Bethune,' *Selected Works of Mao Tse-Tung, Volume 2,* (The People's Publishing House, 1965), p.337.

nation and people and to liberate the other nations and peoples of the world. This is our Internationalism'³⁸

The second aspect of this article focuses on the selfless spirit of Bethune. Mao touches upon the concept of community spirit and selflessness when he discusses the way in which people will sometimes do good works, but significantly only for fame or admiration. He states that, 'when they make some small contribution, they swell with pride and brag about it for fear that others will not know.'³⁹ Mao wanted to address the significant problem of personal ego because it was counter to the spirit of communism. Cinematic representations of Model Workers frequently display the attribute of selflessness, indeed it was perfected by the character of Lei Feng.⁴⁰ Mao also discussed the way in which good, honest hard work could benefit the community by suggesting that, 'A man's ability may be great or small, but if he has this spirit, he is already noble-minded and pure, a man of moral integrity and above vulgar interests, a man who is of value to the people.'⁴¹

Serve the People, 1944.

Serve the People was written in 1944, some five years later. It was written in memory of Zhang Side (张思德), a manual worker who had died when a kiln on which he was working collapsed. *Serve the People* elaborates, to an even greater extent, the key attributes befitting a Model Worker. Mao writes of the need to accept criticism in order that improvements can be made, 'if we have shortcomings, we are not afraid to have

³⁸ Ibid.

³⁹ Ibid, p.338.

⁴⁰ Chapter 4, p.226.

⁴¹ Z. Mao, 'In Memory of Norman Bethune,' p.338.

them pointed out and criticised, because we serve the people.’⁴² Although Mao appears to have been writing about the Party, this point could also be extended to individuals. Essentially, the ‘Party Rectification’ campaign that ran from 1942 until 1944 in Yan’an was designed to encourage individuals to criticise themselves in order that their thinking would become more ‘correct.’⁴³ In addition, *Serve the People* set out the heroic mission of the Party, as Mao stated, ‘the Chinese people are suffering; it is our duty to save them and we must exert ourselves in this struggle.’⁴⁴ Model Workers, Liu Hulan (刘胡兰)⁴⁵ and Zhao Yiman (赵一曼),⁴⁶ both answered this call; they saw the suffering of their people and worked hard to serve them before eventually being captured and executed by the Guomindang. The article also sets out what was expected of an empathetic, decent and compassionate citizen. Mao stated that, in the society they were attempting to build, ‘our cadres must show concern for every soldier, and all people in the revolutionary ranks must care for each other, must love and help each other.’⁴⁷ This element of social reform is apparent in each of the films in this study. Military films, in particular, demonstrate the exceptionally good relationships that exist between all levels of command; this is in sharp contrast to the cruel autocratic leadership of the Japanese or Guomindang enemy.

⁴² Z. Mao, ‘Serve the People,’ *Selected Works of Mao Tse-Tung, Volume 3*, (The People’s Publishing House, 1965), p.227.

⁴³ The Party Rectification campaign also helped Mao stamp his authority on the Party and limit the influence of the Soviet Union by removing Wang Ming 王明, a CCP leader with strong ties to the Comintern.

⁴⁴ Z. Mao, ‘Serve the People,’ p.228.

⁴⁵ Chapter 1, p.21.

⁴⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁷ Z. Mao, ‘Serve the People,’ p.228.

The Foolish Old Man Who Removed the Mountains (1945).

The Foolish Old Man Who Removed the Mountains also addresses the issue of social reform, but adds considerably to the theme of nationalism. Mao identifies two issues that he considered were seriously affecting China; imperialism and feudalism. He suggests, that similar to the story of the 'Foolish Old Man' who with the help of his sons and descendants managed to move two mountains, the Chinese people could move the 'mountains' of imperialism and feudalism. This could be achieved by uprooting and destroying imperialism within the nation. He states, 'Our god is none other than the masses of the Chinese people. If they stand up and dig together with us, why can't these two mountains be cleared away?'⁴⁸ This critique makes significant contributions to the concept of the Model Worker because it deals explicitly with the three key aims; building confidence, unifying the people and inspiring in the nation a desire to fight for reform.

Presentation of the message - Mao's Talks at Yan'an.

Mao was not content with simply describing the message. The way in which these themes were to be presented in terms of propaganda, were described more comprehensively in his 'Talks at the Yan'an Forum on Literature and Art' in 1942.⁴⁹ Mao's Talks express his vision that artistic works should have a role in serving the Party and point toward the importance of the Model Worker in this vision. However, he also sounds a note of caution by indicating that only those with the 'correct' political background would be able to create effective art suitable for the new era. The Yan'an

⁴⁸ Z. Mao, 'The Foolish Old Man Who Removed the Mountain,' *Selected Works of Mao Tse-Tung, Volume 3*, (The People's Publishing House, 1965), p.322.

⁴⁹ M. Meisner, *Mao's China and After: A History of the People's Republic*, (Free Press, 1999), pp.31-51. For further details see Meisner's account of the formation of Mao's Yan'an campaign.

Rectification Campaign had been designed specifically to deal with this problem, but it would continue to cause conflict throughout the post-1949 era. As Mao stated, 'There is in fact no such thing as art for art's sake, art that stands above classes, art that is detached from or independent of politics.'⁵⁰ Qu Qiubai believed that the problem with intellectuals was the way in which they were detached from the masses, but for Mao, the problem was far more serious. The intellectuals did not only lack understanding of realities that faced the vast majority of the population, they were also politically suspect because of their previous connections with the Guomindang and in some cases, the Japanese occupiers. Mao's argument was essentially that throughout the Revolution the intellectuals in the cities had, at best, been unaware of the lives of the masses, but at worst were either corrupted by bourgeois ideas or were potentially collaborators. This made the position of the intellectuals in the People's Democratic Dictatorship rather precarious.

It is through Mao's 'Talks' that the target audience for propaganda in the post-1949 era can be found. He frequently focusses on the idea that art needed to be produced that would appeal to the masses, specifically the peasants, workers and soldiers. The petty bourgeoisie, the capitalist class, one of the members of the People's Democratic Dictatorship are not listed as being part of the masses. This, consequently, influenced the development of the Model Worker because the petty bourgeoisie would be the only class not represented in Model Worker propaganda. In a seminal statement, Mao describes how life should be represented in works of propaganda, 'life as reflected in works of literature and art can and ought to be on a higher plane, more intense, more concentrated, more typical, closer to the ideal.'⁵¹ This 'ideal' would not include the

⁵⁰ Z. Mao, 'Talks at the Yenan Forum on Literature and Art,' *Selected Works of Mao Tse-Tung, Volume 3*, ' (The People's Publishing House, 1965), p.86.

⁵¹ Ibid, p.82.

capitalist class. Instead, historical representations sought to depict an idealised version of history wherein the failings of the Japanese occupation and the difficult Civil War era could be presented in a way that would imbue the people with greater confidence.

Heroes like Liu Hulan and Zhao Yiman represented all that was good about individuals who followed the guidance of the Communist Party, they demonstrated that even during difficult times the main enemy of the people was still oppression.

Over ten years, beginning in 1939, Mao elucidated the main attributes that he was hoping an ideal citizen would have. This process had started much earlier, prior to Mao's membership of the Communist Party, but it was with these four documents that the concept became more secure as the core elements of nationalism, social reform and the development of socialism were detailed.

Methodology.

Following Mao's Revolution, there were significant changes in the way in which language was used, particularly for propaganda purposes. Mao wanted to make sure that written text would be easy to understand by the whole population. The way in which cinema and poster text changed throughout the decade reflects this change in the use of language. During the course of my research, including a year spent in Shanghai, China, I have spent a significant amount of time in the study of the Chinese language. The skills that I have acquired during this period have greatly aided in my understanding of the nuances of language used in propaganda posters of the era. In addition, I have undertaken interviews to provide further insight into both the development of the Model Worker and poster propaganda during the period 1949-1965. The first of these interviews was with Huang Baomei (黄宝妹), the only surviving Model Worker of the five I have selected for study. Huang has spoken with Chinese

state media and researchers about her experiences, however, this is the first time that her involvement with the cinematic production of her life has been detailed in English. To provide more detailed insight into the development of poster propaganda during the period, I have also interviewed the curator of the Shanghai Propaganda Poster Art Centre, Yang Peiming (杨培明). These interviews provide a more detailed context with respect to the importance of the Model Worker in China's post-1949 propaganda efforts.

For this thesis I have isolated five specific Models for study, to demonstrate the extent to which the core values in Mao's Revolution, nationalism, social reform and the development of socialism, were presented to the people. These five Models have been chosen based on the political structure of the new state, represented by the concept of The People's Democratic Dictatorship. The connection between this political structure and the Model Worker is apparent in an examination of the flag, designed by Zeng Liansong (曾联松). Each star represents a class in the new society. Each class, with the exception of the capitalist petty-bourgeoisie, had a Model Worker to represent it in propaganda. Their role provided not just inspiration, but also guidance as to what was expected of an individual who was part of that social group.



Figure 1.1 – Flag of the People's Republic of China.

An examination of the flag (fig 1.1), reveals that the first small star at the top represents the 'National Bourgeoisie.' Intellectuals formed part of this class and for this reason I have selected the Model Worker 'Zhao Yiman.' Zhao was born in Sichuan Province in 1905. She joined the Communist Party in 1926. She was university educated and was involved in underground revolutionary work in Shanghai and later in Jiangxi Province. During her struggle with the Japanese occupation she was executed in 1936.⁵² The second star represents the peasantry. For this 'star' I have chosen the Model Worker 'Liu Hulan.' Liu was born in Shanxi Province in 1932 and fought in the Chinese Civil War. She joined the Communist Party in 1946. When her village was taken by the Guomindang, Party members were taken into custody and Liu was executed when she refused to name her comrades.⁵³ The third star represents the proletariat. I have thus selected the urban worker 'Huang Baomei' for examination for this 'star.' Huang was born in 1931 in Shanghai. She was sent to work in a factory when she was 13. Following liberation in 1949, her factory became state owned. During the Great Leap Forward she was selected to be a Model Worker after Zhou Enlai (周恩来) stated that one must be chosen to represent the workers of Shanghai. Huang was chosen because of her achievements in the improvement of the quality of cotton during the Great Leap period.⁵⁴

The fourth small star represents the urban petite bourgeoisie. This class was rather problematic because of its capitalist roots. Model Workers were, understandably, not

⁵² Detailed biography: Zhao Yiman - All China Women's Federation. 2016. *Zhao Yiman - All China Women's Federation*. [ONLINE] Available at: <http://www.womenofchina.cn/womenofchina/html1/special/13/985-1.htm>.

⁵³ Detailed biography: Liu Hulan - All China Women's Federation. 2016. *Liu Hulan - All China Women's Federation*. [ONLINE] Available at: <http://www.womenofchina.cn/womenofchina/html1/special/13/949-1.htm>

⁵⁴ Appendix Item 3.2, p.404.

selected by the Communist Party to represent this class. Consequently, I have replaced this class with a representative of the People's Liberation Army (PLA). I have done this for two reasons. Firstly, during his Yan'an Talks and in later writings, Mao focussed on the 'worker-peasant-soldier' relationship, arguing that this was critical for the rejuvenation of the nation. Propagandists most certainly took this instruction to heart, as a large number of films were produced during the 1950s featuring the heroic actions of the People's Liberation Army. Secondly, following the failure of the Great Leap Forward, there was an even greater focus on the PLA whose model behaviour appeared to offer a solution to the continuing problems of rebuilding the nation. Therefore, I have selected the Model Worker 'Dong Cunrui' (董存瑞). Dong was born in Hebei Province in 1929 and joined the 8th Route Army in 1945. He won many awards for bravery and sacrificed himself in 1948 during the Civil War period by holding explosives to a bridge to ensure his comrades could advance against the Guomindang enemy.⁵⁵

The largest star represents the Party. For this star, I have selected the 'ultimate' Model Worker, 'Lei Feng.' Each of the other models, with the exception of Huang Baomei were historical figures. For these Models, although there was considerable room for manoeuvre regarding interpretation of events, there did exist an established historical narrative. For Lei Feng and to a lesser extent, Huang Baomei, this was not the case as they were not historical figures, but products of the new society. Indeed, the very existence of Lei Feng has been disputed by scholars because of the way his entire existence mirrors the rhetoric of the propaganda department.⁵⁶ My purpose is not to determine the existence of Lei, but to examine the extent to which he perfectly

⁵⁵ Detailed Biography: China Daily. 2010. *PLA honored models: Dong Cunrui*. [ONLINE] Available at: http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/china/pla2010/2010-07/29/content_11069486.htm.

⁵⁶ J. Fraser, *The Chinese: portrait of a people* (Summit Books, 1980), p.100.

represented the Party, symbolised on the flag by the largest star. Lei was born in 1940 in Hunan province and was a soldier in the People's Liberation Army. He kept a diary detailing his experiences and the importance of Mao Zedong Thought in shaping his life. He died in 1962 in a tractor accident.⁵⁷

In order to analyse the way in which ideology and political policy was implemented through the Model Worker, I have undertaken a content analysis of key policy documents produced during the period 1949-1965. This has been undertaken to identify the way in which the core values of Model Worker propaganda, nationalism, social reform and the development of socialism were central to policy making decisions of the new state. I have considered historical interpretations of these policies and demonstrated the extent to which the documents can be understood from a new perspective once the mission to rejuvenate society, represented by the Model Worker campaign, is taken into consideration. Through analysis of these documents, I have considered the existing historiographical debate by a critique of the responses of historians from a range of secondary sources. I have chosen to engage with sources from established perspectives, represented by the *Cambridge History of China*,⁵⁸ the work of Maurice Meisner,⁵⁹ Stuart Schram,⁶⁰ Frederick Teiwes⁶¹ and with more recent revisionist historians such as Frank Dikötter.⁶² Through my own analysis, I have noted the areas of agreement, but have also argued that by an examination of the documents

⁵⁷ Detailed Biography: Lei Feng - China Strength - CNTV English. 2016. *Lei Feng - China Strength - CNTV English*. [ONLINE] Available at: <http://english.cntv.cn/special/chinastrength/leifeng/index.shtml>

⁵⁸ R. MacFarquhar and J. K. Fairbank (eds), *The Cambridge History of China: Volume 14: The People's Republic, Part 1: The Emergence of Revolutionary China 1949-1965*, (Cambridge University Press, 1987).

⁵⁹ M. Meisner, *Mao's China and After: A History of the People's Republic*, (Free Press, 1999).

⁶⁰ S. Schram, *The Thought of Mao Zedong*, (Cambridge University Press, 1989).

⁶¹ F. Teiwes, *Politics and Purges in China: Rectification and the Decline of Party Norms, 1950-1965*, (Routledge, 1993).

⁶² F. Dikötter, *The Tragedy of Liberation: A History of the Chinese Revolution 1945-1957*, (Bloomsbury Publishing, 2013).

through the Model Worker narrative, it is possible to gain new insights into their importance with respect to the development of ‘New China.’ This narrative suggests that although there were significant policy changes throughout the period there was a large degree of continuity with respect to propaganda and its promotion of the core values of nationalism, social reform and the development of socialism.

Following evaluation of these documents, I have undertaken a content analysis of the films produced about each Model Worker. Although film depictions of Model Workers have been studied before, most notably by Tina Mai Chen at the University of Manitoba, my approach is different as it focusses specifically, in detail, on five Models who were meant to represent the new political structure of the People’s Democratic Dictatorship. I have examined the way in which their lives were presented through the core propaganda values of nationalism, social reform and the development of socialism. In addition, my approach is cross-media, covering policy documents, cinema and poster propaganda. The films I have selected are all on general release and with the exception of *Wu Xun Zhuan* (武训传) - *The Life of Wu Xun* and *Huang Baomei* (黄宝妹) are all available with English subtitles. Moreover, to gain further understanding of the way in which the messages of the films were reinforced through supplementary propaganda, with translation assistance I have analysed articles that pertain to each film from the State film magazine *Dazhong Dianying* (大众电影) - *Popular Cinema*. Access to archive copies of this magazine is largely restricted. The School of African and Asian Studies and the British Library both hold incomplete collections and my attempts to access relevant issues were largely frustrated. Access was eventually gained through the ‘Zhongguo Zhiwang’ (中国知网) - ‘Chinese National Knowledge Infrastructure,’ an archive of material operated by the Chinese government and Qinghua University. Access was only available via subscription and the collection, although extensive, is

also incomplete. At the time of writing, this website no longer appears to be accessible. The film *Huang Baomei* is not available on general release and was located with the kind assistance of Liu Yajuan at Fudan University, China.

To provide greater insight into the way in which the Communist Party utilised Model Workers in a variety of media, I have also engaged in a content analysis of propaganda posters during the era. The posters have been sourced from a number of locations, but most notably from Stefan Landsberger's extensive online collection at chineseposters.net and the Shanghai Poster Propaganda Art Centre. Stefan Landsberger's collection and research documents related to poster propaganda offer a substantial degree of insight into the development of poster propaganda during the era. However, my detailed content analysis of the posters demonstrates the extent to which political ideology, specifically the promotion of nationalism, social reform and the development of socialism, remained constant throughout the period and can be observed in every poster, despite changes in artistic style. Analysis of poster content has been undertaken according to the following criteria: content analysis, visual analysis, contextual information and interpretation. Examination of these posters according to this schema, has underlined the extent to which the core values of the Model Worker remained consistent throughout the period.

[Research outcomes.](#)

My research contributes to the understanding of the ideological motivations of propaganda during this era. My main contention is that despite significant developments in political ideology, the 'core values' of nationalism, social reform and the development of socialism, all guided decision making and Model Worker

propaganda throughout the period 1949-1965. I will demonstrate the extent to which the 'People's Democratic Dictatorship' as a concept, aided by the Model Worker, fulfilled two propaganda functions. Firstly, it provided citizens of 'New China' with role models for the social class to which they now belonged. Secondly, the system, supported by Model Workers, demonstrated to citizens what was expected of them, by countering real or perceived social problems. I will then demonstrate the extent to which the 'core values' of nationalism, social reform and the development of socialism persisted despite the post-Great Leap Forward breakdown of the People's Democratic Dictatorship.

Through detailed critical analysis of film and poster propaganda and an examination of key relevant policy documents of the era, I will argue that the belief in the power of the Model Worker as a tool of propaganda, was a contributing factor to the confident belief that the Great Leap Forward would be a success. Through a content analysis of primary propaganda sources related to Model Workers, I will contribute to and challenge the existing historiographical debate, concerning the use of propaganda in 'New China.' My approach will demonstrate the extent to which, despite the failure of the Great Leap, confidence in the propaganda value of the Model Worker was unshaken. The political environment changed significantly, particularly after Mao's proclamation that 'class struggle was basically over.' However, there remained a clear belief that re-education, on the basis of nationalism, social reform and the development of socialism, if implemented effectively, would eventually establish an idealised, model socialist society.

Chapter 2 – Political and Ideological Developments and the Model Worker, 1949-1956.

Subsequent to the Revolution in 1949, Mao, with the aid of the CCP's propaganda machine was determined to propagate an entirely different version of the ideal Chinese citizen. Through a promotion of three key themes, nationalism, social reform and the development of socialism, these 'Model Workers' would inspire the people and propel the country towards a new age of prosperity. This new citizen would be far from the 'sick man of Asia' and would banish the memories of the 'Bainian Guochi' (百年国耻) - 'The Century of Humiliation.' Propaganda designed to carry this message was produced across the full range of media available to the CCP.

In this chapter I will explore the historical background of the era in which the Model Worker first came to prominence, through an examination of a number of key events. Because of the large number of political campaigns that were undertaken by the CCP during the period 1949-1965, I have divided my analysis into two periods. Chapter 2 provides analysis of 1949-1957 and Chapter 3 examines the period 1957-1964. I have chosen to divide the period between these dates for a specific reason. The propaganda strategy for the Model Worker was to undergo a fundamental change following the 'Baihua Yundong' (百花运动) - 'Hundred Flowers Campaign' in 1956. This campaign was an attempt by the Party to allow the public, and primarily intellectuals, to criticize the direction of Chinese society and offer alternatives for development. It eventually resulted in the 'Fan You Yundong' (反右运动) - 'Anti-Rightist Campaign,' a suppression of those who criticized the Party. This purge lasted between 1957 and

1959. This campaign was particularly significant because, as the American Sinologist Stuart Schram stated, it was at this point that Mao proclaimed that ‘class struggle was basically over.’⁶³ This proclamation was to have significant impact on the use of propaganda and depictions of the Model Worker in the People’s Republic as it meant that the propagandists’ target audience changed significantly. My work will demonstrate the extent to which policy changes during this period were to have a profound impact on the development of the Model Worker. Indeed, whilst Stuart Schram and American Professor of Chinese politics Frederick Teiwes both note that this moment in the history of the new government was pivotal, they do not particularly consider its impact on the use of propaganda and, by extension, the Model Worker.⁶⁴ The historiographical debate regarding political developments during this era generally focusses on the way in which ideology drove the Great Leap. Professor of Chinese History Maurice Meisner, for example, argues that the origins of the Great Leap were based not only on a need for rapid modernisation, but also a necessity to drive further social and ideological change.⁶⁵ However, I will argue that in addition to the need for further improvements, Model Worker propaganda had affected policy decisions, perhaps encouraging the belief that projects such as the Great Leap Forward were undoubtedly going to be successful.

In this chapter I will firstly examine the influence of the Party’s ideological base on the direction of propaganda throughout the period 1949 to 1957. Secondly, I will explore the way in which these ideological aspirations were expressed in official documents firstly through an analysis of the interim constitution established in 1949 titled

⁶³ S. Schram, *The Thought of Mao Zedong*, (Cambridge University Press, 1989), p.10.

⁶⁴ F. Teiwes, ‘Establishment and consolidation of the new regime,’ in R. MacFarquhar and J. K. Fairbank (eds), *The Cambridge History of China: Volume 14: The People’s Republic, Part 1: The Emergence of Revolutionary China 1949-1965*, (Cambridge University Press, 1987), pp.122-123.

⁶⁵ M. Meisner, *Mao’s China and After: A History of the People’s Republic*, (Free Press, 1999), p.204.

‘Gongtong Gangling’ (共同纲领) - ‘The Common Programme’ and secondly, the first Constitution, published in 1954. I will investigate how these documents were to have a direct impact on the use of Model Workers in propaganda. Thirdly, I will explore how the promotion of the three key themes of Model Worker propaganda, nationalism, social reform and the development of socialism were expressed by the newly formed government. To achieve this I will examine the nationalist aspirations of the signing of the ‘Zhongsu Youhao Tongmeng Tiaoyue’ (中苏友好同盟条约) - ‘Sino-Soviet Treaty of Friendship, Alliance and Mutual Assistance’ and China’s involvement in the Korean War.⁶⁶ Both of these events occurred during 1950. I will then explore the three major social reform campaigns of the era, the establishment of the ‘Hunyin Fa’ (婚姻法) - ‘New Marriage Law’ in 1950⁶⁷ and the two rectification movements, named as the ‘San Fan Wu Fan’ (三反五反) - ‘Three and Five Anti campaigns.’⁶⁸ Finally, I will examine the Party’s attempt to develop socialism with the establishment of land reform during the 1950s.⁶⁹ I will then explore how an examination of the propaganda that accompanied it, and indeed the Model Worker as a concept, considerably adds to the historiographical debate.

The second section of this analysis, chapter 3, 1957 to 1964, will take into consideration the change in focus for propaganda that occurred following Mao’s proclamation that ‘class struggle was basically over.’⁷⁰ Firstly, I will investigate how the Hundred Flowers Campaign and, by extension the Anti-Rightist movement, were both used to consolidate this message. Secondly, I will examine how the Great Leap Forward,⁷¹

⁶⁶ Chapter 2, p.47.

⁶⁷ Ibid, p.54.

⁶⁸ Ibid, p.61.

⁶⁹ Ibid, p.65.

⁷⁰ Schram, p.10.

⁷¹ The Great Leap Forward campaign ran from 1958 to 1961 and was designed to rapidly expand China’s economy by making significant changes to the methods of production in the countryside with the intention of moving the country from socialism to the start of communism more quickly.

Mao's attempt to speed up the socialist development of the country was motivated by the three key themes of nationalism, social reform and socialist development. I will further examine how Model Workers were employed to propagate this message.

Through an analysis of these events and documents, these chapters will explore the ways in which the use of the Model Worker by the CCP was more than just an attempt to emulate Soviet Stakhanovism.⁷² Indeed, their use in propaganda campaigns was not simply about production and economic development. Equal emphasis was placed upon reviving and remodelling the soul of the nation following ruinous Civil War and also the 'Century of Humiliation' that had left political thinkers such as Mao stating that there was a danger that the Chinese would become 'slaves without a country.'⁷³

Throughout the period prior to the success of the Revolution, Mao had focussed on several key principles upon which society should be reformed; the promotion of nationalism, social reform and the development of socialism. Policy making was permeated by Model Worker propaganda that embodied these principles.

Ideological developments and the Model Worker.

There was a considerable shift in the way that propaganda was employed by the CCP following its seizure of power. During the Anti-Japanese and Civil War era, the Party had to rely primarily on written sources to propagate their message. Adverse conditions in the countryside and a lack of technical expertise meant that the use of more sophisticated media was beyond the reach of the Party. Consequently, to service the

⁷² The Stakhanovite movement in the Soviet Union began in 1935 and was named after Aleksei Stakhanov. Stakhanov had over fulfilled his production quota and was lauded as a model from which all other workers should follow in an attempt to increase production. See L. H. Siegalbaum, *Stakhanovism and the Politics of Productivity in the USSR, 1935-1941*, (Cambridge University Press, 1990) and M. E. A. Buckley, *Mobilizing Soviet Peasants: Heroines and Heroes of Stalin's Fields*, (Rowman & Littlefield, 2006).

⁷³ Schram, p.15.

message, earlier propaganda had been based, to a large extent, on adapting existing artistic forms with which the people were already familiar. Posters in particular, were designed to echo the already hugely popular ‘nianhua’ (年画) - ‘New Year Print’ style by replacing the familiar images of domestic bliss with images of societal brotherhood and strength through unity.⁷⁴ These images had a specific function, they were clearly designed to be as inclusive as possible and to encourage individuals to ‘join the cause’ against Japanese imperialism, thus promoting national unity within the country.

Following its seizure of power in 1949, the CCP was in a far stronger position. Propaganda began to become increasingly based on inspiration and instruction rather than outright persuasion. The use of Model Workers was, in itself, evidence of this approach. The people no longer had the choice of alternatives, they simply had the choice of whether to follow or not. The Model Worker was intended not simply as an agent of persuasion, but also as a means to educate the masses. The CCP had attained power largely by utilising the vast number of peasants in the countryside, by a promise of land reform and a fair society. The more complicated elements of the Party’s overall mission had not been thoroughly communicated, it was thus essential for this particularly large subsection of the Party’s support to be appropriately informed. In addition, throughout the years of struggle, the CCP had not had a great deal of influence in urban environments. This was largely because the Guomindang had controlled the cities. In addition, events such as ‘Si Yi Er Can An’ (四一二惨案) - ‘The April 12th Tragedy,’ or the ‘Shanghai Massacre’ as it is commonly known outside of China, when Jiang Jieshi had effectively purged communists from the cities, made their position untenable. Consequently, propagandists would be required to produce material that would appeal to two distinct geographic groups, the countryside and the urban centres.

⁷⁴ Chapter 5, p.243.

There was a general perception amongst propaganda analysts of the 1950s that the Chinese system of propaganda was not only the same as the one used by the Soviet Union, but was indeed part of a global Communist structure, controlled by Moscow. American journalist and intelligence agent, Edward Hunter in his work *Brainwashing, the Story of the Men Who Defied it* stated that, 'Few could understand that the success of this unified Red strategy depended on the people within the communist-bloc countries acting their parts as puppets on a string.'⁷⁵

This belief, that the 'Communist Bloc' was an indivisible entity is not entirely accurate. As Japanese historian and contributor to the *Cambridge History of China* series Dr. Mineo Nakajima argues, Mao had a more conciliatory attitude towards the United States than was believed at the time. On the 15th of June 1949 Mao stated that the new government would establish diplomatic relations with any other government who ceased aid to the Nationalists in Taiwan.⁷⁶ It may have appeared that the alliance with the Soviet Union, negotiated between Liu Shaoqi (刘少奇) and Stalin and formalised with the signing of 'The Sino-Soviet Treaty of Friendship, Alliance and Mutual Assistance,' on the 14th of February in 1950 was merely confirming an already existing mutual understanding.⁷⁷ However, the relationship between the CCP and the Soviets was not quite as friendly as it appeared. Because of China's experiences of foreign occupation, Mao was determined to pursue nationalistic policies that did not always match the aims of Moscow.⁷⁸ For example, when interviewed by the American

⁷⁵ E. Hunter, *Brainwashing, The Story of the Men who defied it*, (World Distributors, 1959), p.44.

⁷⁶ M. Najajima, 'Foreign relations: from the Korean War to the Bandung Line,' in MacFarquhar & Fairbank, p.263.

⁷⁷ At this stage Liu Shaoqi (刘少奇) held the position of Vice Chairman of the Central People's Government. He would later become President of the People's Republic from 1959 but was arrested in 1967 and purged from the government after being denounced by Mao as being a 'Capitalist Roder.'

⁷⁸ Schram, p.147. Schram describes the difficulties that Mao had with negotiation over railway access for the Soviets.

journalist Edgar Snow in 1936, he stated, 'We are not fighting for an emancipated China in order to turn the country over to Moscow!'⁷⁹

Throughout the period of revolutionary struggle, Mao had been frustrated by the advice of Soviet advisors and believed that their demands had hindered the development of the Revolution in China. This was because he considered that they did not understand what he believed to be the unique conditions that existed within the country. Consequently, as late as 1945, Mao had reached out to other sources of assistance, specifically the United States, to avoid being overly dependent on Soviet aid. During his time in Yan'an, Mao had spoken with a representative of the United States' 'Dixie Mission' to China about the need for American aid. As noted by Chinese Professor of Modern Chinese intellectual and diplomatic history, Emmanuel C.Y Hsü, at this stage Mao stated that the United States was 'the only country' that could assist in China's post-war development.⁸⁰ However, Mao's request for dialogue with the United States was not reciprocated and the CCP appeared to have no alternative but to form an alliance with the Soviet Union if it wanted to ensure swift economic development.

Propaganda during the period up to the Sino-Soviet split that started in the early 1960s, portrayed China and the Soviet Union as forming an ideological socialist brotherhood. However, although the CCP's first Five-Year Plan was largely Soviet inspired, there were some key areas of difference. Mao was intent on tailoring the Chinese Revolution to the situation in the country, rather than achieving a wholesale replication of the Soviet experience. Mao's additions to what he believed to be the 'socialist cannon' would be a contributing factor to the conflict that later broke out with the more orthodox thinking of the leadership in the Soviet Union. It was these additions that were to

⁷⁹ Schram, p.146.

⁸⁰ I. C. Y. Hsü, *The Rise of Modern China*, (Oxford University Press, 1990), p.673.

provide some of the inspiration for what would become the design of the Model Worker programme. The first constitution of the People's Republic did not create a specifically Soviet style 'Dictatorship of the Proletariat,' but instead a 'People's Democratic Dictatorship.' This built on ideas that Mao had developed in 1926 in his article *Analysis of the Classes in Chinese Society*.⁸¹ He stated that there were five major classes in China that represented three distinct views. These views were either pro-Revolution, Anti-Revolution or undecided.⁸² By 1949, Mao's thinking had evolved as the five distinct groups had been reduced to four, the working class, the peasantry, the urban petite bourgeoisie and the national bourgeoisie. The belief that these groups had three distinct views was further reduced to two; they were now either 'pro-Revolution' or 'undecided.' Mao summarised this union, describing its nature in 'Xin Minzhuzhuyi Lun' (新民主主义论) - 'On New Democracy.' He stated, 'New-democratic culture is the proletarian-led, anti-imperialist and anti-feudal culture of the broad masses.'⁸³

Thus, the 'People's Democratic Dictatorship' was intended to be an alliance of those groups who would work together under the guidance of the Party in the transition to socialist development. The flag adopted by the new state was intended to represent this alliance.⁸⁴ The flag itself serves as a powerful propaganda instrument. It was designed by Zeng Liansong, a citizen from Wenzhou, Zhejiang. The flag was to demonstrate the inclusiveness of the new society under the principles of the People's Democratic Dictatorship. Analysis of the flag demonstrates a clear difference of priority, at least on paper, for the new government compared with their Soviet counterparts. Whereas the

⁸¹ Z. Mao, 'Analysis of the Classes in Chinese Society,' *Selected Works of Mao Tse-Tung, Volume 1*, (Foreign Languages Press, Peking, 1965), p.13.

⁸² C.T. Hsü, 'Communist Education: Theory and Practice,' in R. MacFarquhar (ed), *China under Mao: Politics Takes Command*, (MIT Press, 1966), p.246.

⁸³ Z. Mao, 'On New Democracy,' *Selected Works of Mao Tse-Tung, Volume 2*, (Foreign Languages Press, Peking, 1965), p.372.

⁸⁴ Chapter 1, p.21.

new Soviet society was intended to be built on the foundations of agriculture and industry, China's new society would be built by the cooperation of its diverse peoples.

On this point, there appears to be a divergence in thinking between Mao and Soviet leaders, and an indication of the extent to which the CCP considered its revolutionary situation to be unique and thus requiring a less orthodox approach. However, this divergence is argued by Schram⁸⁵, Dutch Historian Frank Dikötter⁸⁶, American Professor of Government and International Relations Frederick Teiwes⁸⁷ and Professor of Chinese History Maurice Meisner⁸⁸ as being largely illusory. Schram states that the concept of a bourgeois-democratic revolution under the hegemony of the proletariat had already been developed by Lenin and Trotsky and was merely elaborated upon by both Stalin and Mao.⁸⁹ Frank Dikötter agrees with this viewpoint and further adds that Stalin was the main proponent of the use of 'New Democracy' in China as a means to restrain Mao who wanted to push the socialist revolution forward more quickly.⁹⁰ Furthermore, he states that the concept of the four group 'Tongyi Zhanxian' (统一战线) - 'United Front' was a sham, created so that the Party could, in Mao's words, 'Win over the majority, oppose the minority and crush all enemies separately.'⁹¹ Meisner states that the whole concept of the People's Democratic Dictatorship was, 'semantically obscure and socially ambiguous' further adding that the statement that the country was being led by a party of the proletariat was, 'A hollow and purely ideological claim.'⁹² However, this 'hollow and purely ideological claim' was to have a profound impact on the implementation of propaganda as it acknowledged the existence of four distinct

⁸⁵ Schram, pp.76-77.

⁸⁶ F. Dikötter, *The Tragedy of Liberation: A History of the Chinese Revolution 1945-1957*, (Bloomsbury Publishing, 2013), p.165.

⁸⁷ Teiwes, (1987), pp.78-79.

⁸⁸ Meisner, p.61.

⁸⁹ Schram, p.76.

⁹⁰ Dikötter, p.227.

⁹¹ Ibid, p.xi.

⁹² Meisner, p.61.

groups in society, which would all require different levels of attention. The evidence for this lies in the propaganda prior to 1957 and the Hundred Flowers Campaign, which, as I shall demonstrate in chapters four and five, was more diverse in content than that which followed in the late 1950s as traditional class boundaries had, it was argued by Mao, been ‘basically resolved.’⁹³

The way in which these four distinct groups were to be educated can be found in an examination of China’s unofficial interim constitution and the one subsequently adopted in 1954. These documents demonstrate the extent to which the mission of the Party was indeed based on the promotion of nationalism, social reform and the development of socialism. They are therefore relevant to an understanding of the Party’s overall propaganda programme and clearly influenced the concept of the Model Worker.

The ‘Common Programme’ and the Constitution.

The first of these documents, ‘The Common Programme,’ was established following the First Plenary Session of the Chinese People’s Political Consultative Conference on the 29th of September 1949, held in Beijing. The document served to crystallise concepts put forward by Mao in his earlier work ‘On New Democracy,’ and was adopted as an interim framework before the constitution could be formally established in 1954.

Although the document largely commits China to a socialist future, there are other aspects of Mao’s pre-Marxist thinking evident, as well as a clear commitment to the cause of a united Chinese nationalism. In addition, there are the first glimpses of what was to be expected of a Chinese citizen under the new government and an indication of

⁹³ Schram, p.10.

how ‘thought reform,’ the entire raison d’être for the propaganda campaign that was to follow, should be undertaken.

Analysis by historians of both the Common Programme and the first Constitution of the People’s Republic have so far focussed almost entirely on each document’s description of the structure of government, the ideological reasons for this organisation and the importance of each document for economic reconstruction. Indeed, French historian Jean Chesneaux states that the Common Programme was designed in such a way that the country would be returned to order and prosperity.⁹⁴ Whilst this may have been true over the long-term, in the short-term, if its ambitions were to be acted upon, then further political and social turmoil would be guaranteed. As Frederick Teiwes states, the Programme was used to narrowly define the enemy as being ‘imperialism, feudalism and bureaucratic capitalism.’⁹⁵ Consequently, at least two constituents of the People’s Democratic Dictatorship, those living in the countryside and the ‘National Bourgeoisie’ were likely to be targeted in any reform campaign. With regard to the relevance of the Common Programme to the development of the Model Worker, Immanuel C. Y. Hsü identified Article 42 of the constitution as being relevant to the construction of ‘The new socialist man.’⁹⁶ However, Hsü’s analysis only extends to the socialist aspects of the creation of a ‘new citizen.’ In this section I will examine both the Common Programme and the first constitution from a new perspective, focussing on its impact on the development of the Model Worker through the promotion of nationalism, social reform and the development of socialism.

⁹⁴ J. Chesneaux, *China, The People’s Republic, 1949-1976* (The Harvester Press, 1979), p.9.

⁹⁵ Teiwes, (1987), p.77.

⁹⁶ Hsü (1990), p.659.

The nationalist elements of the new programme are immediately apparent in Article 1 of the document.⁹⁷ A summary of the goals of the CCP, opposition to imperialism, feudalism and bureaucratic capitalism, ends with the stated intention of achieving these goals to ensure the ‘prosperity and strength of China.’⁹⁸ However, the main focus of the programme is undoubtedly on improvements that were intended to be made to society, both social and economic. Socially, the position of women was addressed by Article 6.⁹⁹ As I will investigate in more detail later in this chapter,¹⁰⁰ the first law enacted by the government dealt with the issue of marriage reform. This element of social reform, the position of women in society, was a constant theme in both poster and cinema propaganda in the early 1950s. The selection of Liu Hulan, a female peasant worker and Zhao Yiman, a female worker from the cities, for the position of ‘Model Worker’ was intended, particularly in Liu Hulan’s case to teach the masses why this element of social reform was so critical.

With Article 6,¹⁰¹ the Party stated that the conditions depicted in films such as *Liu Hulan* would finally be eliminated and that the courageous actions of both of the women would be rewarded through the granting of equal status with men.¹⁰² This equality was thoroughly presented via the poster medium, as both Zhao Yiman¹⁰³ and Liu Hulan¹⁰⁴ were portrayed in very similar ways to their male counterparts. As Professor of Modern Chinese Literature Zhong Xueping argues in her work *Long Live Youth and the Ironies of Youth*,¹⁰⁵ this would appear to indicate that the equality granted

⁹⁷ O. B. Van Der Sprenkel, M. Lindsay & R. Guillain, *New China: Three Views*, (Turnstile Press, 1950), p.200.

⁹⁸ Ibid.

⁹⁹ Ibid, p.201.

¹⁰⁰ Chapter 2, p.54.

¹⁰¹ Van Der Sprenkel, Lindsay & Guillain, p.201.

¹⁰² *Liu Hulan*, (1950), Directed by Sun Yu, [Film], China: Kunlun Film Studio.

¹⁰³ Chapter 5, p.258.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid, p.274.

¹⁰⁵ Z. Xueping, “‘Long Live Youth’ and the Ironies of Youth and Gender in Chinese Films of the 1950s and 1960s,” *Modern Chinese Literature and Culture*, Vol. 11, No.2, Fall (1999), pp.150-185.

by the CCP was rather masculine in nature. Whilst I agree that this is true to some extent, particularly regarding models from peasant and military backgrounds, the same cannot be said for industrial workers. Analysis of poster propaganda for the proletariat worker, Huang Baomei, reveals the extent to which more feminine depictions of Model Workers were still, at least prior to the Cultural Revolution, considered acceptable.¹⁰⁶ The issue of the correct behaviour of officials was also addressed, as Article 18 detailed the new requirements. This section, in particular, was to become of significance during the 'Three-Anti' and 'Five-Anti' propaganda campaigns.¹⁰⁷

In addition to the inclusion of Article 6, the CCP dedicated an entire chapter to the process of cultural and social reform. The chapter opens with the following statement, 'The main tasks of the People's Government in cultural and educational work shall be the raising of the cultural level of the people.... and the developing of the ideology of service to the people.'¹⁰⁸

The Model Worker concept was the ideal vehicle by which this aim could be implemented and realised. Certainly, the very make up of what was to be expected of a Model Worker and therefore by extension a new citizen, can be found in Article 42. The Programme states that, 'Love of the fatherland, love the people, love of labour, love of science and care of public property shall be promoted as the public spirit of all nationals of the People's Republic of China.'¹⁰⁹ It would not be until the emergence of the 'Xuexi Lei Feng' (学习雷锋) - 'Learn from Lei Feng' propaganda campaign in 1963 that a model who perfectly embodied all aspects of this Article would be

¹⁰⁶ Chapter 5, p.327.

¹⁰⁷ Chapter 2, p.61.

¹⁰⁸ Van Der Sprenkel, Lindsay & Guillaing, p.212.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid, p.213.

promoted.¹¹⁰ This campaign was instigated by Mao's designated successor, Lin Biao (林彪) and exhorted the people to behave as selflessly as the example set by Lei Feng in the diary that was 'found' following his death. 'Lei Feng Day' is still observed in China each year on the 5th of March.¹¹¹ The other models that form part of this study all, to a significant extent, exemplify these qualities, although none as perfectly as Lei Feng.

The Common Programme also dealt with the socialist side of national development promoted in both film and poster propaganda. One of the more significant problems for propagandists in the early stages of the People's Republic was the need to fully educate the peasant masses who had supported them throughout the Revolutionary period. The fundamental significance of the socialist revolution that the Party was intent on carrying out following the era of People's Democratic Dictatorship needed to be addressed. The Common Programme does so in Article 27, wherein the government details the process of returning 'land to the tiller.'¹¹² With regard to propaganda, this aspect was clearly exceptionally important to the CCP. Film propaganda in particular continuously addressed this issue, whereas other aspects of the promotion of socialism were only lightly touched upon by propagandists before 1957. For example, the Civil War epic *Dong Cunrui* which focussed primarily on the national unity of the soldiers fighting for the Red Army and their serious commitment to the cause of liberation, promoted the cause of land reform.¹¹³ An entire section of the film is dedicated to a soldier describing how his wife has changed her 'backward' thinking and now fully

¹¹⁰ Chapter 1, p.23.

¹¹¹ The existence of Lei Feng has been disputed by the historian Simon Leys in S. Leys, *'Broken Images: Essays on Chinese Culture and Politics'*, (Allison & Busby, 1979), p.93 and by J. Fraser, *The Chinese: portrait of a people* (Summit Books, 1980), p.100.

¹¹² Van Der Sprenkel, Lindsay & R. Guillain, p.208.

¹¹³ *Dong Cunrui*, (1955), Directed by Guo Wei, [Film] China: Changchun Film Studio.

understands why land reform was so important.¹¹⁴ Similarly, the opening scenes of *Liu Hulan* show the people working the land under the supervision of a cruel landlord, only to show how wonderful everything was following the Revolution when the process of returning 'land to the tiller' had been completed.¹¹⁵

Apart from the importance of national unity, social reform and the development of socialism, the Common Programme also gives some insight into the development of the systems by which thought reform was to be undertaken. Article 7 details what was to be done with counter-Revolutionaries and reactionary elements in the new society.¹¹⁶ Although the programme states that these people shall be 'disarmed' and their harmful influence removed, it also states that individuals shall be given an opportunity to reform and become part of the new system, 'they shall be given some means of livelihood and shall be compelled to reform themselves through labour so as to become new men.'¹¹⁷

Whilst the image of reform through labour now conjures images of Stalinist gulags, the time in which the Common Programme was created may not have had such negative conceptual connotations. Indeed, by continuously emphasising the fact that individuals could be reformed, Mao may have been attempting to correct one of the flaws that he believed to exist in the Soviet system, that is, the constant purges and political show trials. Whether reality was to match this seemingly benign approach is largely irrelevant to the development of propaganda, the intent was there. In addition to detailing the importance of thought reform, the Common Programme highlights the specific use of the key Maoist instrument of propagation, the Arts. Article 45 of the

¹¹⁴ Ibid, 1:24:32.

¹¹⁵ Chapter 4, p.194.

¹¹⁶ Van Der Sprenkel, Lindsay & Guillain, p.201.

¹¹⁷ Ibid.

programme states that, 'literature and art shall be promoted to serve the people, to awaken their political consciousness, and to enhance their enthusiasm for labour.'¹¹⁸

This was a natural extension of Mao's stated aims at the Yan'an Talks on Art and Literature, but here it can be found codified in the precursor to the People's Republic's first constitution.¹¹⁹ Article 45 also makes provision for the development of both cinema and what was described as being 'the People's drama.'

In The Common Programme, it is also possible to find another aspect that was to dominate propaganda throughout the Mao era. Prior to his conversion to Marxist-Leninism, Mao had also believed that the physical fitness of the nation was of key concern. His pre-Marxist work, had detailed how critical it was that the Chinese nation improve itself physically so that it could stand against any invaders.¹²⁰ Physical fitness as a theme runs throughout Model Worker propaganda, both in film and poster productions. The young Liu Hulan fought through a fever to continue her revolutionary work and the physical and psychological strength of Dong Cunrui gave him the courage to continue when all seemed lost. The new heroes of China would thus find inspiration in Article 48 of the Common Programme, wherein it was stated that, 'national physical culture shall be promoted.'¹²¹ Liu Hulan, Dong Cunrui and Zhao Yiman demonstrated how strong China's past Model Workers had been, they would provide physical inspiration for the nation, an example of the vitality of the people.

¹¹⁸ Ibid, p.213.

¹¹⁹ Z. Mao, 'Talks at the Yanan Forum on Literature and Art,' *Selected Works of Mao Tse-Tung, Volume 3,* ' (The People's Publishing House, 1965), pp.69-99.

¹²⁰ Marxists.org, 1917, *A Study of Physical Education*. [ONLINE] Available at: https://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/mao/selected-works/volume-6/mswv6_01.htm. [Accessed 06 November 2014].

¹²¹ Van Der Sprenkel, Lindsay & Guillain, p.214.

The Common Programme served as an ideological bridge between Mao's 'On New Democracy' and what would officially become the constitution of the People's Republic in 1954. As noted above, it gave a clear indication of not only the content and direction, but also from the outset, the rationale underpinning government propaganda. Five years later, the content of the first constitution was perhaps unsurprisingly, given the events that had occurred, rather different in tone. By this stage, the Party had some experience in governance and the country's involvement in the Korean War had consolidated China's international position. Indeed, American scholar and advisor to the U.S. government on China, A. Doak Barnett, stated that the first constitution merely served to codify the existing system.¹²² This view is echoed to some degree by both Schram and Teiwes, with one important caveat.¹²³ Both also note that the first constitution was an attempt by the CCP to differentiate itself from the Soviet Union.

Teiwes notes that the 1954 constitution was heavily based on the Soviet constitution of 1936, with some significant modifications. The most notable of these was the lack of provision for a secret ballot and no mention that any minority area of the country could secede. On the second point, Teiwes argues that because the Han ethnic group were the overwhelming majority the possibility of an ethnic group seceding was probably not considered.¹²⁴ I would also suggest that this was a reflection of the overwhelming nationalist message of unity that was a cornerstone of the CCP's self-created identity. As with the Common Programme, most analysis of China's first constitution has focussed almost entirely on the document's preoccupation with the structure of governance. Its precursor, the Common Programme, offered an excellent indication for

¹²² A. Doak Barnett, *Communist China: The Early Years, 1949-1955*, (Pall Mall Press, 1964), p.313.

¹²³ Schram, p.102.

¹²⁴ Teiwes (1987), p.104.

what was to be expected of not only the new country but also the new citizen. Its successor, the first constitution, was not to be so inspirational.

The new constitution jettisoned the rather more aspirational language of the Common Programme replacing it with a somewhat more pragmatic set of goals. Indeed, the preamble of the constitution specifically mentions the Korean War and the alliance with the Soviet Union, which was considered to be ‘unbreakable.’¹²⁵ However, when compared with the Common Programme, the more nationalistic elements are largely missing. There are no further idealistic proclamations of ‘making China great’, only a more sober pronouncement in Article 103 that it is the duty of the people to ‘defend the motherland.’ The article further states that, ‘It is the honourable duty of citizens of the People's Republic of China to perform military service according to the law.’¹²⁶

Model Workers such as Dong Cunrui were deployed in both the cinematic and poster media to impart this message. However, other elements of the Common Programme, such as the stated belief that citizens must ‘love the people’ are absent from the constitution. Article 100 stands in stark contrast to Article 42 of the Common Programme which states, ‘Love of the fatherland, love the people, love of labour, love of science and care of public property shall be promoted as the public spirit of all nationals of the People's Republic of China.’¹²⁷ The 1954 document replaces this statement of ‘public spirit’ with the following, ‘Citizens of the People's Republic of China must abide by the Constitution and the law, uphold discipline at work, keep public order and respect social ethics.’¹²⁸

¹²⁵ *Constitution of the People's Republic of China*, (Foreign Language Press, Peking 1954), p.3.

¹²⁶ *Ibid*, p.54.

¹²⁷ Van Der Sprenkel, Lindsay and Guillain, p.213.

¹²⁸ *Constitution of the People's Republic of China*, p.53.

Citizens are no longer required to ‘love their fatherland,’ but they must pay their taxes (Article 102), avoid damaging state property (Article 101) and abide by the constitution and the law. Whilst the more idealistic goals of reshaping the citizenry are largely unspoken in the constitution, the development of socialism is more forcibly emphasized. Chapter 1 of the constitution entitled ‘General Principles’ deals largely with the plan by which China would eventually transition to socialism.¹²⁹ However, the language used is far less evocative and emotional than that of the Common Programme. The very structure of the document also demonstrates the extent to which the Party had become of paramount importance in the country.

The organisational structure of the government is a major component of the document.¹³⁰ Although this is a standard trope of constitutions worldwide, the lighter, more heartfelt and lofty goals of the Common Programme are absent. The experiences of the past five years had perhaps rather tempered the revolutionary enthusiasm of those in command. Indeed, this document is hardly a guide to action and is more concerned with consolidation and retrenchment. The aspects of nationalism and social reform are consequently far less pronounced. The importance of the people rather than the Party, was to change in later revisions to the constitution. In the 1954 constitution, citizens’ rights and responsibilities were clearly less significant as they were relegated to the very end of the document. The threads of Mao’s ‘On New Democracy’ and his ‘Talks at the Yan’an Forum’ are barely visible. Consequently, it is unlikely that propagandists could have found much from the constitution to inspire them.

¹²⁹ Ibid, p.9.

¹³⁰ For a greater analysis of these structures, see Meisner, p.187.

Developments in Nationalism: The Sino-Soviet Pact and the Korean War.

Prior to the publication of the first constitution, a number of other laws and treaties were signed that saw the fulfilment of the aspirations of the Common Programme and by extension had an impact on the direction of propaganda. I will now examine these laws according to the following key themes; nationalism, social reform and the development of socialism inside the country. The first of these themes, nationalism, was an ever-present component of propaganda produced after 1949. When both the global and local situations are taken into consideration it is clear why Model Workers were deployed so quickly to promote the concept of national unity and the strength of the Chinese nation. Two events are particularly relevant to this development, firstly the signing of the Sino-Soviet Treaty in 1950 and the involvement of China in the Korean War.

The stated goal of increasing the 'strength' of China, as detailed in Article 1 of The Common Programme was rather a nebulous concept.¹³¹ However, it appears to have been clear to the CCP that for this to be achieved the country must prioritize one thing; an alliance with a major power. The signing of the Treaty of Alliance and Mutual Assistance was arguably not as straightforward as the American anthropologist Abraham M. Halpern has suggested. Halpern argues that as soon as Mao had decided to take an anti-imperialist course, it was inevitable that an alliance with the Soviet Union would be forged.¹³² However, although the CCP and the Soviet Communist Party had the same ideological roots, this did not guarantee favourable conditions for the Chinese government in negotiations. Indeed, as sociologist, specialising in contemporary China, Mineo Nakajima notes, the Sino-Soviet summit between 1949 and 1950 only gave Mao

¹³¹ Van Der Sprenkel, Lindsay and Guillain, p.200.

¹³² A. M. Halpern, 'China in the Postwar World,' MacFarquhar (1966), p.490.

‘partial satisfaction,’¹³³ as he had received a great deal less from the Soviets than he had expected.¹³⁴ This view is echoed by Dikötter who claims that Stalin hardly welcomed Mao with open arms when he visited Moscow, perhaps fearing that he was a potential rival, or may have become a ‘Chinese Tito.’¹³⁵ Consequently, alliance with the Soviet Union may not have been quite as straightforward as it had appeared to the outside world, but by signing the Sino-Soviet Treaty of Friendship, Alliance and Mutual Assistance, the new government was able to pursue a number of their more nationalistic objectives.

The legal basis for the treaty was established between 1949 and 1950 through a series of diplomatic meetings. The treaty featured six articles.¹³⁶ Although the CCP was later to engage in a series of anti-American propaganda campaigns, ‘the West’ as a political bloc was not the intended target of the Treaty; Japan was regarded as the single greatest threat to both China and the Soviet Union. The treaty, despite the Sino-Soviet split in the early 1960s, remained in force until 1979. The importance of the alliance with the Soviet Union is particularly apparent in propaganda films produced after treating ratification. The Soviets, acting as the ‘big brother’ of the CCP are the only foreign power that is mentioned positively as the ‘Imperialist Powers’ such as the United States, Britain and France are thoroughly discredited. In addition to film representations, poster propaganda highlighted the Soviet’s role as teacher to the People of China.

¹³³ For more detail on the financial aid provided to China by the Soviet Union, see C. Ming-li, ‘China’s Industrial Development, 1958-63,’ in MacFarquhar (1966), p.202.

¹³⁴ Nakajima, p.269.

¹³⁵ Dikötter, pp.122-124.

¹³⁶ Van Der Sprenkel, Lindsay and Guillain, p.227.



Figure 1.1. - Study the advanced production experience of the Soviet Union, struggle for industrialisation of our motherland. (1953).

Figure 1.1, was designed by Li Zongjin (李宗浸) and published by Renmin Meishu Chubanshe (人民美术出版社) - People's Art Publisher in 1953. It details the Soviet role as a 'big brother' in the newly formed relationship between China and the Soviet Union. In the foreground a Russian worker is revealing the secrets of industrialisation to a keen Chinese worker. There is a paternal quality to the picture, the Russian expert is larger than his Chinese counterpart and yet appears warm and approachable. They both look to the future, a future guaranteed by cooperation and industrialisation. This warm relationship was a hallmark of earlier Chinese propaganda which embraced the Soviet Union. However, following the Sino-Soviet split, propaganda increasingly gave the impression that anything 'foreign' was a danger to the People's Republic and was not to be trusted. 'The Sino-Soviet Treaty of Friendship Alliance and Mutual Assistance' was therefore important in framing China's relationship with other nations and served to make propagandists consider 'internationalizing' their content. In addition, the signing of the treaty undoubtedly gave the CCP the confidence to engage in a more muscular approach to foreign policy.

Chinese involvement in the Korean War cannot, however, be understood simply as an attempt by the new government to project its power beyond its borders in order to demonstrate the strength of the nation. Indeed, it appeared unlikely that China would want to involve itself in any more conflict having just emerged from several decades of war. However, although the Revolution in China had been achieved, there was still clearly a great deal of concern amongst the leadership of the dangers of counter-revolution, either from within the country or sponsored by foreign imperialist powers. Meisner states that this was one of the key concerns of the leadership and served to push them towards becoming involved in the conflict. He argues that there was a very real concern that the Guomindang leadership in Taiwan would pressure the United States to press on and invade China following success in Korea. Theoretically this would lead to the return of Jiang Jieshi.¹³⁷ This view is, however disputed by Dikötter, who claims that there was a great deal of argument in the Party's leadership as to whether they should become involved in the Korean conflict. He argues that this was because the Vice Chairman of the Central People's Government, Liu Shaoqi wanted to avoid any military engagement that had the potential to stall the country's fledgling economy, whereas Mao was intent on entering the conflict to boost the CCP's position in Asia and to remove Soviet influence from Korea.¹³⁸ By contrast, Halpern argues that China's entry into the war was at the behest of Stalin, arguing that the evidence for this lies in the fact that following the Soviet leader's death an armistice was swiftly agreed.¹³⁹

Opinions as to whether China gained or lost from the conflict are divided. Dikötter,¹⁴⁰ and Halpern¹⁴¹ both argue that Mao benefitted personally from the conflict because

¹³⁷ Meisner, p.80.

¹³⁸ Dikötter, p.131.

¹³⁹ Halpern, p.493.

¹⁴⁰ Dikötter, p.135.

¹⁴¹ Halpern, p.493.

Chinese forces had fought the United States to a stalemate, thus establishing China as a major source of influence in Asia. However, this view is not shared by Nakajima who argues that even though the ‘Kangmei Yuanchao’ (抗美援朝) - ‘Resist America, Assist Korea’ propaganda campaign reinforced national solidarity, it also left China isolated from the United Nations and unable to retake Taiwan because of the increased U.S. presence in the Pacific.¹⁴² Although the strategic benefits to China’s leadership are rather difficult to determine, the same cannot be said for the country’s propaganda department. The conflict was a gift to China’s propagandists. Following the successful conclusion of the war, the CCP had attempted to take full credit for the expulsion of the Japanese from China. Propaganda films such as *Zhao Yiman*¹⁴³ and *Liu Hulan*¹⁴⁴ in particular, gave a strong impression that it was the Communist Party, led by Mao Zedong, that had completely defeated the Japanese. The awkward detail, that the US nuclear attack in 1945 on the Japanese mainland was instrumental in the Japanese surrender, did not fit comfortably with this narrative.

The Korean War thus gave propagandists the opportunity to thoroughly demonise Republican China’s former allies and build on the already popular narrative of anti-imperialism. In addition, it gave them the opportunity to define more thoroughly what China and its people had now become following the Revolution. This was achieved by contrasting their ‘purity’ with the degenerate actions of the enemy. Indeed, the Southern Weekly Newspaper carried an article in 1951 that stated that with regard to America, ‘This is a country which is thoroughly reactionary, thoroughly dark, thoroughly corrupt, thoroughly cruel. This is the Eden of a pinch of millionaires, the hell of countless millions of poor people. This is the paradise of gangsters, swindlers,

¹⁴² Nakajima, pp.270-279.

¹⁴³ *Zhao Yiman*, (1950), Directed by Sha Meng, [Film], China: Changchun Film Studio

¹⁴⁴ *Liu Hulan*, (1950), Directed by Sun Yu, [Film], China: Kunlun Film Studio

rascals, special agents, fascist germs, speculators, debauchers, and all the dregs of mankind.’¹⁴⁵



Figure 1.2 – ‘The Chinese people absolutely cannot tolerate foreign encroachment; they cannot ignore the encroachment of imperialism in our neighbouring country.’ (1950).

The ‘dregs of humanity’ were presented in propaganda posters such as Figure 1.2. This was designed by Xu Ling (徐灵) and released in 1950. As noted by Stefan Landsberger in his brief analysis, the butcher in the foreground of the picture is intended to be the commander of the American forces in Korea, Douglas MacArthur. He can be seen using a blood stained knife to slaughter Korean children whilst American bombers cross the Yalu River, the border between China and Korea to destroy the newly constructed industrial heartland of China. The use of red in this poster is significantly different to the vibrant variant used in pro-CCP propaganda and instead gives the impression of the fires of hell, stirred up by the ‘fascist germs’ of the United States and its coalition partners.¹⁴⁶

¹⁴⁵ Quoted in R. Walker, *China Under Communism*, (Allen & Unwin, 1956), p.302, from the Nanfang Ribao, translated in *Current Background*, no.55, American Consulate-General, Hong Kong, 22nd January (1951).

¹⁴⁶ Ibid.

Incidents such as ‘Shang Gan Ling’ (上甘岭) - ‘Battle of Triangle Hill’ in 1952, provided an opportunity for propagandists to utilise Model Workers to demonstrate the moral, physical and spiritual superiority of the Chinese forces over what the Southern Weekly described as, ‘the dregs of mankind.’¹⁴⁷ A whole host of both real and fictional Model Workers were created by the Korean War and its accompanying propaganda campaign, ‘Resist America and Assist Korea.’ This campaign ran throughout the war period and focussed on both demonising the American enemy and promoting the humanitarian actions of the Chinese volunteers in the conflict.¹⁴⁸ Cinematic works such as *Yingxiong Er Nv* (英雄儿女) - *Heroic Sons and Daughters*¹⁴⁹ and *Shang Gan Ling* were accompanied by propaganda posters featuring heroes of the conflict.¹⁵⁰ The ‘Resist America, Assist Korea’ campaign was built on nationalist themes that had already been introduced in propaganda detailing the anti-Japanese and Civil War. As will be explored in Chapter 5 in a more detailed analysis of posters featuring specific Model Workers, this style was to continue throughout the decade and was extended to models that were entirely unrelated to the Korean and Civil War conflicts.

The more nationalistic elements of Model Worker propaganda were certainly present prior to the Korean War. However, these were greatly enhanced by the conflict. Propagandists expertly used the war to both standardise depictions of the enemy and portray the idealised Chinese citizen. Events such as the Civil War provided an opportunity to revise the role of the people in the conflict, to demonstrate the power and commitment of those who had striven to make the Revolution a success. Their contribution perhaps appeared even more powerful to the population, when it was seen

¹⁴⁷ Ibid.

¹⁴⁸ chinese posters.net. 1950. *Foreign Friends: North Korea*. [ONLINE] Available at: <http://chinese posters.net/themes/north-korea.php>.

¹⁴⁹ *Heroic Sons and Daughters*, (1964), Directed by Zhaodi Wu, [Film], China: Qilu.

¹⁵⁰ *Shang Gan Ling*, (1956), Directed by Sha Meng, [Film], China: Changchun Film Studio

together with the heroic actions of their fellow citizens in the more recent Korean conflict.

Social Reform – Marriage Law.

Conflict, both external and internal had provided the CCP propagandists with a wealth of models that could be used to promote national unity and the strength of the Chinese people. Social reform was no less important, as is evident in ‘the Common Programme.’¹⁵¹ The issue of marriage reform and by extension the position of women in society was frequently explored in Model Worker films throughout the period. As late as 1962, the fictional Model Worker ‘Li Shuang Shuang’ (李双双) in a film of the same name,¹⁵² devoted a large amount of screen time to the issue. This production was an elaboration of a story that was part of a newly produced handbook on marriage.¹⁵³ It saw the fictional Li, a newly empowered local busybody taking a great interest in assisting a younger girl in the village to marry for love rather than obey the more traditional, or reactionary ideas of her family.¹⁵⁴

Mao proposed the concept of ‘love matches’ that could replace the traditional approach to marriage.¹⁵⁵ Indeed, this concept, of a ‘love match’ was extended to the use of language within the new society. As Chinese scholar Fengyuan Ji notes, it was during this period that the term ‘Airen’ (爱人) - ‘Love Partner’ was introduced to replace existing terms for husband and wife. This was to emphasize the fact that a marriage had been organised on the basis of love and not the pre-Revolutionary values of family

¹⁵¹ Chapter 2, p.37.

¹⁵² *Li Shuang Shuang*, (1962), Directed by Ren Lu, [Film], China: Haiyan Film Studio.

¹⁵³ For a more thorough account and translation of key aspects of this book see K.S. Karol, *China: The Other Communism*, (T Hill & Wang, 1968), p.175.

¹⁵⁴ K.S. Karol gives an account of both the story that inspired this film and the reaction he observed to it during his visit to China in Karol, pp.172-182.

¹⁵⁵ Schram, p.27.

interests.¹⁵⁶ As I will explore in Chapter 4, the female Model Worker, Liu Hulan, was to represent the aspirations of youth and its desire for more freedom of action.¹⁵⁷ The implementation of the new marriage law was the first step towards the realisation of this ambition.

Whilst the historical significance of the implementation of the new law is without question, there is some disagreement about the degree to which the CCP can take credit for its implementation. Whilst Chesneaux argues that the new marriage law provided a clean break with the past and was, by extension, truly revolutionary,¹⁵⁸ this view is disputed by the American historian John K. Fairbank. Fairbank states that the issue of marriage reform was not solely a CCP invention. He credits the New Culture Movement with the innovation. The New Culture Movement was a broad alliance of intellectuals who had attempted in the 1920s, to initiate marriage reform as a means to break the domination of the family, which they believed limited personal choice.¹⁵⁹ Although Mao, perhaps because of his own experiences of marriage, clearly wished to see reform of the system, the CCP had a quite different motivation to that of the New Culture Movement for wishing to implement reform. The Model Worker movement, although not entirely Stakhanovite in nature, was intended to motivate citizens towards greater production in service of the country as a whole. Thus, the issue of marriage reform was not simply about improving the social situation of the people, but was also because the CCP wanted greater control over the process, rather than trusting it to the lottery of family self-interest, as had been the case in pre-Revolutionary China. Whilst people, under the new law, were free to marry whomever they chose, propaganda

¹⁵⁶ J. Fengyuan, 'Linguistic Engineering before the Cultural Revolution,' *Linguistic Engineering: Language and Politics in Mao's China*, (University of Hawaii Press, 2003), pp.42-109.

¹⁵⁷ Chapter 4, p.185.

¹⁵⁸ Chesneaux, p.39.

¹⁵⁹ J. K. Fairbank, 'The reunification of China,' in MacFarquhar & Fairbank, p.27.

posters and film representations of the process focussed heavily on the importance of choosing the ‘correct’ person to marry.¹⁶⁰

An examination of the new marriage law, the first piece of legislation passed by the new government in 1950,¹⁶¹ demonstrates the extent to which it was to have enormous significance for the Model Worker movement subsequent to the Revolution. It provided not only a legal framework for marriage in the People’s Republic, but also gives some indication as to the values required of a new citizen. Indeed, Article 1 of the law established the equality of men and women as it abolished the traditionally accepted superiority of men over women and eradicated the practice of arranged marriage. This Article, combined with Article 7 which stated that a husband and wife were to have equal status in the home, was an attempt to counter pre-Revolutionary ideas explored in the film *Liu Hulan*,¹⁶² where the grandfather of the female protagonist, Liu Hulan, states that the birth of a daughter is ‘always a loss.’¹⁶³

One of key tasks of the Model Worker, assistance in construction of a new society, is dealt with in Article 8. This article details what is to be expected of a family unit, stating that the family are, ‘to live in harmony, to engage in production, to care for the children and to strive jointly for the welfare of the family and for the building up of a new society.’¹⁶⁴

This focus on economic production and the construction of the new society is echoed in Article 23, which deals with the issue of divorce. Divorce, although not impossible in

¹⁶⁰ K.S. Karol explores this aspect, with particularly reference to ‘Li Shuang Shuang’ in Karol, p.175.

¹⁶¹ J. Chen, P. K. Cheng & M. Lestz with J. D. Spence, *The Search for Modern China: A Documentary Collection*, (W.W. Norton & Company, 1999), p.375.

¹⁶² Chapter 4, p.185.

¹⁶³ *Liu Hulan*, (1950), Directed by Sun Yu, [Film], China: Kunlun Film Studio, 0:15:40.

¹⁶⁴ Chen, Cheng & Lestz with Spence, p.377.

pre-Revolutionary China was heavily biased in favour of men. Women were not guaranteed any share of the outcomes, thus making them less inclined to seek divorce. Article 23 provided women with the right to property that they owned prior to the union and also guaranteed them a share of anything else gained during the marriage. However, the issue of production is still clearly of great importance. The article states that if a court is called upon to make a decision on the couple's assets, in the case of disagreement, then it shall be decided, after considering the family, according to, 'the principle of benefitting the development of production.'¹⁶⁵

Once again, it can be seen that the issue of social reform and the interests of the people were intended to be subordinate to the benefit of society as a whole. A model citizen, one who had benefitted from the heroic struggle of female model workers such as Liu Hulan and Zhao Yiman were thus required to keep the wider society in mind, even in the case of personal family decisions. Indeed, the extent to which citizens were required to consider the harmony of society can be observed in Article 25. This article stated that citizens who had divorced were required to render assistance to their former partners. If they failed to do so then the People's court had the power to force them to do so. The marriage law was consequently an essential component of detailing the duties of the new citizen and was thus a further guide for propagandists who were to use Model Workers in various forms of media.

Poster propaganda for this campaign appears to have been quite extensive.¹⁶⁶ Designs such as figure 1.3 and figure 1.4 were meant to make the benefits of the new policy clear, but also emphasized the importance and benefits of economic production. These

¹⁶⁵ Ibid, p.379.

¹⁶⁶ chinese posters.net. 1950. *New Marriage Law*. [ONLINE] Available at: <http://chinese posters.net/themes/marriage-law.php>.

two posters represent two of the socio-geographic areas in which propagandists were operating after the Revolution. The first focuses on the countryside and the second on those who lived in urban environments. An analysis of these posters demonstrates the extent to which, even though the environment of these two communities differed greatly, the central messages of the new law remained constant, although there were clear attempts to target the propaganda to specific groups of the People's Democratic Dictatorship.



Figure 1.3 – A free and independent marriage is good, there is great happiness in unified production, (1953).

Figure 1.3, was designed by Bi Cheng (毕成), released in February 1953 and entitled, 'A free and independent marriage is good, there is great happiness in unified production.' It features two workers from the peasant class unified under the new marriage law. The peasants stand together, in the centre of the frame, with neither significantly raised above the other, this is clearly a statement of the equality guaranteed

by the new law. The entire lower half of the frame is taken up by the abundant crop that the new couple have worked together to harvest. This represents the fruit of not simply their labour, but the productive power of their new marriage. Although dressed in peasant clothing, the husband wears a shirt in revolutionary red whilst his wife's clothing is a rather more feminine lighter red. Both are well fed, having fully embraced the spirit of Article 8 of the new law. In addition, the extent to which this marriage has been a 'love match' is seen in the way in which the husband is tenderly and lovingly looking at his wife. The use of text is limited, with a simple two-part message designed to be easily understood by people in the countryside with minimal levels of literacy.



Figure 1.4 – Freedom of marriage, happiness and good luck, (1953).

By contrast, figure 1.4 designed by Yu Yunjie (俞云阶) in 1953 and published by Huadong Renmin Meishu Chubanshe (华东人民美术出版社) - East China People's

Art Publisher, entitled 'Freedom of marriage, happiness and good luck,' was clearly designed for a more urban audience. This included the workers, national bourgeoisie and the intellectuals that formed part of the People's Democratic Dictatorship. As in Figure 1.3, the husband and wife stand together, equally in the centre of the frame, although there is perhaps a slightly more progressive aspect to their relationship as they are depicted holding hands, something that may not have been quite so accepted in the more conservative countryside. This element is significant as it demonstrates the extent to which urban marriage propaganda focussed to a greater extent on the concept of the 'love match,' as opposed to the production benefits promised in the countryside. The newly married couple both wear a rosette, representing the redness of their hearts as they walk forward together with 'happiness and good luck.' The extent to which this poster was targeted at the more educated urbanites, can be seen in the extensive use of text in the background behind the happy couple. The text contains details of some of the provisions of the new marriage law that the couple appear to be holding in their hands. Visible in the background are parts of the new marriage law, including 'Chapter 1 – Principles,' 'Abolish forced marriage,' 'Guarantee freedom to marry,' 'One husband, one wife,' 'Male and female have equal rights,' 'protect women and children's legal rights,' 'Bigamy is illegal,' 'Mistresses are forbidden.' The use of more complex language would indicate that the poster was intended for an urban audience.

Whilst Model Workers were not directly employed to promote this new law, the benefits of it were directly addressed in films such as *Liu Hulan* and *Zhao Yiman*, both of which featured strong women who yearned for greater control over their lives. As I shall explore in more detail in Chapter 4, these women were used to demonstrate not just the problems with the old society, but what could be achieved if an individual behaved in the same revolutionary way as a Model Worker. Although Meisner notes

that one of the complaints raised during the ‘Hundred Flowers Campaign’ was that the New Marriage Law was not being strictly adhered to, the establishment and promotion of it thus demonstrated the CCP’s intent to develop effective solutions to the significant social problems highlighted by earlier Model Workers in film and poster propaganda.¹⁶⁷

Social Reform - The Three Anti and Five Anti Campaigns.

The Model Worker campaign was unlikely to gain any traction throughout the country if it had required citizens to engage in an exercise of cognitive dissonance. Models may have been the ideal that citizens were urged through propaganda to strive to match, but as the Model Workers were ultimately subordinate to Party officials it was clearly important that an attempt was made to establish confidence in the system that they were serving. Furthermore, the Three and Five Anti Campaigns were an attempt to combat the remnants of traditional culture that continued to permeate specific levels of society; traditions that no longer fit with the vision for a new culture outlined by Mao in ‘On New Democracy’ and later in ‘the Common Programme.’

The views of historians regarding both the motivation for the campaign and the way in which it was conducted vary quite considerably. Frederick Teiwes argues that following the ‘basic success’ of land reform in the countryside, attention inevitably turned to establishing socialism in the cities, in order that central planning be improved.¹⁶⁸ However, by contrast, former advisor to the American government on China, A. Doak Barnett states that the campaign was not ideological and was really an attempt to both extort funds from businesses and steal economic data from the capitalist class in order to fund the war in Korea.¹⁶⁹ Whilst Teiwes argues that the Three and Five

¹⁶⁷ Meisner, p.188.

¹⁶⁸ Teiwes (1987), p.119.

¹⁶⁹ Doak Barnett, p.132.

Anti Campaigns were not only of financial benefit to the Party but also gave them greatly enhanced state control over private companies.¹⁷⁰ This argument is contested by Chinese scholar Chou Ming Li who argues that the campaigns had a particularly negative impact on the economy, stating that economic figures from 1952 in particular are inadequate for providing a baseline for Chinese economic growth during that period.¹⁷¹ Whilst it is certainly true that there were economic considerations regarding the campaign, it is unlikely that they were the sole reason for the CCP to engage in a rectification campaign at such an early point in their governance given the possible dangers to the stability of the economy. The ideological aspirations of, ‘On New Democracy’ dominated the decision to launch the campaign, as I shall now explore.

Following the Revolution, the CCP had four distinct groups that needed to be reformed in order that society could be improved. The largest of these groups, the peasants, were despite exhortations from Mao to the contrary, clearly the priority.¹⁷² Consequently a new Land Reform policy began on the 30th of June 1950. This campaign, as I shall explore in more detail later in this chapter was more than an attempt to simply give the peasants control over the land; it was intended to communicate to them the finer details of the proposed transition to capitalism. The other groups that formed part of the People’s Democratic Dictatorship were to be dealt with quite differently. The Three and Five Anti campaigns were broadly intended to deal with the considerable problems with corruption, that the newly liberated society was continuing to have. The first of these campaigns, the ‘Three Anti’ focussed on the elimination of ‘corruption,’ ‘waste’ and ‘bureaucracy.’ American specialist in the Chinese Communist Party, Frederick C. Teiwes argues in his work, *Politics and Purges in China*, that there was a general

¹⁷⁰ Teiwes (1987), p.91.

¹⁷¹ Ming-Li, p.149.

¹⁷² Schram, p.110.

perception amongst the CCP leadership that cadres that had fought the revolutionary war had become corrupted by the bright lights of the city.¹⁷³ This was believed to be particularly true of Shanghai, a city that had been comprehensively occupied by the colonial powers.¹⁷⁴ The campaign was thus intended to reform the most important member of the People's Democratic Dictatorship, one of the key sources of the Model Worker's inspiration, the Party itself.

Similarly, the purpose of the Five Anti campaign was to deal with corruption, specifically bribery, theft of state property, tax evasion, cheating on government contracts and stealing state economic information. As is apparent from the litany of crimes that were to be reformed, the target of this campaign was to be the ideologically most troublesome member of the People's Democratic Dictatorship, the National Bourgeoisie. The relationship of the capitalist class with the new government, although guaranteed by both the Common Programme and assurances made by Mao in 'On New Democracy' was rather precarious. The timing of the launch of this campaign is critical in understanding this relationship. Mao explained at the Sixth Plenum in October 1955 that the time was right for the reform of the cities as the Land Reform policy in the countryside had been completed successfully. The peasants were now firmly wedded to the CCP, there was no further danger of counter-revolution from the countryside.¹⁷⁵ Attention could now be focussed on the cities. With regard to the development of the Model Worker, it is the Five Anti Campaign that is of most significance. Teiwes argues that the campaign was intended to eradicate bourgeois values and practices.¹⁷⁶ These

¹⁷³ F. Teiwes, *Politics and Purges in China: Rectification and the Decline of Party Norms, 1950-1965*, (M.E. Sharpe, Inc 1979), p.134.

¹⁷⁴ For more information about the changing role of Shanghai and propaganda perceptions of the city throughout the 1950s and early 1960s see Y. Braester's "A Big Dying Vat": The Vilifying of Shanghai during the Good Eighth Company Campaign,' *Modern China* Vol. 31, No. 4 Oct (2005), pp.411-447.

¹⁷⁵ Schram, p.118.

¹⁷⁶ Teiwes (1979), pp.134-137.

values were clearly deemed to be not only harmful to the Revolution but also a significant barrier that would prevent the effectiveness of the propaganda associated with the ideologically pure Model Workers that were to be used by the CCP.

Indeed, as French historian Jean Chesneaux argues the campaign was itself an attempt to engage the public in rectification.¹⁷⁷ The involvement of the population was to have two benefits with regard to this. Firstly, it would ensure that the public fully understood what was unacceptable in 'new China' and secondly it would provide the Party with possible new recruits to replace those who had been retained from the Guomindang era.¹⁷⁸ As Teiwes notes, one of the more pressing concerns facing the CCP at this time was a lack of personnel. Following the seizure of power, the CCP only had 4.5 million members, a number considered to be inadequate for governing such a vast geographical area.¹⁷⁹ However, although the campaign undoubtedly provided the CCP with willing new recruits, there is some disagreement amongst historians as to the impact that the campaign was to have on those targeted for rectification. Whilst Teiwes states that the campaign was mostly persuasive rather than coercive,¹⁸⁰ this is challenged by the American Professor of Social Sciences, Ezra Vogel who states that those who were 'rectified' were not prepared for the psychological shock of being denounced by friends and family.¹⁸¹ In addition, A. Doak Barnett argued that victims of the campaign were often imprisoned and speculated that they were part of a government plan to use prisoners for national construction projects.¹⁸² More recently, Frank Dikötter in the second of his 'People's History' trilogy, *The Tragedy of Liberation*, has

¹⁷⁷ Chesneaux, p.50.

¹⁷⁸ Meisner, p.96.

¹⁷⁹ Teiwes (1987), p.84.

¹⁸⁰ Teiwes (1979), p.141

¹⁸¹ E. F. Vogel, 'From Friendship to Comradeship: The Change in Personal Relations in Communist China,' in MacFarquhar (1966), p.411.

¹⁸² Doak Barnett, p.66.

confirmed this view, stating that the campaign was not only violent, but that the targets of rectification were decided, on a whim, by the Chairman.¹⁸³

However, despite these aspects of the campaign, the propaganda value of it cannot be underestimated. The Three and Five Anti campaigns were used by the CCP to ensure that the rhetoric and rationale of the Model Worker could be backed by a leadership that at the very least appeared to be holding itself to the new values detailed by Mao in 'On New Democracy.' The campaign would thus lessen the need for the people to engage in a painful exercise of cognitive dissonance, as the Party through the Three Anti Campaign, and society, through the Five Anti Campaign, was presented as being 'clean.' Model Worker propaganda would thus, in the eyes of the people, have had more basis in reality. Indeed, although there is no explicit propaganda linking the Three Anti and Five Anti campaigns with the Model Worker, it does feature implicitly, particularly in pieces featuring military models such as filmic adaptations of *Dong Cunrui*, and *Lei Feng*.

Construction of Socialism – Land Reform.

Although the social reform movements of the Three and Five Anti campaigns were less visible in propaganda during the early 1950s, the same cannot be said for the CCP's Land Reform campaign that was launched in 1950. Both campaigns share a common ideological rationale that can be found in Mao's 'On New Democracy,' as explored above. Once the People's Democratic Dictatorship had been established, the CCP began the process of making the ambitions of the Common Programme a reality. The first group in the People's Democratic Dictatorship to be targeted was the part of society that had made the greatest contribution to the success of the CCP during the

¹⁸³ Dikötter (2013), p.159.

Revolution; the peasantry. The fact that the peasants were chosen first is significant as it contradicts earlier statements by Mao, that following the Revolution, the Party would shift the majority of its attention to the cities as the countryside had already enjoyed the attention of the CCP during the Civil War period.¹⁸⁴

However, it was clear that the peasantry was of enormous significance because the countryside would be responsible for supplying the materials required for further industrialisation. During the Civil War era, the CCP had been the only political group that had been able to successfully capitalise on the support of China's vast peasantry because they were able to harness its feelings of discontent with the existing system.¹⁸⁵ Mao had said to American journalist Edgar Snow in 1936 that whoever won the peasants would win China.¹⁸⁶ Consequently, propaganda targeted at the peasants had focussed on promises of land reform and a more equitable society for those living under communism. The Agrarian Reform Law was passed in June, 1950. Its stated purpose was to eliminate the 'land ownership system of feudal exploitation.' According to the law, the agrarian community was divided into five specific categories; landlords, rich peasants, middle peasants, poor peasants and hired hands.¹⁸⁷ Chinese historian Immanuel C. Y. Hsü notes, the purpose of the campaign was to redistribute the land from the rich to the poor, with those in the middle, neither losing nor significantly gaining. Once this stage was completed, the plan was to move towards collectivisation in order to prevent the rich peasants from re-emerging.¹⁸⁸

¹⁸⁴ Schram, p.110.

¹⁸⁵ Doak Barnett, p.172.

¹⁸⁶ E. Snow, *The Other Side of the River*, (Random House, 1961), p.70.

¹⁸⁷ Hsü (1990), p.652.

¹⁸⁸ Ibid, p.653.

Analysis of both the ideological motivation and the practical methods of implementation employed during the Land Reform campaign have a profound impact on the study of propaganda and by extension, the Model Worker movement during this period. The view that the CCP had harnessed the discontent of the peasants with their feudal landlord masters has recently been disputed by Frank Dikötter who states in his work, *The Tragedy of Liberation* that the organisational situation in the countryside was not as it has been presented over the past sixty years. Dikötter argues that Landlords did not exist in the countryside and that the whole concept of class struggle was an invention of the CCP.¹⁸⁹ He further states that when the CCP began the process of Land Reform in the countryside it had to expend great efforts to encourage the peasants to become involved in a class struggle that he claims was entirely fabricated by the Party. Dikötter considers that the reason the Party was intent on doing this was because Mao was trying to outdo Stalin and his treatment of the Kulaks during the Soviet Union's experience of collectivisation in the late 1920s. Furthermore, he argues that Mao wanted to bind the peasants to the Party by encouraging them to engage in acts of violence from which there would be no return.¹⁹⁰ By contrast, Meisner argues that it was the party that tried to stop 'enthusiastic' peasants from going too far because the CCP was deeply concerned with economic productivity at this stage.¹⁹¹ However, this view is disputed by Teiwes who, similarly to Dikötter, states that the peasantry had to be encouraged to engage in class struggle against their masters. Teiwes, however, offers different reasoning for this, arguing that because the CCP had only been in control for a short period, the peasantry were concerned that the Party may have been removed from power and the former power structure restored.¹⁹² In addition, the outbreak of the Korean War in June 1950, fuelled concerns that counter-revolution was

¹⁸⁹ Dikötter, p.70.

¹⁹⁰ Ibid, p.75.

¹⁹¹ Meisner, p.102.

¹⁹² Teiwes (1987), p.85.

a very real possibility. The peasants were consequently, he argues, attempting to avoid putting themselves in a position that they would later regret.

If Dikötter's analysis is correct then it will have a profound impact on the study of propaganda during this era. One of the main villains depicted in film propaganda, the Landlord, would have been a concept of which the people would have had little understanding and it would therefore have had little propaganda value. As noted by French Philosopher, Jacques Ellul, for propaganda to be effective there has to be some aspect with which a target audience can identify.¹⁹³ Indeed, he states that propaganda must engage with 'the fundamental psycho-sociological bases on which a whole society rests, the presuppositions and myths not just of individuals or of particular groups but those shared by all individuals in a society.'¹⁹⁴ Consequently, if as Dikötter states, the concept of class struggle in the countryside were a construct of the CCP, then the resulting propaganda would have been severely limited in its effectiveness. Ellul asserts that, 'A propaganda pitting itself against this fundamental and accepted structure would have no chance of success.'¹⁹⁵ Dikötter addresses this by stating that the people had to, 'Reconcile the huge gap that existed between the propaganda on the one hand and the reality of revolution on the other.'¹⁹⁶

However, here Dikötter is referring to the use of violence, during the Land Reform campaign, not specifically the reality of an entire class structure. Whilst it is plausible that aspects of class struggle were embellished to guarantee the support of the

¹⁹³ J. Ellul, *Propaganda, The Formation of Men's Attitudes*, (Vintage Books, 1973), p.39.

¹⁹⁴ Ibid, p.38.

¹⁹⁵ Ibid, p.39.

¹⁹⁶ Dikötter, p.178.

peasants,¹⁹⁷ denying the existence of an entire class structure would call into question the rationale for the CCP's entire propaganda campaign. Cinematic presentations featuring Model Workers such as the female peasant Liu Hulan¹⁹⁸ and later the young boy Pan Dongzi (潘东子)¹⁹⁹ who pitted their wits against the cruel oppression of their landlord masters would have had little traction in a community that had never experienced such a societal structure. Consequently, for the Model Worker to be successful as a propaganda concept, the individual would need to feel some emotional and cultural connection with the Model. If the Model were thus behaving in a way that had no relation to the individual's life, then his/her effectiveness as a persuasive agent of change would have been drastically reduced or nullified. More recently, Dikötter's work has come under scrutiny regarding interpretation of sources and the problems caused by translation. Discussion on the H-Net's PRC group focussed on the misappropriation or misinterpretation of quotations related to Mao's speeches regarding the Great Leap Forward.²⁰⁰

Whilst the Land Reform campaign did undoubtedly result in increased aggression and conflict in the countryside, the degree to which violence was the CCP's objective is highly debateable. Whilst Meisner,²⁰¹ Doak Barnett²⁰² and Teiwes²⁰³ state that the CCP was keen to learn from the violence that resulted from Soviet Land Reform in the late 1920s, this view is disputed by Dikötter in his more recent work.²⁰⁴ An analysis of

¹⁹⁷ Novelist Ding Ling's Stalin Prize winning novel D. Ling, *The Sun Shines over the Sanggan River*, (Foreign Languages Press, 1984), features detailed fictional accounts of the peasantry engaged in class struggle.

¹⁹⁸ *Liu Hulan*, (1950), Directed by Sun Yu, [Film], China: Kunlun Film Studio.

¹⁹⁹ Pan was the star of a feature film titled *Sparkling Red Star*, (1974), directed by Ang Li & Jun Li, [Film], China: August 1st Film Studio.

²⁰⁰ | H-PRC | H-Net. 2016. *Looking for Great Leap "smoking gun" document* | H-PRC | H-Net. [ONLINE] Available at: <https://networks.h-net.org/node/3544/discussions/99266/looking-great-leap-smoking-gun-document>.

²⁰¹ Meisner, p.102.

²⁰² Doak Barnett, p.172.

²⁰³ Teiwes (1979), p.111.

²⁰⁴ Dikötter, p.75. Dikötter makes specific comparisons with similar attempts at reform in Taiwan.

propaganda posters produced during this period specifically designed for the Land Reform campaign indicate that the CCP was, at the very least, attempting to provide a more inclusive and harmonious approach to land reform than had been apparent during Stalin's attempt at a similar process in the Soviet Union.



Figure 1.5 – The life of the peasants is good after Land Reform. (1951).

Figure 1.5, designed by Jin Meisheng (金梅生) published by Huamei Huapian Chubanshe (华美画片出版社) - Huamei Picture Publisher in 1951, presents an image of prosperous domestic harmony. An extended family, featuring parents, grandparents and children form a family unit that has clearly benefitted from land reform. They appear to be healthy, well dressed and well fed. There is no indication of violence, conflict or division as the members of the family enjoy the fruits of their work under the benevolent gaze of the Chairman. There is a clear focus on the future as there are three children of which the youngest is holding the newly created Chinese national flag. Around the room there is a clear indication of abundance, with livestock and baskets filled with supplies on prominent display. The subtle use of colour, specifically red, is

used to draw attention to both the national flag and the scarf worn by the symbol of China's future; the young boy at the table. Text is used very sparingly, with the picture designed to be self-explanatory.



Figure 1.6 – Joining the mutual aid teams is walking the road to common prosperity. (1954).

Figure 1.6, designed by Zhang Fanfu (张凡夫), Wu Dezu (武德祖) and Zhao Yu (赵域), published by Zhaohua Meishu Chubanshe (朝花美术出版社) - Zhaohua Art Publisher, was produced slightly later, in 1954, as the second stage of the Land Reform process was underway. By this time the objective of giving the land to the peasants had, it was argued by Mao, been achieved. This poster was therefore designed to encourage the peasants to engage in the transition to socialism by joining the first stage of collectivisation, the mutual aid team. The poster is aspirational rather than confrontational. In the foreground, the central figure, healthy, well dressed and as to be expected, in red, holds a farming

implement and looks to the bright future assured by her involvement with the mutual aid team. In the background, the hard working team are gathering the abundant harvest that their collective work has produced. Men and women are equally involved, supporting each other as part of their joint enterprise. In addition, there is an element of agricultural modernisation in that some operations are partially mechanised. As with Figure 1.5, the text used in this poster is minimal and simply limited to the title of the scene.

The result and the practical application of the Land Reform campaign was clearly rather different to the promotional images created by the propaganda department. There is, I would argue, less doubt that the CCP were at least attempting to present to the public the idea that land reform was to be a generally peaceful and joyous event, rather than the orgy of violence that, according to Dikötter it was to become.²⁰⁵ The Land Reform campaign was a prominent component of Model Worker propaganda during the early 1950s. In each of the earlier films that form part of this study great attention is paid to the issue. In *Liu Hulan* the film opens with a scene featuring an oppressive landlord inspecting the production efforts of his workers.²⁰⁶ Following the arrival of the People's Army, the peasants are liberated and the viewer is treated to a scene demonstrating the communal prosperity that the villagers are now able to enjoy. In *Dong Cunrui*²⁰⁷ a significant section is dedicated to explaining the importance, meaning and benefits of land reform as will be explored in more detail in Chapter 4. In addition, the importance of land and its significance to the people can be found in scenes from the Korean War epic *Shang Gan Ling*.²⁰⁸ This film in particular, was clearly designed to resonate with the peasantry as the conflict took place at the same time that the CCP was engaged in the Land Reform programme. In the middle of the film, during a lull in

²⁰⁵ Dikötter, p.75.

²⁰⁶ *Liu Hulan*, (1950), Directed by Sun Yu, [Film], China: Kunlun Film Studio.

²⁰⁷ *Dong Cunrui*, (1955), Directed by Guo Wei, [Film], China: Changchun Film Studio.

²⁰⁸ *Shang Gan Ling*, (1956), Directed by Sha Meng, [Film], China: Changchun Film Studio.

fighting, the soldiers spend time reminiscing about their attachment to the country and the land in particular. Model Workers were therefore used in these propaganda films to justify and promote the Land Reform campaign.

In conclusion, an examination of the historical background and relevant political campaigns undertaken throughout the early post-Civil War period (1949-1956) reveals the way in which the core values of nationalism, social reform and the development of socialism, all of which influenced Model Worker propaganda, were essential aspects in the building of the new state. During this period, the social groups of the People's Democratic Dictatorship were targeted with propaganda to inspire them in their efforts to build the new State and also to inform them of their place in the new society. This was elucidated by documents such as the Common Programme and the first constitution of the People's Republic. The evidence for this lies in the campaigns that were pursued and the way in which Model Workers were used to promote these goals. These goals were specifically focussed on the development of socialism through land reform, nationalism, through the Korean conflict and social reform via the Three and Five Anti campaigns and provisions of the Common Programme and later constitution. Society and the People's Democratic Dictatorship was, at least according to State propaganda, on a clearly defined path towards achieving the creation of a socialist state. However, the pace at which society was changing was, for Mao, not fast enough. Model Worker propaganda was intended to encourage the population and create the certainty that the citizens of the nation were exceptional and that their achievements could be extraordinary. Therefore, if Model Workers were consistently emulated by the population then even a feat such as the Great Leap Forward could be achieved.

Chapter 3 – Political and Ideological Developments and the Model Worker, 1956-1964.

In the previous chapter I explored the way in which the Party's ideological base had an impact on the development of Model Worker propaganda. I traced the way in which the use of these models in Party propaganda was inevitable if the tenets of the 'Common Programme' of 1949 and later the Constitution of 1954²⁰⁹ were to be followed. I noted the importance of the structure of the 'People's Democratic Dictatorship.' I argued that the organisational difference of this system compared to the Soviet 'Dictatorship of the Proletariat' had a direct impact on the direction and content of propaganda. I then explored the way in which the recurring themes relevant to the deployment of Model Workers, 'Nationalism,' 'Social Reform' and the 'Development of Socialism,' were expressed through policy decisions throughout the pre-1957 period. In this chapter, I will focus on four more key events that were to shape the development of the use of the Model Worker in the country's propaganda campaigns. These being 'The Hundred Flowers Campaign' (1956), 'The Great Leap Forward' (1958), the 'Socialist Education Movement' (1963) and finally the 'Quanguo Xue Renmin Jiefangjun' (全国学人民解放军) - 'Learn from the PLA' campaign (1964).

The 'Hundred Flowers Campaign' was to have a direct impact on the ideological motivation for propaganda work. This was the point at which Mao declared that, 'class struggle was basically over.' To analyse this campaign I will firstly give a brief overview. Secondly, I will explore the historiography of the Hundred Flowers

²⁰⁹ Chapter 2, p.37.

Campaign and note where this research is compatible with my own research conclusions when the use of the Model Worker is taken into consideration. Thirdly, I will examine the two key documents of the campaign, 'Lun Shida Guanxi' (论十大关系) - 'On the Ten Major Relationships'²¹⁰ and 'Guanxi Zhengque Chuli Renmin Neibu Maodun de Wenti' (关于正确处理人民内部矛盾的问题) - 'On the Correct Handling of Contradictions Among the People,'²¹¹ noting their ideological relevance to the continued development of the Model Worker. Finally, I will explore the way in which the Hundred Flowers Campaign set the scene for the next stage in Mao's project to reconstruct the nation, 'The Great Leap Forward.' For this campaign, the people would have to become the heroes they had, in theory, been inspired by in the previous decade.

The Hundred Flowers Campaign (1956).

The Hundred Flowers Campaign was intended to solve a problem that Mao believed had emerged since the successful transition to Socialism; the existence of class struggle. Both the 'Common Programme' and the Constitution of 1954 had detailed the way in which society was to be structured, based on the alliance of four societal groups, led by the Party. This in turn was to affect the development of propaganda as each of these groups needed to be represented and provided for in any campaign. As I shall demonstrate in chapters four and five, Model Workers were selected to achieve this goal. The first of the Models selected for this study, Zhao Yiman represented the first small star of the newly created national flag, the national bourgeoisie.²¹² She was an intellectual from the city who had heeded Mao's call to go to the countryside to learn

²¹⁰ Z. Mao, 'On The Ten Major Relationships,' *Selected Works of Mao Tse-Tung, Volume 5*, (The People's Publishing House, 1977), pp.284-308.

²¹¹ Z. Mao, 'On The Correct Handling of Contradictions Among the People (Speaking Notes)', in R. Macfarquhar, T. Cheek and E. Wu, (eds), *The Secret Speeches of Chairman Mao: From the Hundred Flowers to the Great Leap Forward*, (Harvard University Press, 1989), pp.131-191.

²¹² Chapter 1, p.22.

from the peasants and educate them.²¹³ The second star signified the peasantry and was represented by Liu Hulan.²¹⁴ Her story was designed to demonstrate the tremendous social impact that the Party's policies were to have on the countryside. Huang Baomei, the third star, represented the most ideologically important class, the proletariat.²¹⁵ Finally, Dong Cunrui, the fourth star, detailed the story of an individual overcoming his own personal faults before becoming unified with the largest star of all, the Party, represented by Lei Feng.²¹⁶

The actions of these models were designed to represent the structure of the People's Democratic Dictatorship and to demonstrate the harmony of China's social classes as they advanced together towards socialism. However, with Mao's proclamation that class struggle was now 'basically over,' this structure was now in doubt. Deng Xiaoping (邓小平) had stated at the Eighth National Congress of the Communist Party in 1956 that, with respect to the economy, traditional social classes no longer existed.²¹⁷ In addition, Mao was confident that the country had already transitioned to socialism. This was because of the perceived success of land reforms that had started in 1950.²¹⁸ The reason why Mao insisted on beginning the Hundred Flowers campaign, against the advice of many senior officials in the leadership, has been the source of a great deal of debate amongst scholars. Whilst the majority of this debate, from the simplistic reasoning of Jon Halliday and Jung Chang,²¹⁹ to the more complex analysis of Frederick

²¹³ Part of the 'Selected Works of Mao Zedong,' the 'Talks at the Yan'an Forum on Literature and Art' were based on a speech made by Mao on the 2nd of May 1942. The content of these talks laid the foundation for what was to be expected of artistic endeavours in the People's Republic.

²¹⁴ Chapter 1, p.22.

²¹⁵ Ibid, p.22.

²¹⁶ Ibid, p.23.

²¹⁷ The relevant text can be found in S. Schram, *The Thought of Mao Zedong*, (Cambridge University Press, 1989), p.119.

²¹⁸ T. Cheng and M. Selden, 'The Construction of Spatial Hierarchies: China's Hukou and Danwei Systems,' in T. Cheek and T. Saich (eds), *New Perspectives on State Socialism in China*, (M. E. Sharpe, Inc. 1997), p.32.

²¹⁹ J. Halliday & J. Chang, *Mao: The Unknown Story*, (Jonathan Cape, 2005), pp.434-444.

Teiwes,²²⁰ has focussed on the political nature of the campaign, I will instead demonstrate that the onset of the Hundred Flowers movement was an inevitability.

Mao clearly believed at this stage that the propaganda of the previous five years had been an unqualified success. The evidence for this lies in the study of two documents. Firstly, ‘On The Ten Major Relationships,’ released on the 25th April 1956 and later, ‘On the Correct Handling of Contradictions Among the People.’ The latter was based on a speech made by Mao to Party colleagues on the 27th February 1957. The content of this document in particular, has become, in itself, a source of contention amongst historians, as I shall explore later. Each document demonstrates the extent to which Mao clearly believed that his mission to reform the nation on the basis of nationalism, social reform and the development of socialism was now ready to advance to the next stage. Posters such as Figure 1.1, produced in 1958, were designed to reinforce the core message of the campaign.



Figure 1.1 – ‘Bring every positive factor into play, correctly handle contradictions among the people.’ (1958).

²²⁰ F. Teiwes, *Politics and Purges in China: Rectification and the Decline of Party Norms, 1950-1965*, (Routledge, 1993), p.211-275.

Figure 1.1, designed by ‘Students and Teachers from the Central Industrial Arts College’ was published by Tianjin Meishu Chubanshe (天津美术出版社) - Tianjin Art Publisher. The book in the centre is titled ‘On the Correct Handling of Contradictions Among the People’ and appears to have been signed by Mao himself. The banners attached to balloons read: ‘Long live the Chinese Communist Party’ and ‘Long life to the People’s Republic of China.’ The banners held by the people at the back, state: ‘Maximise energy and strive for the best, construct socialism quickly, nicely and frugally.’ The top half of the poster features Mao’s work on the background of a radiant sun, delivering the message that the ideas contained within truly are a new beginning. The masses stand together, no longer divided by class as they are guided by the red flag that represents not the country, but the Party.

Before I begin an examination of ‘On The Ten Major Relationships,’ and ‘On the Correct Handling of Contradictions Among the People,’ it is important to firstly address the historiography connected to the Hundred Flowers campaign. A large body of work dedicated to the study of the movement is already in existence, as alluded to above, with many studies focussing specifically on both internal and external factors that may have triggered the campaign. However, as Maurice Meisner stated, ‘Motivations are difficult to read and the passage of time has not made the task any easier. The Hundred Flowers still defies an entirely satisfactory interpretation.’²²¹ Broadly, these theories can be grouped into the following categories. Firstly, an uncritical evaluation of the event. Secondly, that Mao was attempting to address both problems and opportunities created by the denunciation of Stalin by Khrushchev in his ‘Secret Speech’ of the 24th of February 1956. Thirdly, that the ‘Hungarian Uprising’ in late 1956 was the catalyst for

²²¹ M. Meisner, *Mao’s China and After: A History of the People’s Republic*, (Free Press, 1999), p.195.

his political actions. Fourthly, the campaign was political in nature and was designed to rectify problems with both Party and society following the transition to socialism. Finally, that the entire period was designed to function as a trap so that Mao could successfully remove all his remaining enemies.

First approach: Uncritical documentation.

An appraisal of these perspectives will provide a useful insight into the impact that the Hundred Flowers campaign was to have on both the propaganda system and the development of the Model Worker following the transition to socialism. Perhaps unsurprisingly, the belief that Mao was genuine in his desire to allow criticism of the system is a viewpoint most strongly advocated by commentators who were chronologically closer to events. In the early 1960s the journalist Edgar Snow and British Historian Professor Charles Patrick Fitzgerald stated that the campaign appeared to be genuine. Fitzgerald in particular, was exceptionally positive about the changes that were occurring in Chinese society. He stated that many criticisms made by Chinese citizens of the government were in fact addressed by the authorities and that the critics were rarely subject to reprisals. He does however, offer the following caveat, ‘Did Mao and his advisors really misjudge the extent of their support, or were they baiting a trap to expose their hidden critics?’²²²

Edgar Snow approached the campaign from a slightly different, but no less simplistic angle. He argued that although Khrushchev’s actions in the Soviet Union most certainly had a bearing on Mao’s thinking,²²³ there was already a rich tradition in the Chinese Communist Party²²⁴ of the type of self-criticism and introspection that the

²²² C.P. Fitzgerald, *The Birth of Communist China*, (Penguin Books, 1970), p.187.

²²³ E. Snow, *The Other Side of the River*, (Penguin Books, 1970), p.382.

²²⁴ Ibid, p.381.

Hundred Flowers campaign wished to encourage. There is certainly some validity to this approach as rectification and self-criticism had been a vital part of Mao's seizure of power during the Yan'an days. Indeed, there are similarities between that period and the Hundred Flowers campaign, particularly because of its focus on the place of intellectuals in society. However, although this tradition of criticism certainly existed, the events of the 1950s and the role that intellectuals in particular, had in the development of propaganda make a comparison between the two periods rather unsatisfactory. In addition, Snow also addressed the influence of the problems in Hungary, but argues that Mao had already predicted such complications for a ruling Communist Party in his 1937 lecture 'On Contradiction.'²²⁵ Snow then states that Mao did learn from the Hungarian Uprising by using it to tailor the Hundred Flowers campaign so that it would not mirror the purges of Stalin's Russia.²²⁶ Snow's account of the Hundred Flowers is largely positive in nature. Indeed, he notes that in his experience, the supposed excesses of the campaign were negligible.²²⁷ Crucially for this study, he also addresses the issue of 'brainwashing' or rather, 'thought reform' that occurred as a result of the campaign. In one section he details the rationale behind this. He states that, 'thought remoulding, or "brain washing" as it is called abroad, conducted not in concentration camps but by one's peers; a choice for stubborn "reactionaries" between social ostracism and the anguish of public recantation; a spell of down-on-the-farm at the recommendation of one's own organisation; and various other measures which in the past would have been called public "loss of face": these are the main instruments of pressure. They can be as cruel to sensitive people as corporal punishment but they may leave open a path of reconciliation.'²²⁸

²²⁵ Z. Mao, 'On Contradiction,' *Selected Readings from the Works of Mao Tse-Tung*, (Foreign Languages Press, 1967), pp.70-109.

²²⁶ Snow, p.386.

²²⁷ Ibid, p.402.

²²⁸ Ibid, p.404.

By writing about a path to reconciliation, Snow demonstrates the extent to which he believed that the system was not malign in its intentions. He suggests that the Party was simply providing a path to redemption for those who had not been fully converted to the ideological cause. Later he describes this process of redemption that was experienced by an American educated intellectual that he met.²²⁹ In one particularly informative section, the intellectual stated, 'it took me years to get used to it but now I believe it has been good for me. I needed it - how I needed it! I am seldom a target any more. I am a lot humbler than I was. I value people more. I am better able to help others.'²³⁰

This American-educated intellectual has thus had his thought reformed and is now on the path to becoming the ideal citizen. He was humble, valued people and was more able to help others; truly the values of a model worker. Snow goes as far as to state that these self-criticism meetings served as a kind of 'group therapy' for those in society who have struggled to adjust their thinking to the new system. In psychological terms this could be regarded as a reconstruction of personality. Although, later accounts of the rectification movement generally paint a far more negative picture of the process of 'thought reform,' Snow's account does have some value when considering the development of the propaganda system as insight can be gained into the way in which the Party hoped that the system would be perceived by the outside world. However, his positive descriptions of the way in which 'thought reform' and 'group therapy' sessions were undertaken is rather misleading. He does not take into account alternative viewpoints, or address criticisms of thought reform that had existed even prior to the Hundred Flowers campaign. As a journalist and 'old China hand,' he must have been aware of the work of the American Psychiatrist Dr Robert Jay Lifton. Lifton's *Thought*

²²⁹ Ibid.

²³⁰ Ibid.

Reform and the Psychology of Totalism: A Study of "Brainwashing" in China, published in 1961, although not without its own biases, methodological problems and inconsistencies, offers a rather different and indeed more negative appraisal of the process of 'thought reform.'²³¹ Although the results of Lifton's research are, I would argue, rather questionable, they do offer a different insight with which Snow fails to engage. Consequently, Snow's account, although of interest, must be treated with scepticism.

Second Approach: Reacting to Khrushchev's 'Secret Speech.'

The second explanation for the Hundred Flowers Campaign that I will briefly examine was the direct influence of Khrushchev's denunciation of Stalin in 1956 and the effect this was to have on China. This approach was explored by Jean Chesneaux in his work *China The People's Republic, 1949-1976*. Chesneaux argues that the Hundred Flowers Campaign was part of a general 'thaw' brought about by the death of Stalin and his denunciation by Khrushchev.²³² However, this view is disputed by a Frederick Teiwes who argues that although some artists explored similar themes to their Soviet counterparts, there were considerable differences between the Hundred Flowers and the Soviet 'thaw.' The evidence for this, he argues, comes from the fact that the Soviets were deeply suspicious of the Hundred Flowers Campaign and did not support it.²³³ Although Chesneaux's argument is rather simplistic, perhaps largely because his work provides an overview of the period rather than highly detailed analysis, I would suggest that there is some validity to his argument. Although Teiwes is correct in stating that there were considerable differences between the Soviet thaw and the Hundred Flowers campaign, there was undoubtedly still support amongst artists and film makers for a

²³¹ R. J. Lifton, *Thought Reform and the Psychology of Totalism: A Study of "Brainwashing" in China*, (Victor Gollancz Ltd, 1961).

²³² J. Chesneaux, *China, The People's Republic, 1949-1976* (The Harvester Press, 1979), p.73.

²³³ Teiwes, (1993), p.219.

relaxation of control prior to the Hundred Flowers. Indeed, the film *Unfinished Comedy*, directed by Ban Lu and released in 1957 demonstrates the extent to which there was indeed a desire for control to be loosened.²³⁴

Both Maurice Meisner and Frank Dikötter approach Khrushchev's revelations about Stalin from a different perspective. Meisner notes that Khrushchev's denunciation of Stalin dealt a major blow to Mao and the Party as a whole. This was because of the Party's adoption of Soviet economic systems and the prominent pro-Soviet propaganda used by the government.²³⁵ For this reason, the denunciation of Stalin cast the system the CCP had copied into doubt. In addition, there was also the issue of Mao's position. Khrushchev had thoroughly attacked the cult of personality that had been constructed around the image of Stalin, arguing that he had put himself above the Party, had Mao done the same?²³⁶ In addition, this attack on the cult of personality may have had implications for the propaganda use of Model Workers in society. This was because the very concept of the Model Worker was the promotion of idealised individual personalities to promote the system of government.

Mao's response to the speech would seem to corroborate significant aspects of Meisner's analysis. Mao argued for a more nuanced appraisal of the Stalin era. He stated that Stalinism and Stalin were separate entities and that the people should not condemn everything about Stalin, but learn from his mistakes whilst still giving praise to his successes. He also addressed the issue of the possibility of a cult of personality, arguing that it was unlikely or impossible to happen in China because of the way the society was structured with the 'mass line,' acting as a check on power, a feature, he

²³⁴ *Unfinished Comedy*, (1957), Directed by Ban Lu, [Film], China: Changchun Film Studio.

²³⁵ Chapter 2, p.47.

²³⁶ Meisner, p.176.

argued, that was absent in the Soviet Union.²³⁷ Mao's carefully measured response, as outlined by Meisner, disguised a more fierce reaction, according to Frank Dikötter who argues that Mao was furious with Khrushchev's denunciation of Stalin.²³⁸ However, the most significant problem with arguing that the Hundred Flowers Campaign was a reaction to the events in the Soviet Union is that Mao had already spoken about the concept in January of 1956, prior to Khrushchev's speech in February.²³⁹

Consequently, I would argue that although events in the Soviet Union may have influenced the later development of Mao's writing, specifically 'On The Correct Handling of Contradictions Among the People,' his fixation on the need for further thought reform because of changes in the social structure of society already existed. Dikötter's account, although in keeping with the general tone of his book is slightly misleading and neglects to consider Mao's earlier writing on the subject.

Third Approach: The impact of the Hungarian Uprising.

The belief that the Hundred Flowers was a reactive event also extends to the third category that I shall now investigate. The contention that the Hungarian Uprising was a major contributing factor has been explored by journalists John Gittings²⁴⁰ and Edgar Snow and by historians Elizabeth J. Perry and Frank Dikötter. Elizabeth Perry in a chapter from Timothy Cheek and Tony Saich's collection *New Perspectives on State Socialism in China* advanced the argument that central to the hundred flowers was the fact that Mao encouraged the criticism to avert social tensions at home as had happened in eastern Europe. She states that Mao was, 'clearly anxious to defuse domestic

²³⁷ Meisner, p.177.

²³⁸ F. Dikötter, *The Tragedy of Liberation: A History of the Chinese Revolution 1945-1957*, (Bloomsbury Publishing, 2013), p.276.

²³⁹ K.S. Karol, *China: The Other Communism*, (T Hill & Wang, 1968), p.268.

²⁴⁰ J. Gittings, *China Changes Face*, (Oxford Paperbacks, 1990), p.xi.

contradictions.²⁴¹ Whilst it is true that he later referred to the Hungarian Uprisings, the plan for the Hundred Flowers had already been proposed. I would therefore argue that whilst parts of the campaign were influenced by the events in Hungary, the genesis of the concept was already in existence.

Fourth Approach: The politics of the Hundred Flowers Campaign.

The fourth interpretation of the Hundred Flowers Campaign considers Mao's political motivation to be of considerable importance. This viewpoint is shared, to varying degrees by the historians Frederick Teiwes, Professor Richard H Solomon and Maurice Meisner. Solomon argues that the Hundred Flowers Campaign was an attempt by Mao to simplify systems of administration in the country so that his plan for the Great Leap Forward could be realised with less resistance.²⁴² Meisner's analysis of the situation shares some similarities. He argues that Mao was aware of the problems caused by following the Soviet model, primarily that the bureaucratisation of the state was in danger of replacing one elite, the defeated Guomindang, with a new one in the form of the Party bureaucracy. The meaning of socialism was thus becoming a problem as a new class structure was in danger of forming in the country. Indeed, Meisner argues that the campaign was not intended simply to expose intellectuals that were unfriendly to the system, but was primarily intended to provide an opportunity to attack the growing bureaucracy of the state.²⁴³

Although Mao had declared that class struggle was now over, it was at this point that it re-emerged in a different form. China had transitioned to a socialist society so the battle

²⁴¹ E. J. Perry, 'Shanghai's Strike Wave of 1957,' in T. Cheek & T. Saich (eds), *New Perspectives on State Socialism in China*, (M. E. Sharpe, Inc. 1997), p.238.

²⁴² R. H. Solomon 'From Commitment to Cant: The Evolving Functions of Ideology in the Revolutionary Process' in C. Johnson (ed), *Ideology and Politics in Contemporary China*, (University of Washington Press, 1973), p.70.

²⁴³ Meisner, pp.179-180.

was now to be waged between 'correct' and 'incorrect' thought. Consequently a 'class enemy' could be someone with different ideas, not just a person who was from a different social class.²⁴⁴ On this point I am in agreement with Meisner as it is this shift in thinking regarding class struggle that I believe to be the most important when considering the development of propaganda and the function of the Model Worker during this period. As the existing class structure was broken down, it was replaced by a new concept of class that could be applied to any individual, regardless of their function in society. Propagandists would need to switch their attention away from portraying characters as either good or bad, dependent on their social class, to providing characters who either followed Maoist principles, the 'revolutionaries' or those who did not, the 'reactionaries.' This more binary approach to the portrayal of characters in Model Worker propaganda was to find its apex with the development of the character of Lei Feng, as I shall explore in chapters four and five.

Frederick Teiwes is in general agreement with Meisner regarding the role of political ideology in the development of the Hundred Flowers Campaign. Furthermore, he argues that there are some similarities between the campaign and the one that occurred at Yan'an between 1942 and 1944. During this earlier campaign Mao had similarly explored the relationship between the intellectuals and the development of a new society. However, he notes that the big difference between this event and the Hundred Flowers was that in February 1942, Mao and the leadership never asked to be criticised as they did during the campaign fifteen years later. Conceivably, one of the reasons for this difference was that Mao truly believed that the country had transitioned to socialism and that the vast majority of the people, including the intellectuals, were fully supportive of the Party. There was therefore, no danger in allowing them to criticise the

²⁴⁴ Meisner, p.185.

system as the majority were in favour of it. This view is given some credence by Teiwes who states that one of the main reasons for the Hundred Flowers was to consolidate a new system following the success of the socialist revolution.²⁴⁵

Teiwes also notes that the propaganda department's role in propagating the Hundred Flowers campaign was rather slow.²⁴⁶ I would argue that this suggests two things. Firstly, engaging in the campaign meant a considerable disruption to work as it required a complete change of focus. Secondly, that because the propaganda department was closer to the reality of the situation at the time, it did not see the logic in the development as it was aware of the problems that still existed between the content providers, the intellectuals, and the demands of the Party. Indeed, the Propaganda department was thoroughly criticised by the intellectuals, as summarised by Teiwes, 'What was objected to was the bureaucratic manifestation of doctrinarism - arbitrary assertions of authority backed by references to orthodox views.'²⁴⁷ Mao was perhaps either unaware or unwilling to acknowledge the depth of antipathy towards his Yan'an inspired policies for the Arts at this stage. This would also seem to indicate that he did indeed believe that the socialist reform of society had been, to a large degree, an unqualified success.

Indeed, if Mao's former physician, Li Zhisui (李志绥) is to be believed it is likely that this was the case. Li notes that 'Every time he met with representatives of the "democratic parties," he was showered with the same obsequious flattery I had first witnessed from party leaders during our trip south in the summer of 1956.'²⁴⁸ Although the reliability of Li's testimony is rather suspect, this observation, when combined with

²⁴⁵ Teiwes, (1993), p.221

²⁴⁶ Ibid, p.247.

²⁴⁷ Ibid, p.264.

²⁴⁸ Z. Li, *The Private Life of Mao*, (Random House, 1994), p.199.

the way in which the propaganda department reacted to the development, would appear to indicate why Mao thought that launching the Hundred Flowers was less of a gamble than in hindsight it appears to have been.

A final viewpoint: It's a trap.

The final viewpoint that needs to be addressed regarding the Hundred Flowers Movement is expressed by Li Zhisui in his memoir of Mao, entitled *The Private Life of Chairman Mao* and also by Jon Halliday and Jung Chang in their biography of Mao, entitled *Mao the Unknown Story*. Li, Halliday and Chang argue that the campaign was indeed what C.P. Fitzgerald suspected it to be,²⁴⁹ a trap designed to attack and eliminate those Mao perceived to be his enemies. In Chapter 39 of *Mao the Unknown Story*, Halliday and Chang takes a quote from Mao out of context, attributing it to his current (for the time) attitude to the use of executions when dealing with counter revolutionaries. As they do not provide footnotes directly linking the quote I surmise that they are referring to a section of, 'On the Correct Handling of Contradictions Among the People' where Mao discussed the use of execution. They state that this was one of the primary reasons for the launch of the campaign, a desire to instigate a purge. They write; 'But with the trend in the Communist world blowing towards de-Stalinisation, Mao decided it was not wise to be too blatant about launching a purge. To create a justification, he cooked up a devious plan. He did so mainly while lying in bed, where he spent most of his time that winter of 1956-7'.²⁵⁰

Halliday and Chang further argue that Mao used his speech on the 27th of February to invite criticism of the Party which he would then use to victimise those who had spoken

²⁴⁹ Fitzgerald, p.187.

²⁵⁰ Halliday & Chang, p.434.

out at a later date. The main problem with their analysis, aside from the rather lurid and personal language used, is that they do not address in any detail the ideological basis and development of the Hundred Flowers campaign. Indeed, they note that, 'Mao's trap was extremely successful. Once the lid was loosened just a fraction, a deluge of dissent burst out, mostly in wall posters and small-scale meetings called 'seminars,' which were the only forums allowed'.²⁵¹

However, the opposite was the case as Mao's first attempt at discussing what needed to be modified in society, 'The Ten Major Relationships' had not been seized or acted upon as enthusiastically as had been hoped. In reality, Mao had to reinitiate the campaign with a further speech and give instructions to the propaganda department to make sure that his recommendations were acted upon.²⁵² Halliday and Chang's failure to offer any analysis of the ideological justification for the Hundred Flowers beyond the use of an un-sourced and most likely out-of-context quotation, rather damages their account, but is in keeping with the general tone of their book.

Li also pursues a similar angle. He states that Mao was furious about the lack of backing he received for the Hundred Flowers from high ranking leaders and spent most of his time in bed plotting his next move.²⁵³ He further adds that although Mao had indicated that class struggle was over, he was still deeply suspicious of the intellectuals, primarily because of the case of Hu Feng (胡风) in 1955²⁵⁴ who had been accused of leading a secret anti-Party clique. However, Li later argues that Mao wanted to use the movement to attack his enemies in the Party and that this would be achieved by utilising

²⁵¹ Ibid, p.435.

²⁵² Z. Mao, 'Speech at the Chinese Communist Party's National Conference on Propaganda Work,' *Selected Works of Mao Tse-Tung, Volume 5,* (The People's Publishing House, 1977), pp.422-436.

²⁵³ Li, p.197.

²⁵⁴ Hu Feng (胡风), (1902-1985), was a writer who criticized the overly political nature of art since the Revolution, he was arrested and branded a 'counter-revolutionary' in 1955.

the criticisms of the intellectuals. Why would Mao have risked allowing giving a voice to a social group that he was so suspicious of to do something that had such potentially dangerous repercussions? I find Frederick Teiwes' explanation more compelling. He argues that it was because Mao assumed that the intellectuals were fundamentally on the side of socialism and that there were no serious contradictions inside the system. Mao clearly wanted to believe that class struggle was over and that the propaganda campaigns that had been waged had been successful and that the ideal presented in films such as *Zhao Yiman* had been achieved. The subsequent anti-rightist campaign was, I would argue, Mao reacting violently and essentially saying that class struggle was incontrovertibly resolved. The propaganda had been successful, there was a new Chinese citizen and anyone who disagreed was a rightist.

The evidence for this can be found in the two major documents that defined the Hundred Flowers period. By extension, they set the direction of ideological development and consequently the propaganda system for what Mao believed would be the next stage of Chinese development, The Great Leap Forward. The first of these documents was, 'On The Ten Major Relationships.' Frank Dikötter has argued that Mao went significantly further than Khrushchev, but was greatly perturbed by the prospect of having to return to a more collective style of leadership.²⁵⁵ Although there is an element of conjecture to this interpretation, it is likely that Mao was still intent on being at the forefront of any policy decision making. However, at this stage his position in the Party was still undisputed. Had the other members of the leadership, principally Liu Shaoqi, wished to reduce Mao's influence, why then did they later provide such confident backing to Mao's greatest economic gamble, The Great Leap Forward at the

²⁵⁵ Dikötter (2013), p.282.

Eighth CCP National Congress in May of 1958?²⁵⁶ At this stage, the ‘collective’ leadership was working rather well for Mao and conceivably provided him with yet more evidence that the majority in the country were fully in agreement with him.

Meisner argues that this document was largely ignored by the Party, which may offer some explanation as to why Mao felt the need to restart the Hundred Flowers campaign.²⁵⁷ Whilst there may be some validity to this claim, I would argue that there is enough evolution of thought between the two documents to demonstrate that Mao felt specific areas needed further clarification and elaboration. The proof for this lies in the way in which the two documents mirror each other. ‘The Ten Major Relationships’ begins with an analysis of economic development, whereas ‘On the Correct Handling of Contradictions Among the People’ ends by addressing this point. In addition, the issue of ideological development is foremost in the second document, but is addressed towards the end of the first. This would appear to indicate that whilst the first document may not have been ignored by the Party, the ideas that Mao felt were of great importance may not have received quite the attention that he was expecting. Indeed, whilst the second document contains a great deal more ideological ideas pertinent to the development of Model Worker propaganda, the seeds of these concepts can be found in the earlier document, as I shall now examine.

[On the Ten Major Relationships. \(1956\).](#)

Much of the focus of ‘On The Ten Major Relationships’ is on economic development. Points one to four of Mao’s analysis focus to a great extent on the challenges of continual improvement of production that would be necessary for the country to build

²⁵⁶ L. Dittmer, *Liu Shao-ch’i and the Chinese Cultural Revolution: The Politics of Mass Criticism*, University of California Press (University of California Press, 1974), p.39.

²⁵⁷ Meisner, p.182.

its economy. However, in the section titled, 'The Relationship between Party and non-Party' (Point 7), Mao declares that class struggle most certainly still exists in China. He argues that having other subordinate political parties is useful for the country as it provided a good opposition and counter-balance to the policies of the CCP. Although the reality of the situation may have been quite different, this is significantly at odds with later developments where Mao stated that 'class struggle had basically come to an end.' If, by this stage, that was indeed so, then there would have been no need for any other parties to exist, as those parties had previously functioned to provide a voice to social groups drawn from the classes of the People's Democratic Dictatorship. The reader is given a further indication of the future of Chinese society, as Mao states, 'The Communist Party and the democratic parties are all products of history. What emerges in history disappears in history. Therefore, the Communist Party will disappear one day, and so will the democratic parties. Is this disappearance so unpleasant? In my opinion, it will be very pleasant. I think it is just fine that one day we will be able to do away with the Communist Party and the dictatorship of the proletariat. Our task is to hasten their extinction.'²⁵⁸

With the rapid transition to socialism and the proclamation that class struggle was basically over, Mao was certainly hastening the extinction of, at the very least, the other democratic parties that had formed part of China's political system since the Revolution of 1949. The disappearance of those parties would have a significant impact on the development of propaganda and the Model Worker. This was because those parties had nominally supported the interests of the national and petty bourgeoisie, two key members of the People's Democratic Dictatorship that would no longer exist. The Model Worker, Zhao Yiman, a member of the National Bourgeoisie would cease to

²⁵⁸ Mao, 'On The Ten Major Relationships,' p.297

have any resonance with the people and would exist merely as a historical anachronism, after China's transition to socialism and a more simplistic class structure. Mao perhaps believed that the time was right for this, as Dikötter notes, 'Repeated campaigns of thought reform had produced a pliant intelligentsia.'²⁵⁹ However, Dikötter's analysis fails to take into account the existence of an independent spirit that continued following the Revolution. This spirit had seen the creation of propaganda works and films such as *The Life of Wu Xun* and *Unfinished Comedy*. The events that followed the beginning of the Hundred Flowers campaign would additionally seem to contradict Dikötter's viewpoint.

Mao then continues the theme of remoulding and redeeming citizens in Point 8 of the document wherein he deals with the relationship between 'Revolution and Counter-Revolution.' Here, he once again compares China with the Soviet Union. He states that although Stalin may have executed the wrong people during his counter-revolutionary purges, that does not necessarily mean that China's actions were incorrect as, he states, there was no alternative. However, Mao echoes his own words in the 1949 'Common Programme,' he states, 'All counter-revolutionaries should be given a chance to earn a living, so that they can start anew. This will be good for the cause of the people and be well received abroad.'²⁶⁰ He speaks specifically about the thought reform mission in the following section, point 9, titled 'The relationship between right and wrong.'

The mission of the Model Worker, to create a new Chinese citizen, free from the problems that had plagued earlier generations was very much predicated on a more clearly defined explanation of what was to be considered to be 'right and wrong' in society. Here Mao addresses this issue, specifically relating it to the way in which those

²⁵⁹ Dikötter (2013), p.284.

²⁶⁰ Mao, 'On The Ten Major Relationships,' p.300.

who have erred should be treated by the new society. This aspect of reform through criticism, is a dominant feature of all propaganda throughout this period and beyond. Mao sets the guidelines for how it should be enacted, 'With regard to comrades who have erred, some people say we must observe them and see if they are going to correct their mistakes. I would say just observing them will not do, we must help them correct their mistakes. That is to say, first we must observe and second we must give help.'²⁶¹ There is a great deal of continuity here with the mission of the Common Programme of 1949. The message of possible redemption remains, as does a commitment to the use of Thought Reform to 'give help' to those who are not following the correct line.

The final point of 'On The Ten Major Relationships' is dedicated to the issue of China's relationship with the rest of the world. This section is highly relevant to the development of the nationalist aspect of the Model Worker as Mao discusses the problems that China had experienced at the hands of foreign powers. He argues that it had been humiliated for a long time and that it had been made to feel inferior. However, he then counters this by arguing that the country was in an excellent position for further development because it had a large amount of territory and a large population at its disposal. This was combined with abundant resources and a rich cultural history. In addition to these benefits, Mao then goes on to describe what he considers to be one of the chief advantages that the nation has, his belief that they are 'poor and blank.'²⁶² The relevance of this statement to the development of propaganda in China cannot be overstated. Mao's complete pronouncement was, 'we are first "poor" and second "blank." By "poor" I mean we do not have much industry and our agriculture is underdeveloped. By "blank" I mean we are like a blank sheet of paper and our cultural and scientific level is not high. From the developmental point of view, this

²⁶¹ Ibid, p.302.

²⁶² Ibid, p.306.

is not bad. The poor want revolution, whereas it is difficult for the rich to want revolution. Countries with a high scientific and technological level are overblown with arrogance. We are like a blank sheet of paper, which is good for writing on.’²⁶³

The propaganda department had already been writing on that ‘blank sheet of paper’ for the past decade. There is an interesting thread that could be considered regarding Mao’s thinking regarding this statement. His belief, that the peasantry are ‘poor and blank,’ conceivably demonstrates a link between his thinking and the extent to which, perhaps unwittingly, Confucianism was still influencing his thought. In the Confucian Classics, “Three Character Primer” versus one to four, it is stated that ‘People at birth, are naturally good. Their natures are similar; their habits become different.’ Mao would appear to be following a similar line of thinking. The goal of propaganda was therefore to mould those who were naturally good (poor and blank) to ensure that their habits did not become diverse, but were of use to society as a whole. The Model Worker propaganda campaign would consequently serve to educate the mass of ‘poor and blank’ citizens and provide the country with the heroes needed to stand up against the nations that had oppressed them during the Century of Humiliation.

[On The Correct Handling of Contradictions Among the People. \(1957\).](#)

Although ‘On The Ten Major Relationships’ was intended to begin the Hundred Flowers movement, it would appear that it did not quite have the desired effect as criticism of the Party was slow to emerge. In addition, Party officials were less than forthcoming in encouraging such criticism, fearing that it may have led to a weakening

²⁶³ Ibid.

of their position in the system.²⁶⁴ Merle Goldman further argues that if freedom were given to the intellectuals to complain it would create a new privileged class ‘with an undesirable sense of superiority.’²⁶⁵ However, considering the way in which those films deemed to be ‘incorrect’ had been dealt with since 1949, this point is questionable. In an effort to give fresh impetus to the campaign, Mao delivered a speech to the Eleventh Session of the Supreme State Conference on the 27th of February 1957. The speech was to eventually become known as, ‘On the Correct Handling of Contradictions Among the People.’ Mao attempted to explain how contradictions, both antagonistic and non-antagonistic, should be dealt with in a society that had transitioned to socialism.

Analysis of the document is difficult because there are more than two different versions of the speech and it was not released outside of China for quite some time. The first version that was made available to the public appears to have been the one published in the People’s Daily on the 19th of June 1957. This was an edited version of the speech made in the February of that year. The differences between the two versions have been detailed by Professor of Chinese studies at Lund University, Michael Schoenhals in a journal article titled *Original Contradictions - On the Unrevised Text of Mao Zedong's 'On the Correct Handling of Contradictions Among the People.'*²⁶⁶ Schoenhals notes that the article that appeared in the People’s Daily on the 19th of June contained ‘certain additions,’ but that the unrevised text was later released in the collection, ‘Thirty Texts by Chairman Mao.’²⁶⁷ He argues that it is not particularly unusual for a text to be

²⁶⁴ F. Teiwes ‘Establishment and consolidation of the new regime’ in D. Twitchett and J. K. Fairbank (eds), *The Cambridge History of China Volume 14, The People’s Republic, Part 1: The Emergence of Revolutionary China 1949-1965*, (Cambridge University Press, 1987), p.135.

²⁶⁵ M. Goldman ‘The Party and the Intellectuals,’ in D. Twitchett and J. K. Fairbank (eds), *The Cambridge History of China Volume 14, The People’s Republic, Part 1: The Emergence of Revolutionary China 1949-1965*, (Cambridge University Press, 1987), p.248.

²⁶⁶ M. Schoenhals, *Original Contradictions-on the Unrevised Text of Mao Zedong's 'On the Correct Handling of Contradictions Among the People,'* (The Australian Journal of Chinese Affairs, No. 16 July, 1986), pp.99-112.

²⁶⁷ Ibid, p.99.

modified in this way because for government officials, the accuracy of a text to its spoken source is not relevant, what is more important is the impact it could possibly have on the public at the moment of publication. Consequently revisions are always made to make sure it fits with the narrative current at the day of publication.²⁶⁸ Indeed he notes that Mao himself stated that the text would have to be edited because of political developments in Eastern Europe and the effect that his comments about strikes may have had on Chinese society.

The text was altered considerably as the latter version was much shorter. Schoenhals notes that no more than a dozen sentences have not been altered in some way.²⁶⁹ One of the first important revisions is Mao's definition of the enemy. In the original transcript he states that if a person is not the enemy then he is one of the people. However, in the revised version there is a greater list of non-antagonistic contradictions.²⁷⁰ This was no doubt because Mao's more idealistic idea of the end of class struggle had been tempered somewhat by the events of the Hundred Flowers thus far. In addition, the original transcript speaks more about the dangers of dogmatism, whereas in the revised version 'revisionism' is explained to be the main danger. Schoenhals notes that this was a logical progression as the later revised speech was released to support the rebirth of the Hundred Flowers Movement and later the resulting Anti-Rightist Campaign. The original text would not have been so useful for this purpose, indeed, Schoenhals argues that it would have contradicted the entire campaign.²⁷¹

²⁶⁸ Ibid, p.100.

²⁶⁹ M. Schoenhals, *Original Contradictions-on the Unrevised Text of Mao Zedong's 'On the Correct Handling of Contradictions Among the People,'* (The Australian Journal of Chinese Affairs, No. 16 July, 1986), p.100.

²⁷⁰ Ibid, p.101.

²⁷¹ Ibid, p.106.

Modifications to the speech demonstrate how the Hundred Flowers evolved into an anti-rightist movement.²⁷² For this reason the original copy is more useful for analysing the development of Mao's political thinking, as it demonstrates both its continuity and discontinuity. The version of the speech that I will now examine is part of a collection of primary source documents edited by Roderick MacFarquhar, Timothy Cheek and Eugene Wu in their book *The Secret Speeches of Chairman Mao, From the Hundred Flowers to the Great Leap Forward*.²⁷³ The editors believe that the original document was a taped transcript because Mao appears to ramble a great deal. This volume expands upon the work of Michael Y. M. Kau and John K. Leung's *The Writings of Mao Zedong, 1949-1976*.²⁷⁴ Kau and Leung are attempting to create a comprehensive and complete collection of Mao's writings, translated into English.²⁷⁵ By contrast, *The Secret Speeches of Chairman Mao* is rather more focussed as editors, Roderick MacFarquhar, Timothy Cheek and Eugene Wu have selectively chosen what they believe to be key documents and have then provided additional translation notes and commentary that greatly assist in interpreting the text. For this reason, I have chosen to use this translation for my analysis.

As Mao was essentially dealing with a shift in the class structure of the country, his findings were therefore relevant to the development of propaganda as he clarified the meaning of 'right and wrong' in a socialist society. Indeed, analysis of this document reveals four specific areas that are relevant to the further development of Model Worker propaganda. Firstly, the aforementioned definition of 'right and wrong.' This was critically important as Mao used it to explain how conflict existed in a society where the

²⁷² Ibid, p106.

²⁷³ R. Macfarquhar, T. Cheek and E. Wu, *The Secret Speeches of Chairman Mao: From the Hundred Flowers to the Great Leap Forward*, (Harvard University Press, 1989).

²⁷⁴ J. K. Leung & M. Y. M. Kau, *The Writings of Mao Zedong 1949-1976*, (M. E. Sharpe, 1992).

²⁷⁵ For further details about the project see, Leung & Kau, pp.xv-xx.

existing social classes had been replaced. The second section that has relevance to the development of propaganda was Mao's explanation of the use of 'remoulding' to assimilate non-antagonistic elements more fully into the newly developed socialist society. Thirdly, Mao detailed the use of education and the most important features that new citizens should learn. Finally, once again he addressed the material and ideological state of the people as a whole, noting why they were ideally suited for the grand project of constructing a new state.

'Right and wrong' in a socialist society.'

It was through this analysis of what Mao refers to as 'right and wrong' that he explains how class conflict is to function in society now that the transition to socialism has been completed. He does this by defining two types of 'contradictions.' Firstly, those between the 'people and the enemy,' which are antagonistic and secondly, those between the 'people and the people' which are non-antagonistic. This concept of 'right and wrong' is crucial when considering the development of the Model Worker. Following the Hundred Flowers campaign, film propaganda in particular began to focus increasingly on a more binary presentation of people as being either 'right' or 'wrong.' The character development and grey areas that existed in films such as *Dong Cunrui* were replaced by this more simplistic presentation of people being either 'right' or 'wrong.' Those who were believed to be 'right' were thus on the correct path towards redemption. Those who were 'wrong' could either be reformed or labelled 'the enemy' and cast aside. For those who required 'remoulding,' Mao restates the following, 'In all questions of an ideological nature, the way to make the people believe you is to use the methods of discussion, debate, criticism, education, and persuasion.'²⁷⁶

²⁷⁶ Macfarquhar, Cheek and Wu, p.135.

Remoulding of potentially antagonistic contradictions.

Mao then addresses the problem of how one of the former social classes, ‘the National Bourgeoisie’ needed to be integrated.²⁷⁷ He stated that although they were not the enemy and were willing to ‘walk the road to socialism’²⁷⁸ there still existed some problems. This made them wholly different to those who were engaged in ‘Imperialism, bureaucratic capitalism, and feudalism.’²⁷⁹ This was conceivably why the National Bourgeoisie, prior to the Hundred Flowers Movement, were portrayed in a largely positive light in Model Worker propaganda; they had the potential to ‘walk the road to socialism.’ Models such as Zhao Yiman demonstrated that this was possible. As Mao states, ‘They are antagonistic, but antagonistic contradictions, if properly handled, can become un-antagonistic.’²⁸⁰ These potentially antagonistic contradictions were not only to be found amongst the National Bourgeoisie, but also amongst other social groups; landlords, rich peasants and capitalists, were also mentioned. When dealing with the children of members of these groups Mao stated that, ‘The great majority are patriots, (who) approve of socialism, (and) want to make China into a great nation.’²⁸¹

Consequently, even amongst the traditional enemies of the Party, there were those who wished to become heroes of both the Revolution and the country. This is in stark contrast to later developments in Maoist ideology when the concept of an individual’s class background became ever more important. Indeed, this concept of redemption and conversion to the correct line of thinking, that runs throughout Mao’s work and lies at the heart of the Model Worker programme, finds its zenith here as Mao describes his

²⁷⁷ Ibid.

²⁷⁸ Ibid, p.136

²⁷⁹ Ibid.

²⁸⁰ Ibid.

²⁸¹ Ibid, p.144.

own experience of conversion to Marxist thinking. He states that he was originally an intellectual and that he made pilgrimages to Buddhist sites of worship and later believed in anarchism. However, he then goes on to talk about his conversion experience: 'Only later did Marxism really penetrate me, change my mind; we call this remoulding which is achieved mainly in the course of class struggle.'²⁸² This 'conversion' experience is also an important aspect of Model Worker propaganda, as I will demonstrate in Chapters four and five. Mao explains here that this is what people needed to go through. He states, 'Even I need to remould (myself). Don't you need to remould (yourselves)?'²⁸³ Regarding the use of Propaganda, Mao then addresses accusations that the Party were engaged in 'brainwashing.' He argued that this was not the case as there is a difference between 'brainwashing' and 'remoulding' and that the Americans are engaged in the former whilst China is more civilised and is only engaged in the latter.²⁸⁴

The process of reform, education.

Mao then details the process by which individuals can be reformed, it is interesting to note that the following epitomises the life of the ultimate Model Worker, Lei Feng. Mao states, 'Study diligently; aside from (making progress in one's) specialty, make progress ideologically, progress also politically, study a bit of Marxism, study a bit of current affairs, study a bit of politics; these things are necessary. If (you) don't have these things, then (you) won't have a soul.'²⁸⁵ The original word that Mao used was 'lin hun' (灵魂) which does indeed translate as 'soul' a further indication of the intention to alter the very core and fabric of an individual's nature. He then discusses how this can

²⁸² Ibid, p.154.

²⁸³ Ibid.

²⁸⁴ Ibid, p.155.

²⁸⁵ Ibid, p.156.

be achieved through education, detailing the method by which individuals can become new citizens. He states that, 'Moral education is discarded. So-called moral education is to study a bit of Marxism, to study a bit of politics, to study a bit of this sort of thing.'²⁸⁶ There is a large degree of continuity here between Mao's words and the method by which the propaganda department portrayed Model Workers, particularly during the post Hundred Flowers period. Films such as *Li Shuang Shuang*,²⁸⁷ *Sparkling Red Star*²⁸⁸ and most obviously, *Lei Feng*²⁸⁹ demonstrated the benefits of studying 'a bit of Marxism' and 'a bit of politics.'

Finally, Mao once again states that the people of China are ideally suited to developing a new society. He repeats his 'poor and blank' argument from, 'On the Ten Major Relationships.' Mao slightly modifies the language he uses to describe the people, stating that, 'Our China has two things: one, poverty; two, ignorance.'²⁹⁰ He then elaborates this point, by stating that there is a dual nature to this situation. He states that if China became prosperous then the people would no longer want revolution. Mao is thus arguing that political rebirth through adherence to revolutionary beliefs is of greater importance than economic prosperity. The evidence for this, he argues, is that 'Our socialist transformation has proceeded so quickly - this is precisely because China is too poor.'²⁹¹

Conclusion.

In conclusion, the Hundred Flowers period was a clear attempt by Mao to address the problem of class conflict in a society that had already transitioned to socialism. The

²⁸⁶ Ibid, p.157.

²⁸⁷ *Li Shuang Shuang*, (1962), Directed by Ren Lu, [Film], China: Haiyan Film Studio.

²⁸⁸ *Sparkling Red Star*, (1974), Directed by Ang Li and Jun Li, [Film], China: August First Film Studio.

²⁸⁹ *Lei Feng*, (1964), Directed by Dong Zhao Qi, [Film], China: August First Film Studio.

²⁹⁰ Macfarquhar, Cheek and Wu, p.180.

²⁹¹ Ibid, p.181.

evidence for this lies in the two documents that fuelled the campaign. Firstly, 'On the Ten Major Relationships' in 1956 and later, 'On the Correct Handling of Contradictions Among the People' in 1957. Both of these documents contain a conspicuous degree of continuity with early ideological works. These had functioned as a guide for propagandists who were intent on creating Model Workers prior to the transition to socialism. The differences between them perhaps demonstrates the extent to which Mao had overestimated the level of support the Party was to receive from the population during such a campaign. The people of the idealised world created by the Party's propagandists in film and posters, supported Mao unquestioningly; their real life counterparts were not so compliant.

Nevertheless, the Chairman was clearly unwilling to consider the possibility that traditional class conflict still existed following the transition to socialism. There were now only two classes, no longer defined by occupation or social background, but by 'correct thinking.' The 'People's Democratic Dictatorship' still existed in name, but in practice it was dead. New heroes such as Lei Feng were developed to represent the more binary nature of class struggle advanced by Mao in, 'On the Correct Handling of Contradictions Among the People.' To some extent I would agree with R.H. Solomon who argues that the Hundred Flowers Campaign was an attempt to simplify the bureaucratic system in preparation for the Great Leap Forward. However, I would add that it was not just the state bureaucracy that Mao intended to simplify, but also the very structure of society. Mao now needed more than just historical heroic figures, he needed the people to stand up and fully emulate the propaganda models of the Revolution as he set out to undertake the next stage of socialist development; 'The Great Leap Forward.'

The Great Leap Forward. (1958).

The Hundred Flowers campaign had seen the redefinition of the class basis for the Model Worker. The People's Democratic Dictatorship may still have existed in name, but in reality China's four classes had now been reduced to two. As I shall explore in more detail in Chapter 4, this did not mean that existing Models from ,what were now considered to be undesirable class backgrounds, were no longer of use. As China's class situation evolved, so too did the presentation of its heroes. Following the Hundred Flowers Campaign, China's revolutionary heroes would be needed like never before as the Party embarked upon what Mao hoped and indeed believed, would be the most transformative campaign of the CCP's history, the Great Leap Forward. In order for the campaign to be successful, the people of China, inspired by the Models of the past decade would become the heroes that would ensure the success of the Great Leap and hasten the dawning of what was hoped would be a new Communist era.

As a policy, The Great Leap Forward was officially adopted at the Second Session of the Eighth Party Congress in May 1958. There were four key elements. Firstly, to combat the lack of capital in both industry and agriculture by mobilising what was considered to be unemployed labour power. Secondly, encouraging innovation in China's economic sectors. Thirdly, to rely on both modern and traditional methods to enhance economic output. Both new and traditional methods would receive equal investment. This would mean that what would become the disastrous 'back yard furnaces'²⁹² would receive the same amount of funding as state steel plants. Finally, and perhaps most importantly, the policy to ignore existing norms of production and

²⁹² Backyard furnaces were introduced in 1958 and were small blast furnaces that could be operated in people's living area. However instead of producing steel the majority of material produced was pig iron.

instead focus on 'more, faster, better and more economical results.'²⁹³ It was hoped that if these methods were employed, the ambitious target set by Mao to 'Overtake Britain in Iron and Steel and Other Major Industrial Production in Fifteen or More Years' could be achieved.²⁹⁴ For this to happen, the nation would need heroes.

Stuart Schram notes that the Great Leap Forward was a declaration of war on nature, that would be followed by a further declaration on 'human nature itself' during the Cultural Revolution.²⁹⁵ Schram does not define what he means by 'human nature,' but if he is referring to an enforced change in the way that individuals were meant to think, then I would argue that the declaration of war had begun years before, with the Model Worker propaganda campaign as evidence of this. The Great Leap Forward was the first attempt by Mao to capitalise on what he clearly believed had already been achieved, a fundamental change in human nature. Evidence for this was believed to be the successful establishment of a socialist society. The Cultural Revolution was a reaction to unexpected flaws in the campaign to change the nature of Chinese society and was ideologically not such a radical departure from earlier attempts. The evidence for this lies in the development of Model Worker propaganda. At each critical stage of the Chinese Revolution the construction of the Model Worker shifted with policy. Initially, Models were representatives of the different classes of the People's Democratic Dictatorship following the founding of the People's Republic. Eventually they became the more binary heroes of socialism, who were active following the Hundred Flowers campaign. In this section, I will firstly give a brief overview of the Great Leap Forward

²⁹³ K. Lieberthal, 'The Great Leap Forward and the split in the Yenan leadership,' in D. Twitchett and J. K. Fairbank (eds), *The Cambridge History of China Volume 14, The People's Republic, Part 1: The Emergence of Revolutionary China 1949-1965*, (Cambridge University Press, 1987), p.305.

²⁹⁴ marxists.org. 1958. *Sixty Points On Working Methods – A Draft Resolution From The Office Of The Centre Of The CPC*. [ONLINE] Available at: https://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/mao/selected-works/volume-8/mswv8_05.htm. [Accessed 25 February 2015].

²⁹⁵ Schram, p.12.

period (1958-1961). Secondly, I will explore the historiography related to the period, specifically focussing on the ideological reasoning for the Great Leap. Finally, I will highlight the way in which three primary source documents adhere to the core principles of the Model Worker, nationalism, social reform and the development of socialism.

['We take a road opposite to that of the Soviet Union.'](#)²⁹⁶ – An overview of the Great Leap Forward.

Despite the disagreements brought about by the Hundred Flowers, there was a general belief that the leadership was united and that the Party was up to the task of further revolutionising Chinese society. Mao, however, was still unhappy with the pace of reform, believing that things could go faster. The Hundred Flowers campaign had changed the rules by which society was organised. The four separate classes of the People's Democratic Dictatorship had effectively been reduced to two. Citizens were now either part of the system or were now 'elements' that required rectification. It is clear that Mao believed that the population was overwhelmingly supportive, because to launch a project as ambitious as the Great Leap Forward without the full backing of the people would be unthinkable. Indeed, as American academic, Professor Kenneth Lieberthal writes, 'It is ironic that this period proved on balance to be so destructive, for it began with the Great Leap Forward (GLF), a programme based on almost utopian optimism about what the Party, with its methods of mass mobilization, could accomplish.'²⁹⁷ The desire for the Second Five Year Plan was to overcome some of the problems that the Chinese leadership believed planners in the Soviet Union had failed to deal with. The key to improving on Soviet methods was to use the CCP's experience of mass mobilization to achieve economic and social goals more quickly. The use of

²⁹⁶ marxists.org. 1958. *Sixty Points On Working Methods*.

²⁹⁷ Lieberthal, p.294.

propaganda was therefore a crucial factor in this endeavour, as the people would, as I have already noted above, be required to become the heroes they had been tasked with emulating since the CCP had gained power.

As a campaign, the Great Leap Forward built upon the propaganda of the 1950s. As noted by Lieberthal, power was devolved to a great degree to local Party authorities.²⁹⁸ If the propaganda campaigns of the 1950s were thought to have been a success, this was a natural evolution, as those in charge would have been fully indoctrinated by the system and ready to lead the workers to the next level of social development. Indeed, propaganda posters of the era, such as Figure 1.2 and Figure 1.3 display the people, united together in heroic poses, not so dissimilar to the Model Workers of the previous decade.



Figure 1.2 - 'Long live the General Line! Long live the Great Leap Forward! Long live the People's Communes! (1964).

²⁹⁸ Ibid.

Figure 1.2 was produced towards the end of the Great Leap in 1964 and was designed by Yao Zhongyu (姚中玉) and published by Shanghai Renmin Meishu Chubanshe (上海人民美术出版社) - Shanghai People's Art Publisher. In this poster the people march, united together under the Red Flag of the Great Leap Forward. Citizens from all sections of life are present, signifying the unity and equality provided by the establishment of the People's Communes. The shepherd at the head of line holds aloft a copy of Mao's writings, the people's eyes are all drawn to it.



Figure 1.3. - 'Brave the wind and the waves, everything has remarkable abilities.' (1958).



Figure 1.4. – Eight Saints Cross the Sea. (date unknown).

The second poster, Figure 1.3, has a slightly more significant background story and must be compared with Figure 1.2. Figure 1.3 was produced in 1958 and was designed by nine artists, Wang Liuying (王柳影); Xin Liliang(忻礼良); Wu Shaoyun (吴少云); Jin Zhaofang (金肇芳); Meng Muyi (孟慕颐); Yu Weibo(俞微波); Xu Jiping (徐寄萍); Lu Zezhi (陆泽之) and Zhang Biwu (张碧梧). Chinese poster collector and expert Stefan R. Landsberger of the University of Leiden from whose collection this poster originates, states that it has ‘several elements from other posters, merged to a new composition.’²⁹⁹ Whilst this may indeed be correct the intent of the designers was most certainly to create a unified piece as it bears a striking similarity to Figure 1.4. This figure, created by Chen Yanning (date unknown), details one of the stories of the ‘Eight Immortals.’³⁰⁰ According to the legend, one day, when the Eight Immortals arrive at the East Sea, it was extremely rough, with turbulent waves. One of the Immortals, Lu Dongbin (吕洞宾), proposes that each of them cross the sea using his or her special skills by projecting something on to the sea’s surface. Thus, all of them successfully cross the stormy East Sea. The story was intended to symbolize overcoming difficulties or doing something spectacular through using specific special skills and working together.³⁰¹ Figure 1.3 was clearly intended to evoke not just the artistic design, but also the message. However, the Eight Immortals are substituted by citizens of the People’s Republic, the clear message being that the people, through embracing the Great Leap Forward are now equal to China’s greatest mythic heroes. Whereas the Immortal Eight use magic to cross the river, the people of China rely instead on the rewards of industrial development.

²⁹⁹ chinese posters.net. 1958. *Brave the wind and the waves, everything has remarkable abilities*. [ONLINE] Available at: <http://chinese posters.net/posters/pc-1958-024.php>.

³⁰⁰ A group of legendary saints in Chinese mythology.

³⁰¹ Translation of the story of the ‘Eight Immortals’ located (in Chinese), [ONLINE], accessed 30th June 2015. Available at: http://cul.shangdu.com/chinacul/20141022/278_5949548.shtml

However, one of the key features of the Great Leap Forward was the way in which technical expertise became less important during this period as political reliability became the main criterion for the selection of leaders. This was to have a direct impact on Sino-Soviet relations as the technical experts sent by the Soviet Union had their authority challenged.³⁰² This was arguably, at least in Mao's mind, the next stage of China's liberation from outside interference. China did not need a foreign power however friendly, it could rely on the newly reformed mass of Chinese people to rebuild the country. The First Five Year Plan was modelled on the same principles as the Soviet strategy which was designed to exploit the countryside to benefit industrial production.³⁰³ However, as noted by Lieberthal, Mao believed that the situation in the countryside in China was quite different and argued as such through a series of conferences throughout the period of the Great Leap Forward. Interestingly, Lieberthal also notes that Chen Yun (陈云) argued that the peasants would need material incentives for them to increase production and that ideological work would not be enough.³⁰⁴ Subsequently, he, like Bukharin in the Soviet Union, was pushed aside. Lieberthal argues that Chen's ideas were defeated because of 'simple impatience.'³⁰⁵ However, I contend that there was a deeper reason than that. Ideologically, with class struggle being 'basically over'³⁰⁶ and the society already transitioning to socialism, the idea of material incentives had now become, at best debateable, and at worst, counter-revolutionary. The new men and women, inspired by the Model Workers of the past ten years, were ideally only devoted to one thing, the rebirth of the nation. Material incentives would therefore no longer be a factor.

³⁰² Lieberthal, p.294.

³⁰³ Ibid, p.299.

³⁰⁴ Chen served as Party Vice Chairman of the CCP in 1956.

³⁰⁵ Lieberthal, p.301.

³⁰⁶ Chapter 2, p.30.

In addition, since the first Five Year Plan, Chinese society had become increasingly stratified.³⁰⁷ Chen's remarks about using more material incentives would have further encouraged this stratification and would have been more of a challenge to Mao's conception of a socialist society. Whilst Lieberthal argues that part of the reason for the strategy of the Great Leap Forward was a desire to return to a perceived 'purity' of the Yan'an days, I would argue that it was not the only reason as Mao perhaps believed that the society was ready, because of the years of propaganda, to take on this challenge.

Great Leap Historiography.

It is my intention in this section to confine my analysis of the effect of the Great Leap Forward in as much as it was the catalyst for the next stage of the development of the Model Worker. There is an exhaustive amount of literature that deals with the outcomes of Great Leap policies. Indeed, this is perhaps because, as journalist K.S Karol stated in 1967, 'At the time of the "Great Leap Forward" the Maoists made dazzling promises they were unable to keep. "Certain errors" have been officially admitted, but in such cryptic and vague terms that a more advanced and more aware population would not have tolerated them. Serious research in these matters would doubtless reveal anomalies in the working of the CCP and in its relationship with the masses.'³⁰⁸

These 'anomalies' have been thoroughly detailed by historians and I will engage in more detail with the debate in the section of this chapter covering, 'The Socialist Education Movement.' However, I would like to briefly address here some important aspects that

³⁰⁷ Lieberthal, p.303.

³⁰⁸ Karol, p.139.

are particularly pertinent to the early development of the Great Leap or rather the rationale behind its implementation. Broadly, I have identified three different aspects that each historian focuses upon to a greater or lesser extent. These can be summarised under the following headings. Firstly, that the Great Leap was a nationalist endeavour, designed to boost China's prestige and compete with the Soviet Union. This view is represented by Frank Dikötter. Secondly, Jean Chesneaux posits another possible reason, that the Great Leap Forward was demanded by the masses. Thirdly, and the theory supported by the greatest number of historians, is the belief that the Great Leap Forward was primarily in reaction to a perceived failure and incompatibility of the Soviet model of development with that of China. This view is supported by Teiwes, Sun, Solomon, Meisner, Schram and senior fellow at the Institute for International Economics, Nicholas R. Lardy.

[The Nationalist Motive or Revolution from below.](#)

Dikötter states that one of the key aims of the Great Leap was to push the country ahead of other competing countries.³⁰⁹ Khrushchev had already stated that the intention of the Soviet Union's was to catch up with and overtake the United States. Mao was not to be outdone by this, which was perhaps another reason for the swift implementation of the plan to, 'Overtake Britain in Iron and Steel and Other Major Industrial Production in Fifteen or More Years.'³¹⁰ However, this aspect can only be considered to be a contributing factor and not a sole cause as plans for the Great Leap were already underway prior to Khrushchev's pronouncement. Dikötter also highlights foreigners who were given selective tours of the country to demonstrate how well the Leap was

³⁰⁹ F. Dikötter, *Mao's Great Famine: The History of China's Most Devastating Catastrophe, 1958-1962*. (Bloomsbury Publishing, 2011), p.xi.

³¹⁰ marxists.org. 1958. *Sixty Points On Working Methods*.

going,³¹¹ this was obviously another aspect of nationalism. Indeed, regarding foreign criticism, there was an even stronger reason for Mao to want to push on with the communes and the Great Leap as a whole. On the 18th of July 1959, Khrushchev condemned the system arguing that those who had tried to implement it did not truly understand Communism.³¹² This was a rather sharp rebuff to Mao which no doubt strengthened his resolve to continue with the project.

Dikötter also argues that calling the result of the Great Leap Forward a 'famine' causes a massive misunderstanding as he states that there was clearly a programme of genocide in operation.³¹³ As noted in Chapter 2, Dikötter's use of sources has recently been flagged as being possibly problematic, especially in his interpretation of language related to Mao's supposed desire to kill on such an industrial scale.³¹⁴ Indeed, Dikötter disagrees with Chesneaux's appraisal, that the people actively embraced the Great Leap Forward.³¹⁵ He cites examples of protests against Great Leap policies, specifically through wall graffiti and handmade posters.³¹⁶ However, later dissent appears to be based more around the famine conditions that existed following 1958 that were brought about by Great Leap policies.³¹⁷ Whilst there was almost certainly discontent with aspects of the Great Leap Forward, these were more likely to have become widespread as the Great Famine gripped the country. It is unlikely that the discontent at the beginning of the Great Leap was of the magnitude that Dikötter claims. If it was, undertaking the Great Leap would have been an extremely foolhardy project for the government to have undertaken.

³¹¹ Dikötter, (2011), p.215.

³¹² Ibid, p.95.

³¹³ Ibid, p.x.

³¹⁴ Chapter 2, p.68.

³¹⁵ Chesneaux, p.85.

³¹⁶ Dikötter, (2011), p.217.

³¹⁷ Ibid, p.218.

Ineffectiveness of the Soviet Model and the spirit of the people.

Whilst nationalism was undoubtedly a factor in the Great Leap Forward, it was decidedly not the sole aim. Chalmers Johnson in the introduction to his edited volume, *Ideology and Politics in Contemporary China* argues that, 'The Ideology of the Great Leap Forward, as many observers have pointed out, made sense only in light of many earlier - particularly of the Yan'an period - organisational precedents.'³¹⁸ I would add, that the Yan'an period was not the deciding factor, but that other post-1949 'revolutions' in the countryside and then later in the city, were of more significance. Nevertheless, the point still stands, the ideology of the Great Leap Forward does make sense when the events of the past decade are taken into consideration. Teiwes and Sun's chapter, 'The Politics of an "Un-Maoist" Interlude: The Case of Opposing Rash Advance, 1956-1957' in Cheek and Saich's *New Perspectives on State Socialism in China* attempts to explain why there was a deviation from 'opposing rash advance' that had begun in 1956 with the start of the Great Leap Forward.³¹⁹ They argue that Mao's personal desire for more rapid growth was combined with a general belief amongst the Party's leadership that the Soviet model was not working for China. In addition, there was a fear that bourgeois elements of society needed for further growth using the Soviet model, were no longer reliable. This view is largely shared by Lardy in his discussion of the Chinese economy during the Great Leap Forward wherein he argues that Mao misunderstood the constraints that existed in the Chinese economy.³²⁰ In addition, Teiwes and Sun state that the perceived success of the socialisation of the countryside

³¹⁸ C. Johnson 'Introduction' in C. Johnson (ed), *Ideology and Politics in Contemporary China*, (University of Washington Press, 1973), p.vi.

³¹⁹ F. C. Teiwes with W. Sun, 'The Politics of an "Un-Maoist" Interlude: The Case of Opposing Rash Advance, 1956-1957' in T. Cheek and T. Saich (eds), *New Perspectives on State Socialism in China*, (M. E. Sharpe, Inc. 1997), p.151.

³²⁰ N. R. Lardy, 'The Chinese Economy Under Stress, 1958-1965' in D. Twitchett and J. K. Fairbank (eds), *The Cambridge History of China Volume 14, The People's Republic, Part 1: The Emergence of Revolutionary China 1949-1965*, (Cambridge University Press, 1987), p.363.

and a nationalist inspired desire to compete with the Soviet Union were also contributing factors.³²¹ Whilst all these elements undoubtedly played a part, I would argue that there was a belief, because of the pervasive role of propaganda and the Model Worker in particular since 1949, that the time was now right for the Great Leap Forward to be undertaken.

Meisner argues that it was at this point that Maoist interpretations of Marxism became ever more firmly rooted in what he describes as being 'a voluntaristic belief that human consciousness and the moral qualities of men are the decisive factors in determining the course of history.'³²² This view is supported by Schram who also notes that Mao began to make pronouncements such as, 'the subjective creates the objective.'³²³ Economic prosperity would come through harnessing the power of the people, the consciousness of whom had been awakened. This was in contrast to the ideology of Stalin who advocated evolutionary change, not 'great leaps.'³²⁴ Economic prosperity was thus guaranteed. The consciousness of the people, referred to by Meisner, had not so much been awakened, but inspired by the heroes promoted by the CCP's propaganda department.

Elements of all of the approaches outlined above were indeed contributory to the overall aims of the Great Leap Forward. However, without the rectification of the people inspired by the core ideology of the Model Worker, the Great Leap would not have been thought possible. The importance of this core ideology is clear and continued to be promoted in documents designed to promote the Great Leap Forward to the masses. I

³²¹ F. C. Tewies with W. Sun, p.176.

³²² Meisner, p.205.

³²³ Schram, p.132.

³²⁴ Meisner, p.210.

will now examine this perspective in light of three key documents related to the policies of the Great Leap Forward.

Primary Sources:

Following the Hangzhou and Nanning conferences, on the 3rd to the 4th of January and 11th to the 22nd of January, both in 1958, the Party released the ‘Gongzuo Fangfa Liushitiao’ (工作方法六十条) - 'Sixty Points on Working Methods - A Draft Resolution from the Office of The Centre of the CCP.' This document was designed to summarise the main points agreed upon at the two conferences and serve as a guide to action for the Great Leap Forward. Alfred L Chan in his work *Mao's Crusade : Politics and Policy Implementation in China's Great Leap* argues that Mao exaggerated when he stated that the document was eight years in the making and that it was more of a reaction to the planners who wished to follow the Soviet model of development.³²⁵ Whilst the claim that this specific document was eight years in the making is indeed rather unbelievable, the elements that exist within it, demonstrate a clear evolution in thinking resulting from the Hundred Flowers Campaign.

The Sixty Points were reinforced by further ideological pronouncements. Chief amongst these were the writings of the newly created journal ‘Hong Qi’ (红旗) - 'Red Flag.' One article, written by Mao's personal secretary Chen Boda (陈伯达), entitled ‘Quanxin de Shehui, Quanxin de Ren (全新的社会，全新的人) - 'Brand New Society, Brand New Man' is of particular importance. There is no English translation of this article, therefore I have translated it. These sections demonstrate the way in which this

³²⁵ A. L. Chan, *Mao's Crusade : Politics and Policy Implementation in China's Great Leap Forward*, (Oxford University Press, 2001), p.39.

document supports the thesis, that the Model Worker propaganda of the previous decade was believed to have created a situation whereby the Great Leap Forward was now considered possible.

The 'Sixty Points' were followed up with conferences at Beidaihe in August 1958 and Zhengzhou and Wuchang in November. These conferences served to elaborate some of the points made in this resolution. As I shall now examine, the themes of nationalism, social reform and in particular, the development of socialism, prominently feature throughout each of these primary sources. Firstly I will analyse the 'Sixty Points' before examining the work of Chen Boda. I will then investigate chronologically how the three key themes were reiterated during the later conferences.

[Sixty Points on Working Methods - A Draft Resolution from the Office of the Centre of the CCP - 2nd February 1958.](#)

In the introduction to the sixty articles Mao explicitly mentions several factors that the Party had overcome which are specifically related to the aspects of reform that drove Model Worker propaganda. The document concludes with a proclamation by Mao that he will now be standing down as Chairman of the Republic, so that he can concentrate on his duties as Chairman of the Party. Nationalism is exemplified by a perceived need to compete with foreign countries in order to prove that China was now a major world power. Mao specifically sets the target of "Overtake Britain in Iron and Steel and Other Major Industrial Production in Fifteen or More Years."³²⁶ As I have noted above, this nationalist competition was not solely related to the capitalist West, but could also be found in a desire to overtake the Soviet Union.

³²⁶ marxists.org. 1958. *Sixty Points On Working Methods*.

Mao also details the triumph of the CCP over the cultural problems that the country had inherited. He states that they have rectified, 'the mistakes and weaknesses rooted in the subjectivism which the Party and people have inherited from the old society.' In addition, point 22 details the importance of continuing to focus on ideology and politics in all things, for citizens to struggle to become 'red and expert.'³²⁷ The importance of this aspect of thought reform is underlined as he argued that 'a slight relaxation in our ideological and political work will lead our economic and technological work astray.'³²⁸ The endeavour is consequently clearly believed to be entirely reliant on the positive attributes of the people. In addition, point 26 states that there must be a great effort to 'make people feel that relationships among men are truly equal.' For this to be achieved, individuals are urged to 'learn from Lu Xun'³²⁹ by making sure that there is 'full and openhearted communication.'³³⁰ Following this the document lays out, from points 27 to 46, the responsibilities of government officials in an attempt to curb the perceived deeply ideologically entrenched bureaucratic problems that had yet to be fully resolved.

Mao trumpets the developments of socialism over the past years, highlighting in particular the 'victories in the socialist ownership system in 1956.'³³¹ The entire article provides the blueprint for how the process of achieving the Great Leap will be accomplished. Point 17 details how the contradictions between individual and collective economies must be resolved because, 'This situation inevitably affects the peasants' enthusiasm for socialist collective economy and must be altered.'³³² In Point 21, the process of the Chinese Revolution is detailed in an attempt to expound upon the theory of uninterrupted revolution and thus legitimise the actions of the Great Leap

³²⁷ Ibid, Point 22.

³²⁸ Ibid.

³²⁹ Ibid, Point 26.

³³⁰ Ibid.

³³¹ Ibid, Introduction.

³³² Ibid, Point 17.

Forward. The main developments of Chinese socialism are argued to be firstly the 'seizure of power in the whole country in 1949' which resulted in anti-feudal land reform, the creation of agricultural cooperatives and the socialist reconstruction of private industries.³³³ It is then argued that the ownership of the means of production was 'basically completed' in 1956 then followed by an ideological and political revolution during the Hundred Flowers campaign. The implication being that the time was now right for a further revolution to bring China ever closer to achieving the goal of genuine communism. Indeed, points 47 to 59 detail the process by which this goal would be achieved, through the building of workshops and farms in schools to a 'patriotic public health campaign centring on the elimination of the 'four pests.'³³⁴

Brand New Society, Brand new Man – Chen Boda.

Following the publication of the Sixty Points on Working Methods, considerable propaganda was released to promote the Great Leap Forward. In addition, articles such as this one, written by Mao's political secretary, Chen Boda in March 1958 were published in the new political journal 'Red Flag.' Although the Red Flag journal was not intended for mass consumption, the articles within were intended for those who would be enforcing policy decisions. For this reason, it is worth examining as it demonstrates the extent to which the concept of the Model Worker had been intended to prepare the country for the Great Leap. This article, as noted above, has not been translated into English, consequently the text that follows is my own. The footnotes contain a reference to the original Chinese text, hosted by MarxistPhilosophy.org.³³⁵ A complete translation can be found in the appendix.³³⁶

³³³ Ibid, Point 21.

³³⁴ Ibid, Points 49, 50 and 51.

³³⁵ Marxist Philosophy, *Selected Essays from Hongqi (Red Flag) 1958-79*, [Online], [Accessed 19 March 2015], Available from: <http://marxistphilosophy.org/Hongqi/index.htm>

³³⁶ Appendix item 8.1.

Firstly, Chen writes about the priorities of the Great Leap, but then states how it had been the power of local initiatives and local people that had caused there to be such great gains. He then states, 'Just think about the workers and peasants, under the leadership of our party, have created many new miracle work by millions of times of the spirit of "Yu Gong." And just think about all the local enormous potential, then we will believe these possibilities will become reality.'³³⁷

The potential is clearly there, waiting to be unlocked at the local level. Indeed, he continues by explicitly discussing the now heroic nature of Chinese society, stating that, 'We have seen China in its Great Leap Forward, we have also seen a brand new society, brand new people. Almost all the people here are like a group of lively and strong willed heroes. They dare to think, dare to talk, dare to do it... Just like Comrade Mao Zedong said, they are writing the most beautiful words, painting the most beautiful picture on the original blank point.'³³⁸

Chen then discusses the next stage and what will be required of the citizenry. There is a striking similarity here to the *modus operandi* of the ultimate Model Worker 'Lei Feng' who was to become the centrepiece of Party propaganda in the early 1960s. Citizens would now become 'universal men' (and presumably women) who would be expected to serve multiple functions in society or as Chen puts it, 'Be a farmer when you get into the fields, be a worker when you get into the factory.'³³⁹

³³⁷ Marxist Philosophy, *Selected Essays from Hongqi (Red Flag) 1958-79*.

³³⁸ Ibid.

³³⁹ Ibid.

The new citizens of the Great Leap would be further inspired by the core values of nationalism, social reform and the development of socialism, as outlined by the 'Sixty Points on Working Methods' and further elaborated upon at two key conferences that took place towards the end of 1958.

Talks at Beidaihe, Zhengzhou and Wuchang, August, and November 1958.

The first of these conferences, a draft transcript of which has been made available by Roderick Macfarquhar in the aforementioned *The Secret Speeches of Chairman Mao: From the Hundred Flowers to the Great Leap Forward* took place at Beidaihe. This conference was intended to launch the People's Commune system and further detail the ideological reasoning behind the Great Leap. Whilst Jean Chesneaux argues that the tone of the conference was 'calm and cautious,' there are certainly elements that are rather more strident.³⁴⁰

Nationalistic elements in particular are well represented as Mao used the opportunity to thoroughly criticise the development of the Soviet Union. He does this by laying the blame for China's current situation with the Soviets, stating that, 'In the past we were compelled to have bourgeoisie advisors.... As the sea of the bourgeoisie has risen up to our chests, it has drowned some.'³⁴¹ Here Mao is clearly connecting those who had to be 'rectified' during the anti-rightist campaign, following the Hundred Flowers, with the Soviets. In addition, he further argues that the Soviets are not without mistakes, colourfully stating, 'Don't think the ancestors all fart fragrantly and fart no foul farts.... The Soviet Union has had forty-one years of experience; we've had thirty-one years.'³⁴²

³⁴⁰ Chesneaux, p.88.

³⁴¹ Macfarquhar, Cheek and Wu, p.428.

³⁴² Ibid, p.441.

The implication here being that Chinese thinking is just as advanced as its 'big brother' to the North.

During the Zhengzhou conference Mao continued his assault by stating that 'The Soviet Union also brags (about entering communism) but you only hear a noise on the staircase, you don't see anyone coming down.'³⁴³ Further to his criticism of the Soviet method for achieving improvements during the Beidaihe conference, Mao spent a great deal of time attacking Stalin's concept of socialism. He attempts to explain why the Chinese model is superior arguing that this was principally because 'Stalin saw material things, not people, he saw only the cadres, and not the masses.'³⁴⁴ He expanded this attack later in November during the Wuchang conference when he outlined what he considered to be a successful societal shift to full socialism. Mao stated, 'We take the achievement of ownership by the whole people as the primary criterion. By this criterion, the Soviet Union has not completed the building of socialism.... This has given rise to the question: people all over the world ask, has the Soviet Union even now still not completed the building of socialism.'³⁴⁵ It is unlikely that Mao would have been so open in his condemnation had Stalin still been alive.

Competition with the Soviet Union was thus focussed primarily on the development of socialism. Consequently, this was the prime consideration for the Beidaihe conference and Mao spent a considerable time discussing how systems should work. He focused in particular on how the wage system was to be simplified and based on ability and how it would be paid directly to the individual rather than the head of a family. He stated that this development should be a 'socialist system plus communist ideology.'³⁴⁶ He then

³⁴³ Ibid, p.446.

³⁴⁴ Ibid, p.464.

³⁴⁵ Ibid, p.488.

³⁴⁶ Ibid, p.408.

proceeds to criticise the Soviet Union for its use of material incentives. This was in line with the previously studied 'Sixty Points,' which demanded the establishment of greater equality.³⁴⁷ Mao takes the development of socialism and possible leap to communism even further when he argues that if the second year of the Great Leap is successful then there is the possibility that people will be able to eat without making any payment, presumably either in monetary form or through 'work points.'³⁴⁸ This would thus be the achievement of 'to each according to his need,' a further indication that communism had arrived.

During the Beidaihe conference in August, Mao also addressed the importance of the spirit of the people, now newly reformed, for the success of the Great Leap Forward. He posits the question, 'Why is the enthusiasm among the people so great?' The simple answer being, according to Mao, 'We have become one with the masses.'³⁴⁹ Mao's answer is rather disingenuous, but it is consistent with the 'mass line' philosophy. When the concept of the mass line is taken into consideration, I would argue that it was now believed that the masses have now become what was expected of them, they were at one with the Party and by extension, with Mao's thought. The social reform programme was clearly extremely important as Mao states that, '(we) can't rule the majority of the people by relying on law. The majority of people (can be ruled only) by relying on the cultivation of (good) habits.'³⁵⁰ These 'good habits,' one of the key components of the social reform aspect of Model Worker propaganda was vital, as Mao stated that, 'If China fails to solve the relationship between people, the Great Leap Forward will be impossible.'³⁵¹ Within this quotation the justification for what would become the

³⁴⁷ Chapter 3, p.117.

³⁴⁸ Macfarquhar, Cheek and Wu, p.426.

³⁴⁹ Ibid, p.413.

³⁵⁰ Ibid, p.424.

³⁵¹ Ibid. p.413.

‘Socialist Education Movement,’³⁵² following the failure of the Great Leap Forward becomes apparent. Failure was not necessarily because the idea was flawed, but because this relationship still required rectification. Mao then concludes this section by stating what could be described as the rationale for the life of a Model Worker, 'What meaning is there (to life) if (you) don't help others a bit, (or) don't practice a bit of communism?'³⁵³

However, during the Zhengzhou conference Mao addressed one of the more negative results of the Model Worker propaganda movement. He attacked those who brought false reports of success. He gives a number of examples of this with particular reference to grain production.³⁵⁴ I would argue that it was inevitable that this would happen and despite Mao's exhortation, would continue because of the influence Model Worker. The use of positive propaganda detailing the success of Great Leap policies was relentless during this period. As workers were surrounded by these images there would have been enormous pressure to reach the ideal presented by the propaganda. The Model Worker had been presented to society as the template by which a person should live their life. The message had been consistent. If there were more people cast in the same mould as, for example, Dong Cunrui, then success was assured. If success was not realised, then it was an indication that the individuals had failed to live up to the standards set by the Party. It was therefore understandable that figures were ‘massaged’ in order that perfection be reached. Mao revisited the topic during the Wuchang conference later in November. Here he once again discussed the issue of falsifying reports. Interestingly he states, 'If you demand comparison, the result will be fabrications. If you don't compare, there is no competition.' He appears here to be

³⁵² Chapter 3, p.126.

³⁵³ Macfarquhar, Cheek and Wu, p.414.

³⁵⁴ Ibid, p.460.

arguing that individuals and 'work units' should not compare with each other but focus solely on their own work.³⁵⁵ However, the critical flaw in his reasoning was the propaganda to which people had been exposed. The whole Model Worker concept was about comparisons. Falsification was thus inevitable.

Mao clearly still fully believed in the potential of the people. Towards the end of the Zhengzhou conference he once again discussed the superiority of the Chinese peasant, arguing as he did in 'On Contradiction' that, 'The Chinese workers are used to poverty; once they get to work, they work very hard.'³⁵⁶ He continues 'the communes are too poor; beyond providing food, wages are very small. Some pay only a few jiao; food, too, is very poor, substandard. It's still a case of poor and blank. I say that's a good thing.'³⁵⁷ Mao clearly believed this as during the Wuchang conference later in November he reiterated this point by arguing that although China was poor and the conditions for the people were perhaps worse than in the Soviet Union, but they were still closer to achieving ownership by the whole people and were consequently closer to achieving communism.

Before long it became apparent that the dream of the Great Leap Forward was, at this stage, not to be realised. Following the agonising death of the policy, Mao concluded that the reason for its failure still lay with the people. Further 'thought reform' was required and the Model Worker would once again be called upon to provide guidance during the 'Socialist Education Movement.'

³⁵⁵ Ibid, p.508.

³⁵⁶ Ibid, p.474.

³⁵⁷ Ibid, p.475.

The Socialist Education Movement.

Mao had been building towards the Great Leap Forward for nearly a decade before it began. Previous successes with land reform in the early 1950s, the war in Korea, the First Five Year Plan and the rectification of the Hundred Flowers Campaign, had led Mao to believe that the time for more drastic change had arrived. The Great Leap, as Mao envisaged it, could only succeed if the masses were able to take on the mantle of the Model Workers and perform truly heroic tasks. There was clearly no question in Mao's mind that the failure of the Great Leap was related to any serious theoretical flaws with the project. Whilst Mao had acknowledged that there had been a problem with an exaggeration of the results, this was clearly a man-made problem rather than an ideological one. The evidence for this lies in the report given to the Central Committee's Tenth Plenum in September of 1962. Professors Richard Baum and Frederick Teiwes, in their ground-breaking study of the Socialist Education Movement, noted that the Party presented a 'cautiously optimistic' summary of the economy.³⁵⁸ This was meant to deflect attention away from the structural failings of the Great Leap Forward, as the real problem was identified, thus, 'There still exists in society bourgeois influence, the force of habit of old society and the spontaneous tendency toward capitalism among part of the small producers. Therefore, among the people, a small number of persons, making up only a tiny fraction of the total population, who have not yet undergone socialist remoulding, always attempt to depart from the socialist road and turn to the capitalist road whenever there is an opportunity.'³⁵⁹

³⁵⁸ R. Baum and F. Teiwes, *Ssu-Ch'ing: The Socialist Education Movement of 1962–1966*, (Berkeley University of California, Centre for Chinese Studies, Research Monographs, No. 2, 1968).

³⁵⁹ Ibid, p.11.

The main purpose of the Socialist Education Movement was almost certainly to deal with the problems brought about by the expansion of the Communist Party and Mao's belief that there were people within it that were not true believers of Communism. Consequently, they were also unready to undertake greater steps towards socialism and eventual communism, because they had not been educated thoroughly enough. Indeed, Schram notes that there was a clear emphasis by Mao on the need for further transformation through education.³⁶⁰ The supermen and women, inspired by years of Model Worker propaganda had failed to fulfil their role in the construction of socialism. Mao's greater emphasis on education would suggest that it was this that he believed was the cause of the failure, not the overly ambitious targets or scientifically dubious 'innovations'.³⁶¹ The Socialist Education Movement was intended to remedy this perceived problem. To this end, propaganda was thus to become even more essential if Mao's aim to dramatically improve both the material and spiritual welfare of the people was to be fulfilled.

However, whilst Mao may have considered that the cause of the Great Leap Forward was the inability to adequately explain socialism to the local leadership, this view may not have been shared amongst the higher echelons of the Party. This is a contested point amongst historians and one that I shall explore in more detail in this section. Consequently, what was to become the Socialist Education Movement was rather confused as policy documents lacked an entirely clear focus. The evidence for this lies in the numerous revisions and alterations made to the key document of the era, the 'Qian Shi Tiao' (前十条) - 'Ten Points.' Ascertaining the importance of the Socialist Education Movement to the development of the Model Worker is thus rather difficult.

³⁶⁰ Schram, p.165.

³⁶¹ Chapter 3, p.104 (note 290).

Although elements of Nationalism, Social Reform and The Development of Socialism exist throughout the documents, they are far less pronounced as a result of an overall lack of focus. The Movement nonetheless is important as its overall failure was a contributing factor to the eventual creation of the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution, within which Model Workers would play a key role.

It is for this reason that some study of the Movement is important as it is possible to identify the enduring threads of Model Worker propaganda that were still sewn through this period. The complexity of the evolution of the Socialist Education Movement makes a reasoned analysis rather difficult. Although the events, on the surface, appear to have occurred in a relatively straightforward manner, the underlying reasons are far more complex. Indeed, Professor Richard Baum describes the event as being ‘one of the most complex - and as yet only imperfectly understood - episodes in the entire history of the Chinese People's Republic.’³⁶² For this reason this section will be divided into three parts. Firstly, I will briefly explore the chronology of the Socialist Education Movement. Secondly, I will examine the historiographical debate, noting the specific areas of class, ideological and cultural struggle that were waged throughout the campaign. Thirdly, I will analyse the four key documents of the Socialist Education Movement, noting the elements of Nationalism, Social Reform and the Development of Socialism that are present. For this section I will be making extensive use of Baum and Teiwes’ translation of the Socialist Education Movement’s documentation. Although their work includes commentary, the document has not been analysed according to the propaganda aims of the Model Worker. Indeed, their work could also be criticised of failing to offer a more systemic analysis of the campaign.³⁶³ My intention is not to

³⁶² R. Baum, ‘Revolution and Reaction in the Chinese Countryside: The Socialist Education Movement in Cultural Revolutionary Perspective,’ *The China Quarterly*, vol.38 (1969), p.166.

³⁶³ E. Winckler, *The China Quarterly*, Vol. 39, September (1969), pp.126-127.

provide such analysis, but to consider the impact of the campaign on the development of the Model Worker and to demonstrate the continuity of thinking that continued to exist following the Great Leap Forward.

[The Chronology of the Socialist Education Movement.](#)

The way in which the Socialist Education Movement was to develop is, in itself contested by historians. In one of the earliest studies of the Movement, Professors Baum and Teiwes state that there were five clear periods of development. These periods included what they describe as being the 'Investigation Period,' covering the Tenth Plenum (September 1962 to the 'First Ten Points' (Summer 1963). This was then followed by the 'Hou Shi Tiao' (后十条) 'Later Ten Points' in September 1963. During this period the results from the investigation were analysed and a campaign created to address them, this was given widespread attention in the media. The next period began in September 1964 and was a result of a more pessimistic view of developments in the countryside. It resulted in the reorganisation of the system and the campaign was widened to all rural households. This period was followed by the fourth stage in Mid-January of 1965. This saw the adoption of the 'Er Shi San Tiao' (二十三条) - 'Twenty-Three Articles' and a search for new theoretical guidelines and a step back from attacks on lower level cadres; but warnings of possible problems with higher level officials. The final stage was the Autumn of 1965 with the rectification of party officials at the county level. In addition, and critically for the development of the Model Worker, the Mao study movement corresponded with the, 'Politics must take command' slogan.³⁶⁴ However, this timeline was later revised by Baum in 1969 in an article in the 'China Quarterly' journal when he argued that there were in fact three

³⁶⁴ R. Baum and F. Teiwes, p.48.

stages.³⁶⁵ The first of these stages, between 1962 and 1964, Baum argues saw the most intense indoctrination undertaken. The second stage, post 1964 saw a shift from the use of propaganda to disciplinary action.³⁶⁶ The final stage, that began in January 1965, focussed almost solely on education and the fulfilment of the material needs of the peasants.³⁶⁷

Interpretations of the Movement.

The solution to the problems of the Great Leap Forward were believed to lay in the implementation of a rectification policy referred to as the 'Si Qing Yundong' (四清运动) - the 'Four Clean Ups Movement.' The campaign would eventually evolve to focus primarily on dealing with the aspects that were believed to plague local bureaucracy through the promotion of, 'clean politics, clean economics, clean organization, clean ideology.'³⁶⁸ There were several underlying aspects of this campaign, focusing largely around the themes of 'class struggle' and 'socialist development.' The campaign led to further disagreements with President of the People's Republic, Liu Shaoqi, who Mao believed was trying to undermine his efforts.³⁶⁹ According to Schram, by 1964 Mao announced that there were two factions inside the Communist Party, capitalist and socialist.³⁷⁰ This interpretation suggests that whereas during the Hundred Flowers Campaign, society had been reduced to two distinct classes, the Socialist Education Campaign would see the same happen to the Party itself. This view was supported by both Chesneaux³⁷¹ and Meisner. The latter argued that the impetus for the Socialist Education movement was Mao's fear that there was a growth in 'revisionism' within the

³⁶⁵ R.Baum, p.93

³⁶⁶ Ibid, p.94.

³⁶⁷ Ibid, p.95.

³⁶⁸ Meisner, p.292.

³⁶⁹ Schram, p.170

³⁷⁰ Ibid, p.171

³⁷¹ Chesneaux, p.113.

Party.³⁷² Taken at face value this would make logical sense, however I would also suggest that the intention was not simply to combat revisionism but was also an attempt by Mao to strengthen his grip as colleagues, primarily Liu Shaoqi and Deng Xiaoping began to offer alternative methods for the development of the country.

Consequently, the Socialist Education Movement was, according to Meisner, designed to follow the same path of rectification as in Yan'an. He argues, moreover, that the campaign was to be stifled by those in the Party who did not wish to take this route. For Mao, the growth of the bureaucracy was the biggest single problem in Chinese society as it represented everything that he had fought against. The aspects of Social Reform needed in China that I outlined in Chapter 1, therefore found their root in the nature of China's bureaucratic tradition; this arguably and inevitably led to corruption.³⁷³ This tradition, in Mao's opinion was, after the failure of the Great Leap Forward, reasserting itself. Indeed, he stated in August of 1964 that, 'At present, you can buy a Party branch secretary for a few packs of cigarettes, not to mention marrying a daughter to him.'³⁷⁴

However, although both Professor Kenneth Lieberthal and Frederick Teiwes agree that revisionism and corruption were major components of the Movement, they dispute the idea that there were two distinct factions within the Party and argue for a more nuanced interpretation of events.³⁷⁵ The argument commonly presented to demonstrate that there was a power struggle taking place inside the Party is the way in which the Socialist Education Movement lacked direction and suffered so many revisions. Teiwes argues that this may not have been the case and that Mao's own opinion during this period was shifting, which is why policy was so unclear during this time. He further argues that the

³⁷² Meisner, p.271.

³⁷³ Chapter 1, p.12.

³⁷⁴ Meisner, p.303.

³⁷⁵ Lieberthal, p.333.

leadership were trying to win Mao over, rather than oppose him.³⁷⁶ Teiwes claims that this was because at this stage Mao was in the 'second line' of leadership and was mostly dedicated to dealing with theoretical matters. However, he still commented extensively on the situations facing the country, but these comments were often contradictory. This confused policy makers who were unsure how to develop these ideas.³⁷⁷ This interpretation would appear to be more plausible as there was a clear evolution of ideas throughout the documentation of the Socialist Education Movement which would indicate the concept was not the product of an intensely vicious power struggle.

The Ten Articles.

Policy makers may not have been entirely sure what the specific goals of the Socialist Education Movement were, indeed, Frederick Teiwes argues that the first of the 'Ten Articles' were 'broad' and 'non-specific.'³⁷⁸ An analysis of them reveals the extent to which the propaganda of the Model Worker Movement, that of Nationalism, Social Reform and the Development of Socialism, had become imprinted on each significant campaign of the post-1949 era. Professor Lowell Dittmer in his study of Liu Shaoqi argues that the authorship of the 'First Ten Articles,' published in May 1963 can be traced to Mao himself.³⁷⁹ However, there does not appear to be any conclusive evidence to support this claim. The introductory statements that accompany the document do focus on the elements of rectification that Mao clearly believed to be the most important. The preamble of the piece focuses almost solely on why education is needed, as it argues that the people do not understand why they should have the 'correct' line of thinking. It then details the 'correct' form by which people should gain

³⁷⁶ Ibid, p.493.

³⁷⁷ Ibid, p.499.

³⁷⁸ Ibid, p.512.

³⁷⁹ Dittmer, p.50.

knowledge, arguing that, 'a correct idea can be arrived at only after many repetitions of the process leading from matter to consciousness and then back to matter, that is, leading from practice to knowledge and then back to practice.'³⁸⁰

Here it is possible to see the process by which propaganda should have been effective. An individual would first emulate a Model Worker, by doing this they would then understand why they were doing it. This would further encourage them to consciously engage in the 'correct' form of practice as they appreciated its value. The Socialist Education Movement was thus intended to enhance the second stage of the process as it was clearly believed that although people may have engaged in the first stage and emulated their heroes, they did not fully understand why they did so. Consequently, as the Great Leap Forward became more challenging their determination failed them. This was because they lacked complete understanding as to what they were fighting to achieve. Their conversion to new citizens was thus incomplete. To combat this problem, the following aspects related to Model Worker Propaganda ran throughout all three of the key elements of the Socialist Education Movement, as I shall now explore.

Nationalism.

Although undeniably the weakest of the three elements there are nonetheless hints of nationalism within the various incarnations of the 'Ten Articles.' In the introduction there is a brief nationalist message wherein the struggle to make China great is promoted. Citizens are encouraged to work hard, 'so as to build China into a great and powerful socialist country and help the broad masses of the oppressed and exploited throughout the world.'³⁸¹ China's national role, although not the centrepiece of the

³⁸⁰ Baum and Teiwes, p.59.

³⁸¹ Ibid, p.59.

articles, is nonetheless present. Indeed, the 'Later Ten Articles,' add to the messianic role of the country by stating in Article 1, Task 6, that citizens are required to receive a 'patriotic' education.³⁸² The final revision to the 'Ten Articles' addresses the issue of national unity as the ethnic minorities of China were encouraged to join more actively in creating China's socialist society.³⁸³

Social Reform.

As the Socialist Education Movement was intended to function primarily to rectify problems within the Party and those specifically related to corruption, it is perhaps unsurprising that the issue of 'Social Reform' features exceptionally strongly throughout all three documents. The evils of society, or 'corrupt elements' are detailed as being 'thieves, speculators, degenerates, rich peasants and counter-revolutionaries.'³⁸⁴ However, although these 'elements' are barred from joining organisations, they are not without hope. As with the 'Common Programme' of 1949,³⁸⁵ those who had erred were offered rehabilitation. The article states, 'Admittance of these branded elements is permissible only when they have made frank confessions and accounted for their evil doings, 'washed their hands and bodies,' or when they have been proved to have truly corrected their wrongs at mass meetings of the poor and lower middle class peasants.'³⁸⁶ In reality, unless these people are reformed then society cannot progress. The document stated that, 'This is a high hurdle that must be surmounted before entering the state of socialism. All such cadres must understand that 'being clean' is a must.'³⁸⁷ This aspect of reform was further developed in the 'Later Ten Articles.' In Point 1 (Basic

³⁸² Ibid, p.74.

³⁸³ Ibid, p.110.

³⁸⁴ Ibid, p.64.

³⁸⁵ Chapter 2, p.37.

³⁸⁶ Baum and Teiwes, p.64.

³⁸⁷ Ibid, p.66.

Directions and Main Contents of the Socialist Education Movement), it was stated that regarding 'undesirables,' care must be taken to, 'remould the majority of these elements into new men.'³⁸⁸

Another initiative intended to reinforce the social reform aspect of the government was the insistence that cadres must be involved in physical work. Whilst this may also be attributed to developing socialism, it is one of the aspects of social reform that the Party were intending to promote because of the perceived danger that officials would slide back into a Confucian mode of thinking regarding leadership. This was clearly a concern for Mao as during this period Chinese scholars such as Feng Youlan (冯友兰)³⁸⁹ and Wu Han (吴晗)³⁹⁰ were beginning to debate the benefits of Confucianism and how it could fit into the existing system, particularly the ideas of 'humanism' and what they believed to be a system of universal, ethical values.³⁹¹ This rather worrying trend consequently had to be countered. Under the Confucian system, the division between the workers and those in leadership had traditionally been marked by the latter's lack of engagement with physical work. Therefore, for social reform to become a reality, this aspect of Chinese culture had to be eradicated. The scale of this task was clearly enormous, as Mao stated, 'If we succeed in having one-third of all secretaries in the Party branches join in the production labour during the first year, we will have scored a great victory.'³⁹² This aspect, of those in leadership being 'encouraged' to engage in manual labour was to reach its apex during the Cultural Revolution. For the leadership it was clearly one of the most important aspects of social reform as Mao attempted to

³⁸⁸ Ibid, p.73.

³⁸⁹ Feng Youlan (冯友兰) was a philosopher who focused primarily on the study of the reintroduction of Chinese philosophy to modern China. His work was criticized during the Cultural Revolution period.

³⁹⁰ Wu Han (吴晗) was a historian who wrote the play 'Hai Rui Ba Guan' (海瑞罢官) - 'Hai Rui Dismissed from Office' that was to be the catalyst for the Cultural Revolution.

³⁹¹ Meisner, p.300.

³⁹² Baum and Teiwes, p.68.

lead by example, visiting construction sites and doing a little symbolic work. Whilst higher level officials may not have been seriously engaging in manual work, the intention was still there and the propaganda value was clear. Officials were no longer to live surrounded by isolated bureaucrats, they had to be one with the people, they were required to act as Party models. This point was reinforced in the 'Later Ten Articles.' Point Seven (Concerning Cadre Participation in Collective Production Labour) states that, 'the influence of a centuries-old concept of exploiting and despising labour is not easily wiped out.'³⁹³

One final aspect of social reform that was needed, was the apparent need of the Party, to at least appear, to combat indifference towards those who suffer. Point Five (Concerning the Organisation of Poor and Lower-Middle Peasants), Part 1 states that organisations formed should be, 'paying visits to the poor and the suffering, taking social root in their midst, expanding small organisations into large ones, and pushing the movement step by step.'³⁹⁴ Furthermore, the way in which society was intended to function, in comparison to the 'old society' was specifically highlighted in Point Six (Unify more than 95 per cent of Rural Cadres), Article B, where it was stated that with respect to punishment for misdemeanours, 'Many of our basic-level cadres suffered and were suppressed in the old society to lead them to remember the old society and compare it with the new society is an easy way to raise their class consciousness.'³⁹⁵

[The Development of Socialism.](#)

The failed Great Leap Forward had been intended to propel the country even further along the road of socialist development. The Socialist Education Movement was thus

³⁹³ Ibid, p.89.

³⁹⁴ Ibid, p.81.

³⁹⁵ Ibid, p.86.

intended to make up for that which had been lost during the Great Leap campaign. Consequently, a great deal of the 'First Ten Articles' was dedicated to the development of socialism in the country. Point Two (The Problem of Whether Class, Class Contradiction, and Class Struggle Still Exist in a Socialist Society), detailed the history that the Party had had regarding the development of socialism, particularly the importance of dealing with 'contradictions among the people.' Failures in overcoming class struggle were claimed to be because of those who had failed to be properly 'remoulded.' Point Five deals exclusively with addressing the question of how leadership in the countryside would be arranged once socialism was established. Similarly, Point 6 deals with how to handle contradictions among the people. Moreover, there is also a connection here with social reform, as the importance of using history was emphasised to educate the people as to what had been achieved since society was reformed following the Revolution. They were to remind, particularly the younger generation of, 'the suffering they sustained under the oppression of the exploiting class, and the sufferings under the exploitation of the landlords and rich peasants, thereby arousing their class sentiments.'³⁹⁶ The issue of social class was at the core of the Socialist Education Movement.

In the 'Later Ten Articles' there was also a hardening of class struggle beyond what was called for in the first document. Two classes had emerged following the Hundred Flowers Campaign, this was to be consolidated in the countryside by the Socialist Education Movement as Point 3 (Consolidate the More than 95% of the Peasant Masses) called for the peasants to band together into one group, thus eliminating further class differences between those who remained following the Great Leap Forward. The question of class was regarded as a particularly pressing problem and is addressed in

³⁹⁶ Ibid, p.63.

Point Ten of the 'Later Ten Points.' This was titled, 'The Correct Handling of the Question of How to Deal with Sons and Daughters of Landlords and Rich Peasants.' This point details how individuals from 'bad' class backgrounds were to be treated and how marriage was to be affected by the class system. Mao had stated in the late 1950s that the class struggle was now, 'basically over.'³⁹⁷ However, following the Great Leap Forward, the Party seemed intent on creating a new series of classifications for the population. These newly created classes were a key feature of the Cultural Revolution as those who were identified as being part of the 'bad' classes were victimised. Consequently, the advent of this development during the Socialist Education Movement, was perhaps not so much about class, but more about creating a system of enmity.

[The Twenty-Three Articles.](#)

In January 1956, following the perceived failure of the 'Ten Articles,' Mao seized the initiative and produced his own set of Articles,³⁹⁸ designed to supersede all that had gone before. The points were in most respects a consolidation of the 'Ten Articles,' but Mao sought to bring further clarity to the direction of the Movement. However, Party Propaganda Chief Lu Dingyi (陆定一)³⁹⁹ described the document as being, 'incomplete, senseless and piecemeal.'⁴⁰⁰ Similarly, Frederick Teiwes describes it as being a 'vague and confusing document.' On this point I would disagree with Teiwes as the Twenty-Three Articles provide resolution to the crucial problem of Mao's troublesome statement that class struggle was 'basically over.' In the summary section

³⁹⁷ Chapter 2, p.30.

³⁹⁸ Lardy, p.350.

³⁹⁹ Lu Dingyi (陆定一) was made 'Minister of Culture' in 1965, however following the outbreak of the Cultural Revolution he was detained for thirteen years before being released by Deng Xiaoping following Mao's death.

⁴⁰⁰ Teiwes (1979), p.565.

titled, '1. The Situation,' it is stated that, 'After the socialist reform of the ownership system was basically completed, the class enemies who oppose socialism attempted to use the form of "peaceful evolution" to restore capitalism..... The leadership of certain communes, brigades, enterprises and units has either been corrupted or usurped.'⁴⁰¹

The problem of 'class struggle being basically over' is neatly sidestepped by stating that socialist reform was referencing the ownership system, not society as a whole. In addition, the failure of the Great Leap Forward is addressed. It clearly was not the failure of propaganda or the policy, but the actions of those who were now being classed as the enemy. Indeed, this enemy is colourfully described in '2: The Nature of the Movement.' Those who are not following the Party line, those who 'oppose socialism,' are, 'degenerate elements who have shed their original skin and changed their nature.'⁴⁰² This represented a further hardening of the approach to those who opposed the 'Thought of Mao Zedong.' The Twenty-Three Articles transformed the rural based Socialist Reform Movement into a set of guidelines to be followed nationwide. The hardening of class struggle was to have an important impact on the development of the Model Worker.

[Further development of the Model Worker.](#)

The pinnacle of the Model Worker campaign, 'Learn from Lei Feng' began with an article published by Renmin Ribao (人民日报) - The People's Daily on the 5th of February 1963.⁴⁰³ It is worth noting here the importance of the emergence of Lei Feng at this stage of the Party's ideological development. As I have explored, the Socialist

⁴⁰¹ Baum and Teiwes, p.119.

⁴⁰² Ibid, p.120.

⁴⁰³ Chesneaux, p.129.

Education Movement was rather chaotically organised and lacked clear guidelines regarding many aspects of its policy. However, one dominant theme is apparent throughout, one that had begun with the Hundred Flowers Movement. This was the increasing polarisation of citizens, between those who were considered to be on the path towards socialism and those who were intent on destroying the Revolution. This more binary approach to classification, apparent in documents of this period, naturally gave birth to the more binary character of Lei Feng. He was a product of the period, in much the same way that characters such as Dong Cunrui represented the path that citizens would need to tread before they could join the Revolution. Following the failure of the Great Leap Forward there was now no longer time for citizens to go on their own path of self-discovery, they needed to emulate a ready-made, fully formed hero, Lei Feng.

The hardening of class struggle and the promotion of the belief that there were only two possible ways in which China could develop, was to have further impact on the Model Worker concept. Mao was clearly unhappy with the direction of cultural work during this period as in June 1964 he stated that, 'in the last fifteen years these associations, most of their publications (it is said that a few are good), and by and large the people in them (that is, not everybody) have not carried out the policies of the Party. They have acted as high and mighty bureaucrats, have not gone to the workers, peasants and soldiers and have not reflected the socialist revolution and socialist construction.'⁴⁰⁴

Cultural work of the era was criticised from this angle. Cultural work that took a 'middle road' or did not clearly define heroes and villains was criticised for 'shameless compromise with feudal and bourgeoisie ideologies.'⁴⁰⁵

⁴⁰⁴ Teiwes, (1993), p.581.

⁴⁰⁵ Ibid, p.573.

Teiwes argues that there may have been a wavering in support for the Model Worker and emulation campaigns by Mao during this period. In March 1964, Mao refused to allow the Four Clean-ups campaign to be replaced by one that would focus on the emulation of the People's Liberation Army and the Dazhai (大寨) model.⁴⁰⁶ However, I would argue that this does not necessarily indicate a rejection of emulation per se. Indeed, the campaign to 'Nongye Xue Dazhai' (农业学大寨) - 'Learn from Dazhai in Agriculture' that began in 1963 was used to promote the benefits of adherence to the Socialist Education Movement. This campaign was designed to demonstrate what could be achieved if farmers followed the example of Dazhai village in Shanxi that had supposedly created its own self-reliant socialist utopia. Mao was very interested in how self-reliant the village had become.⁴⁰⁷ Its story clearly fits well with the general overarching ideology in place of the Model Worker and the construction of a strong, independent China. Dazhai provided this on a small, but replicable scale. Despite criticisms by work teams sent to evaluate the village, Mao would not accept that it could possibly be flawed. As Teiwes writes, 'Without checking into the facts of the matter, the Chairman had moved to uphold Dazhai as a symbol of self-reliance.'⁴⁰⁸ Propaganda, such as Figure 1.5 was created to promote the vast gains that were possible if the Socialist Education Movement were to succeed.

⁴⁰⁶ Teiwes, (1993), p.529.

⁴⁰⁷ Ibid, p.554.

⁴⁰⁸ Ibid, p.555.



Figure 1.5 - Walk the road of Dazhai. (1965).

Figure 1.5 designed by Qian Daxin (钱大昕)⁴⁰⁹ in April 1965 was published by Shanghai Renmin Meishu Chubanshe (上海人民美术出版社) - Shanghai People's Art Publisher. In the foreground of the poster is seen Chen Yonggui (陈永贵), who was the leader of the Dazhai community. He exhibits strength and determination as he joyfully helps to the shape the future of his community. In the background are groups of workers busily engaged in similar activities following Chen's heroic example.

Teiwes notes that propaganda also focused on 'mass indoctrination, especially through meetings to "recall the past" of pre-1949 class exploitation, propaganda on the superiority of socialism and emulation of advanced economic performances.' This

⁴⁰⁹ chinese-posters.net. 1965. Qian Daxin (钱大昕). [ONLINE] Available at: <http://chinese-posters.net/artists/qiandaxin.php>.

aspect, the 'recall the past' technique was used in propaganda prior to this period, but was perfected during the Socialist Education Movement and would find its ultimate expression in the origin story of the Model Worker, Lei Feng.⁴¹⁰ In addition, Lieberthal argues that Jiang Qing (江青), the wife of Mao, had been 'working on' the Chairman during this period, to convince him that there was something fundamentally wrong and potentially degenerate about China's cultural direction.⁴¹¹ The consequences of this were to be most keenly felt during the Cultural Revolution period.

To conclude, although the Socialist Education Movement may not have had quite the transformative impact on Model Worker propaganda as earlier political developments, it was responsible for sowing the seeds for the greatest shift in the use of the Model Worker. This was to find its fullest expression during the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution. Since 1949, the CCP had been continuously promoting the use of Model Workers in order to reform society. Although this had ultimately ended in failure during the Great Leap Forward, the ideological concept persisted and continued to influence policy and the published documents that expressed the shifting ideals of the period prior to the Cultural Revolution.

⁴¹⁰ Chapter 1, p.23.

⁴¹¹ Lieberthal, p.333.

Refashioning the Socialist Education Movement: Learn from the PLA.

Although the Socialist Education Movement had failed to have a significant and positive effect on Chinese society, Mao was not finished with attempting to reform society so that it might be more able to undertake another revolution. Model Worker propaganda would find its zenith with the ‘Xiang Lei Feng Tongzhi Xuexi’ (向雷锋同志学习) - ‘Learn from Comrade Lei Feng’ campaign that has run continuously, on and off, since its inception in 1963. Lei Feng epitomised the core values of the Model Worker, his good deeds and strong spirit were dedicated to nationalism, social reform and the development of socialism. Initially, Lei Feng was connected with the successor to the Socialist Education Movement, the ‘Learn from the PLA Campaign.’ As the topic of Lei Feng is exceptionally broad and rather beyond the scope of this thesis, I will briefly analyse the impact and importance of the ‘Learn from the PLA’ campaign on the development and use of the Model Worker in the period prior to the start of the Cultural Revolution. Firstly, I will outline the objectives of the campaign and consider the way in which the core values of the Model Worker, nationalism, social reform and the development of socialism were expanded upon. Secondly, I will briefly examine some examples of poster propaganda related to the ‘Learn from the PLA’ campaign. Thirdly, I will consider the historiographical debate that surrounds the campaign and demonstrate the extent to which a consideration of Model Worker propaganda can offer a different perspective.

There appears to be some confusion regarding the date of the start of the ‘Learn from the PLA campaign.’ Harding, in *The Politics of China* states that it began in February

1964.⁴¹² However, this date is contradicted by an earlier journal article written by Professor Ralph L. Powell who stated that the campaign began in 1963 following the transferral of staff from the military to civilian fields in the Central-South Bureau of the Party. Powell notes that it was at this point that the first secretary of this bureau called for everyone to, 'learn from the model 'Toughbone Sixth Company' of the PLA.'⁴¹³ The main tenets of the campaign originated slightly earlier in 1960 as Lin Biao⁴¹⁴ worked to gain greater control over the army following the Peng Dehuai (彭德怀) incident.⁴¹⁵ Under Lin, the army put together a new ten year plan to increase study of Mao's work and improve the culture of the army.⁴¹⁶ Part of this plan was that troops would follow the 'San Ba Zuofeng (三八作风) 'Three-Eight' work style.

For this campaign, the 'Three' refers to three phrases, these being, 'A steadfast and correct political direction; an industrious and thrifty working style; and a flexible and mobile strategy and tactics.' The 'eight' does not refer to eight specific words, but four as each of these words is made up of two characters. These eight characters are, 'Tuanjie' (团结) - 'unity,' 'Jinzhang (紧张) - 'intensity,' 'Yansu' (严肃) - 'serious' Huopo 活泼 – 'vitality.'⁴¹⁷ Also developed in 1960 was the 'Wu Hao Yundong' (五好运动) - 'five good campaign' which focussed on five aspects of behaviour deemed

⁴¹² H. Harding, 'The Chinese State in Crisis 1966-9' in R. MacFarquhar (ed), *The Politics of China*, (Cambridge University Press, 2011), p.156.

⁴¹³ R. L. Powell, *Commissars in the Economy: "Learn from the PLA" Movement in China*, (Asian Survey, Vol. 5, No. 3, March 1965), p.127.

⁴¹⁴ During this period Lin Biao was Vice Premier, Vice Chairman and Minister of National Defence. He was eventually designated as Mao's successor before dying mysteriously in a plane crash over Mongolia following an alleged coup attempt. For further details see R. MacFarquhar & M. Schoenhals, *Mao's Last Revolution*, (First Harvard University Press, 2008), pp.324-337.

⁴¹⁵ As the widespread problems with the Great Leap Forward were becoming more apparent the 'Lushan Conference' was held between the 2nd July and 1st August 1959. During the conference Defence Minister Marshall Peng Dehuai criticised aspects of the Great Leap Forward. Mao responded by criticising Peng who was eventually replaced by Lin Biao. For further details see Meisner, pp.244-247.

⁴¹⁶ R. H. Solomon, *Mao's Revolution and the Chinese Political Culture*, (University of California Press, 1972), p.437.

⁴¹⁷ Ibid, p.437, note 89.

desirable for emulation. Individuals were expected to be ‘good at political ideology, good at military technique, good at the ‘three-eight’ work style, good at fulfilling tasks assigned to them, and good at physical training.’⁴¹⁸ Following the start of the ‘Learn from the PLA’ campaign in 1963, these tenets were once again promoted, but this time to the general population. As Powell notes, the army were held up as the exemplar of organisation as they promoted, ‘Love of country, hatred of all enemies of the Revolution, but also thrift, honesty and initiative, courage, discipline, a sense of organisation and revolutionary spirit.’⁴¹⁹ The ideals of the ‘Three-Eight Working Style’ and the ‘Five Goods’ build on the core values of the Model Worker, as elements of nationalism, social reform and the development of socialism continued to be promoted.

Indeed, it was at this stage that the practice of assigning ranks and insignia was also ended in the PLA in an effort to make the organisation appear more egalitarian and perhaps at one with the people. Harding notes that it was also at this time that the PLA stopped using Soviet style uniforms and returned to the type worn during the Yan’an period.⁴²⁰ This is understandable given the recent Sino-Soviet split and is another indication of the extent to which the promotion of unity and consequently nationalism was driving policy. Poster propaganda such as Figure 1.6 communicated these messages to the people.

⁴¹⁸ Solomon, p.438, note 93.

⁴¹⁹ Powell, p.129.

⁴²⁰ Harding, p.156.



Figure 1.6 – Study the fine work style of the People's Liberation Army. (1964).

Figure 1.6, designed by Chen Shizhen (陈世真) and Wu Min (吴敏)⁴²¹ was released in November of 1964 by Renmin Meishu Chubanshe (人民美术出版社) People's Art Publisher. The poster is divided into two distinct frames with the same title (Study the fine work style of the People's Liberation Army) printed above, indicating that they could be divided if necessary, although they were clearly intended to complement each other. In the left frame the People's Liberation Army lays the groundwork for the airmen and naval officers depicted in the right frame. The soldiers endure harsh weather conditions as they undertake a scouting exercise, as is evident by the binoculars the

⁴²¹ chinese-posters.net. Wu Min (吴敏). [ONLINE] Available at: <http://chinese-posters.net/artists/wumin.php>.

soldiers are carrying. In the bottom right the text reads ‘devotion to duty.’ The soldiers, even during extreme weather conditions are dedicated to keeping China safe, ever vigilant and ready to defend the nation. In the right frame a group of airmen and sailors, who benefit from the protection of the soldiers, are marching down a pathway with banners aloft and a portrait of Mao. The text reads ‘go forward and sing songs.’ The banner they are carrying states, ‘Hold high the great red flag of Chairman Mao Thought to forge ahead.’ Below each frame there is a poem. The text on the right, clearly designed to promote the ‘Three-Eight’ working style states:

There is a lot of singing in the barracks and the life in the company is the most lively.

There are evening parties to attend every month and new songs to be sung every week.

Our soldiers are the most optimistic. They are full of life and energy. They have very good morale and youthful spirit. They can break through any difficulty, no matter how

*big it is.*⁴²²

Powell states that by the autumn of 1964, the campaign was phased out and replaced by ‘Depend on the poor and lower-middle peasants.’⁴²³ However, this does not mean that the overall concept was abandoned. Lieberthal argues that the ‘Learn from the PLA’ campaign was indeed a reaction to the Great Leap Forward, but that it was an expression of Mao’s unhappiness with the Party bureaucracy that he believed had been the cause of the failure of the Great Leap.⁴²⁴ Although Mao was clearly unhappy with the Party and may have believed, as Schram argues, that control of it was slipping away from him, particularly following the Peng Dehuai incident, it was not the only aspect of society that was a major cause for concern. Indeed, if Lieberthal is correct then just

⁴²² The resolution of this poster is limited so I am unable to provide a translation of the poem on the left side, I was able to obtain a clearer copy of the poem on the right.

⁴²³ Powell, p.134.

⁴²⁴ Lieberthal, p.338.

implementing structural changes that emulated the PLA's work style would have been enough.

However, the propaganda campaign, as can be seen in Figure 1.6 was intended to target the people as a whole and not simply the bureaucracy. Furthermore, both Powell and Shambaugh⁴²⁵ argue that overall, the campaign was designed to subordinate the economy to political concerns and that one of the main reasons for the focus on the 'five-good' soldier movement was because there was a belief that there needed to be a solid base before further developments could be made.⁴²⁶ This interpretation of the 'Learn from the PLA' campaign would also seem to indicate that there was a belief that Model Worker propaganda of the past decade had not provided this 'solid base.' The system of using models for the people to emulate was not changed, indeed their importance increased in the early 1960s as, in conjunction with the 'learn from the PLA' campaign, the military became the main source of inspiration for emulation. For example, depictions of Zhao Yiman, shifted from presenting her as a member of the National Bourgeoisie to being a PLA commander.⁴²⁷ In this new environment, Lei Feng was the ideal model that all should follow. His background and deeds fit more perfectly with the core values of the Model Worker than any of his predecessors.

Conclusion.

Mao's proclamation that 'class struggle was basically over,' had a profound effect on the development of Model Worker propaganda as the classes of the People's Democratic Dictatorship unofficially shrank in size. The Hundred Flowers campaign

⁴²⁵ D. Shambaugh, *The Soldier and the State in China: The Political Work System in the People's Liberation Army*, (The China Quarterly, Volume 127, September 1991), p.539.

⁴²⁶ Powell, p.128.

⁴²⁷ Chapter 5, p.267.

saw the simplification of class struggle in society as the classification of groups became increasingly binary. Confident that Model Worker propaganda of the previous decade had been successful, and with class struggle ‘basically over,’ the Great Leap Forward began. The people of China were called upon to not only emulate, but also exceed the feats of past heroes of the Revolution in an effort to ambitiously increase the speed of development.

As the Great Leap ended in failure, it became clear that the people had not been suitably inspired by earlier Model Worker propaganda. The ‘Socialist Education’ and later ‘Learn from the PLA’ campaigns were intended to address this problem with an even greater focus on emulation and indoctrination. This period saw the ‘birth’ of Lei Feng, a model designed to perfectly represent the core values of nationalism, social reform and the development of socialism. Through emulation of ever more simplified, but perfect models, a more solid base could be constructed, in preparation for the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution.

Chapter 4 – Constructing the Model Worker in post-1949 Chinese cinema.

Introduction.

The success of the Revolution in 1949 brought a number of challenges and opportunities to the CCP. From 1949 to 1964 the nation underwent major and significant changes and endured involvement in a foreign war in Korea and the implementation of the first economic ‘Five Year Plan’ in 1953. It underwent the ‘Hundred Flowers Campaign’ in 1956, ‘The Great Leap Forward’ in 1958, the beginnings of the Sino-Soviet split in 1960 and finally the onset of the Cultural Revolution in the mid-1960s. Although this is far from an exhaustive list of major events, each of these key developments were to have a profound impact on the mission that the CCP was undertaking; the construction of a new nation. To assist in this creation, the CCP made full use of the propaganda tools at its disposal. Film in particular, was utilised to carry the message to the newly liberated masses. As with other forms of communication, one of the most significant agents of change chosen to carry the message was the concept of the ‘Model Worker. ‘Through analysis of film it is possible to see the extent to which nationalism was a major driving force.

The use of 'Model Workers' in China's post-Revolutionary propaganda was pervasive. Models were used didactically to build a new society from the ashes of Imperialism, Japanese occupation, Civil War and Revolution. Although the promotion of the benefits of socialism was undoubtedly one of the key objectives of the Model Worker movement, there is another aspect, to which even the promotion of socialism was subordinate. The perception that existed in China, prior to the Revolution, that the

country had been humiliated by foreign powers, ran exceptionally deep. For this reason, nationalism, focussing not just on the creation of a new China, but the rebirth of its people, was the top priority. In this chapter I intend to demonstrate the extent to which certain key themes were ever present in a selection of six films produced between 1951 and 1964 that featured Model Workers in significant roles. Whilst this list is far from exhaustive, I have chosen these particular representations because they each embody a different perspective on the Model Worker.

In Chapter 1, I defined nationalism in the Chinese context and briefly explore why this idea was so important in shaping the thinking of the decision makers in the Post-Revolutionary period.⁴²⁸ I also linked the historical situation with later responses by Mao Zedong.⁴²⁹ This link is important because, as I will demonstrate, his thinking came to dominate the cultural scene and was the blueprint upon which the Model Worker films were created. In this chapter, I will briefly examine the history of Chinese cinema during this period to place the Model Worker movement in a wider context. This will be coupled with an appraisal of the current historiography and current state of research. In addition, I will examine six films to demonstrate the extent to which the themes that have been identified were constant throughout the years following the Revolution of 1949 until the beginning of the Cultural Revolution. The analysis of each film will be followed by a brief appraisal of some selected supplementary propaganda. Through this study I have identified nine common themes that dominated films of this era. The core of these being nationalism, socialism and social reform. In addition, the social reform element consists of six sub themes, these being the promotion of empathy, community spirit, selflessness, hard work, self-criticism and a desire to fight. In effect all of these themes were intended to service the promotion of nationalism, that is,

⁴²⁸ Chapter 1, p.12.

⁴²⁹ Ibid, p.8.

making China great once again. Although the promotion of socialism was clearly a goal, it was to be achieved in order that the nation became great once more.

[Supplementary Propaganda.](#)

Included in this chapter are translated extracts from *Dazhong Dianying* a film magazine founded and published 1st June 1950, in Shanghai. I have selected this magazine because it targeted both the casual film enthusiast and those directly involved with the film industry. For this reason, the magazine is a valuable propaganda source. It was not only intended to influence the viewer public, but also provide guidance on the ‘correct’ use of the cinematic medium for film workers. The magazine, printed in black and white, was initially circulated only in Shanghai. Production of the magazine was moved to Beijing in February 1952 and was combined with another magazine titled *Xin Dianying* (新电影) - *New Cinema*. It is perhaps no coincidence that full state control of the cinema was established by 1953.

After the move to Beijing the magazine was distributed nationwide and was directly controlled by the Central Film Department. This would go some way to explain why the tone of articles before the move to Beijing were more critical of films than the rather more glowing pieces that supplemented the films post 1952. Production of the magazine returned to Shanghai in 1962 and was combined with another periodical, *Shanghai Dianying* (上海电影) - *Shanghai Film*. Production of the magazine ended at the beginning of the Cultural Revolution in 1966, after the publication of over 300 issues. From 1952, *Dazhong Dianying* was essentially a mouthpiece of the Central Film Department. This makes its output relevant to a study of cinema propaganda during the period.

The way in which the magazine developed over the first decade of the People's Republic is apparent in the change in style of its articles. These ranged from critical to almost entirely instructional. The magazine frequently featured 'reports' from workers who, it was claimed had seen the films. However, it is particularly difficult to determine how accurate these reports are as workers are not named and are simply identified as 'representatives'. Later articles do name individuals who responded to the films they watched. However, it is also difficult to determine whether the words are their own or whether they belong to the propaganda department. Actors also wrote articles to consider their roles in the films, but a similar problem arises because it is very difficult to determine the validity of the documents.

As the magazine was controlled by the Central Film Department, a highly political entity, the authenticity and validity of responses recorded are open to question. However, it is for this reason that the magazine is a valuable resource with regard to propaganda; it warrants further examination and analysis. Unfortunately, access to the magazine is rather complicated. Communication with Chris Berry at King's College London and Tina Mai Chen at the University of Manitoba, established that access to the majority of copies of the magazine in the United Kingdom is only possible through the archives of the Oxford Bodleian Library and the British Library. Moreover, both of these collections appear to be incomplete. The magazine was accessible online, although only through the 'Chinese National Knowledge Infrastructure,' an archive of materials operated by the Chinese government and Tsinghua University. Access was through a paywall (by subscription), but the collection, although extensive is also not complete. In addition, at the time of writing, access via this method has been suspended.

Developments in Chinese cinema.

Before an analysis of the films can be made, I will set the historical context of the cinema within which the films were made and also give a brief overview of the state of the research already conducted. Detailed analyses of the majority of the films that form this study have so far proven to be elusive. Work has been undertaken by a number of authors regarding different aspects of Chinese cinema, but the propaganda value of the films appears to have been only touched upon by other research. As Yingjin Zhang notes in his comprehensive volume, *Screening China*, historical research prior to the 1980s was primarily of a descriptive rather than critical nature.⁴³⁰ He extends considerable criticism to the work of Jay Leyda,⁴³¹ arguing that it is intentionally derivative as it attempted to counteract the official Chinese version of cinema history being created by Cheng Jihua (程季华).⁴³² In addition, he suggests that because Leyda's language ability was limited, his work contains many mistakes and is consequently best regarded as being a primary source.

However, Zhang fails to elaborate on which mistakes Leyda has made in his work, although it is evident that some of his accounts are rather simplistic. Leyda states, for example, that the director of *The Life of Wu Xun*⁴³³ never worked again following the denunciation of the film by Mao and other critics.⁴³⁴ However, an investigation of Sun Yu's filmography indicates that he continued to direct films after the critical response to

⁴³⁰ Y. Zhang, *Screening China: Critical Interventions, Cinematic Reconfigurations, and the Transnational Imaginary in Contemporary Chinese Cinema*, (Centre for Chinese Studies Publications, 2003).

⁴³¹ J. Leyda, *Dianying: Electric Shadows: An Account of Films and the Film Audience in China*, (Massachusetts Institute of Technology Press, 1972).

⁴³² J. Cheng, S. Li. & Z. Xing (eds), *Zhongguo dianying fazhanshi (History of the development of Chinese film)*, (Zhongguo dianying chubanshe, 1963).

⁴³³ *The Life of Wu Xun*, (1950), Directed by Sun Yu, [Film], China: Kunlun Film Studio.

⁴³⁴ Leyda, p.223.

The Life of Wu Xun. In 1955 he directed *Song Jingshi*, (宋景诗)⁴³⁵ in 1957 he directed *Chengfeng Polang* (乘风破浪) - *Brave the Wind and Waves*⁴³⁶ and finally in 1958 he directed *Lu Ban de Chuanshuo* (鲁班的传说) - *The Legend of Lu Ban*.⁴³⁷ However, to dismiss Leyda's comments regarding films of this era is more than a little harsh, his insight into thematic trends are still, I would argue, exceptionally valid and the work he undertook whilst in the Soviet Union no doubt gave him valuable insight into the development of Chinese film, especially during the period that China was 'leaning to one side.'⁴³⁸

In contrast to Leyda, Paul Clark offers a more critical account of the era in his *Chinese Cinema: Culture and Politics since 1949*.⁴³⁹ Clark advances the thesis that film development during the post-revolutionary era was, as noted in earlier chapters, dominated by the political struggles generated by Mao's 'Talks at the Yan'an forum.' This concept dominates both his book and published articles. Whilst this was clearly a factor in the development of the cinema during this period, it was not the sole feature that needs to be considered. Yingjin Zhang notes that Clark fails to take into account the response from the audience, arguing that he therefore considers them to be unimportant.⁴⁴⁰ Although this may be true for *Chinese Cinema: Culture and Politics since 1949*, in *Closely watched viewers: A taxonomy of Chinese film audiences from 1949 to the Cultural Revolution seen from Hunan*,⁴⁴¹ Clark details audience responses, but also notes that it is difficult to determine the accuracy of audience numbers; he

⁴³⁵ *Song Jing Shi*, (1955), Directed by Junli Zheng and Sun Yu, [Film], China: Shanghai Film Studio.

⁴³⁶ *Brave the Wind and the Waves*, (1957), Directed by Sun Yu, [Film] China: Jiang Nan Film Studio.

⁴³⁷ *The Legend of Lu Ban*, (1958), Directed by Sun Yu, [Film], China: Jiang Nan Film Studio.

⁴³⁸ Z. Mao, *Selected Readings from the Works of Mao Tse-Tung*, (Foreign Language Press Peking, 1967), p.306.

⁴³⁹ P. Clark, *Chinese Cinema: Culture and Politics since 1949*, (Cambridge Studies in Film, 1988).

⁴⁴⁰ Zhang, (2003), p.53.

⁴⁴¹ P. Clark, 'Closely watched viewers: A taxonomy of Chinese film audiences from 1949 to the Cultural Revolution seen from Hunan,' *Journal of Chinese Cinemas*, Vol.5, Issue 1, (2011).

argues that they were considered to be 'state secrets.' In addition, audience numbers that do exist are difficult to verify, as is the popularity of films because of the strictly controlled way in which they were shown. Clark references *Dazhong Dianying* frequently, but notes that even though votes were used to determine popular films, it is difficult to determine whether the results were manipulated for political reasons. On this point I would agree with Clark as my initial investigations of *Dazhong Dianying* indicate that articles became progressively more 'educational' throughout the 1950s and early 1960s. It is possible to see this trend by comparing articles written in the early 50s about *Zhao Yiman* with the later, virtually didactic articles produced in the mid-1960s. For this reason, although Zhang's criticisms of Clark are indeed valid, it is difficult to see how accurate figures or more genuine responses could be recorded.

It is this aspect that Tina Mai Chen details in her work, *Propagating the propaganda film: the meaning of film in Chinese Communist Party Writings, 1949-1965*.⁴⁴² Chen discusses the propaganda effect of film in relation to audiences, with reference to *Dazhong Dianying* in particular. She notes, as I have also observed, that film articles were designed to create a kind of collective thinking through the printing of group impressions. However, whilst some articles do use this approach, as I have noted in this study, many and especially earlier articles, are structured quite differently with variations in response rather than a single collective reaction. Between 1949 and 1964 hundreds of copies of *Dazhong Dianying* were published. Without thorough study it would be difficult to comment other than in generalized statements based on selected articles. I would argue that further research into the magazine would need to be conducted to test the veracity of Chen's claims.

⁴⁴² T. M. Chen, 'Propagating the Propaganda Film: The Meaning of Film in Chinese Communist Party Writings, 1949-1965,' *Modern Chinese Literature and Culture* Vol. 15, No. 2, (2003), pp.154-193

Paul Pickowicz has also engaged in extensive work on Chinese cinema. Indeed he stated in 1984 that 'research on Chinese cinema is still in its infancy.'⁴⁴³ Pickowicz has done much work to fill that gap. Of particular relevance to this study is his article entitled, *Revisiting Cold War Propaganda: Close Readings of Chinese and American Film Representations of the Korean War*.⁴⁴⁴ Pickowicz compares and contrasts the differing techniques used to depict the conflict by the United States and China after the Korean War. Although he notes a number of similarities between techniques used by the film-makers, his assertion that the Chinese were attempting to portray the enemy as being 'inhuman' is rather exaggerated. In addition, he argues that during the 1950s, portrayals of Chinese society were softer and more paternalistic than later representations. Whilst I would agree that interactions between members of Chinese society were most certainly softer, later films focused more intensely on the promotion of self-criticism, with the paternalistic element arguably strengthened, as is evident in *Lei Feng*. Pickowicz also states that the Guomindang's film-making network was weak and underdeveloped.⁴⁴⁵ I would disagree with this assessment for two reasons. Firstly, as Yingjin Zhang argues in *Screening China*, the Nationalists sought to incorporate film-making into their nation building project. There appears to have been an extensive censorship network in place that was designed not just to protect the government, but also to promote certain values which Zhang describes as being, 'Mandarin as unified 'guoyu' or "national language;" a rational mind; a healthy body; and neo-Confucian ethics.'⁴⁴⁶ Zhang details this argument in Chapter 5 of *Screening China* entitled, 'From "Minority Film" to "Minority Discourse": Negotiating Nationhood, Ethnicity and

⁴⁴³ Zhang, (2003), p.53.

⁴⁴⁴ P. Pickowicz, 'Revisiting Cold War Propaganda: Close Readings of Chinese and American Film Representations of the Korean War,' *Journal of American-East Asian Relations*, Vol.17, Issue 4, (2010).

⁴⁴⁵ P. Pickowicz, 'Victory as Defeat: Postwar Visualisations of China's War of Resistance' in W. Yeh (ed), *Becoming Chinese: Passages to Modernity and Beyond*, (University of California Press, 2000), p.366.

⁴⁴⁶ Zhang, (2003), p.159.

History.’ Although the points he makes are generally focussed on the way in which ethnic groups were portrayed in cinema his arguments regarding the use of cinema to construct a nation are most helpful. Secondly, as I have outlined above, Mao appeared to be exceptionally concerned with the abilities of the existing city film studios. So concerned that he began an entire rectification movement lasting for several years. If, as Pickowicz argues, the film network was so 'weak and underdeveloped' why would its members warrant such intensive attention?

Chris Berry has contributed a great deal to the study of Chinese cinema, most notably with his work *Perspectives on Chinese Cinema*.⁴⁴⁷ However, it is the work of Yingjin Zhang that I have found most useful. Whilst Berry's study of cinema focuses to a great extent on the issues of race and ethnicity, Zhang has delved into a broader range of topics related to cinema, not least the importance of nationalism. Zhang focuses more on the nation-building aspect of Chinese cinema rather than the study of the way in which propaganda themes developed or the importance of the social reform programme. He tends to focus on political and ideological reasons for common themes rather than exploring potentially more emotive reasons.

Cinema Background.

'From February 1953 onward, all production of 'the most important art' was in Party hands. A process which had taken over 10 years to complete in the Soviet Union in China took a mere three.'⁴⁴⁸

⁴⁴⁷ C. Berry, *Perspectives on Chinese Cinema*, (BFI Publishing, 1991).

⁴⁴⁸ Clark, (1988), p.38.

A brief historical context of the development of the Chinese cinema is now necessary. This element is important as it demonstrates the extent to which Mao's words at Yan'an began to slowly change and shape the industry so that the intended message could be more effectively delivered. As noted by Paul Clark, the consolidation of the People's cinema was hardly a simple process for the CCP, however it did occur extremely swiftly. As I have previously noted, there were arguably two dominant factions that existed following the founding of the People's Republic in 1949. These two factions, on the surface, shared a number of common goals. Both were 'left leaning' and had learned their craft during the resistance against Japanese and the later Guomindang rule. However, this is where the similarities were to end as the aspects that differentiated them were to prove terminal. During their time in Yan'an, Mao's group had formed an artistic detachment responsible for film propaganda. They were light on experience and equipment, but were believed to be more ideologically 'pure.' The other rival groups were based in the cities, such as Shanghai. They were influenced by foreign film-makers and limited by Guomindang censorship. There were enormous tensions between these two philosophical ideas, but ultimately only one was ever going to survive.

The development of the 'ideal' Model Worker film can be traced to this period and helps to define the struggle between the two modes of thought. Film-makers from both schools of thought struggled to realise Mao's vision of a reformed culture and vision of a unified, powerful Chinese nation. Generally, the tensions between Yan'an and Shanghai can be summarised by observing that Mao did not want work produced that was artistically complex. This was because it was believed this would confuse the masses, thus artistry was to become politically suspect. A film with an overly complex plot or characterization could contain hidden meaning, or could even be misinterpreted.

This would naturally make the propaganda value of the film less effective. Those filmmakers who produced such films would naturally fall under suspicion of being counter-revolutionaries or 'rightists.' Films that failed to represent Model Workers in the correct way were therefore to become politically suspect.

Furthermore, Leo Ou-Fan Lee argues that these Shanghai-based studios had long been promoting 'social realism,' rather than the more political, 'socialist realism.'⁴⁴⁹ He argues that the motivation for this form of cinematic representation was thus, 'The basic ethos of "social realism" is criticism and "dark exposure" motivated by humanistic concern for the plight of the Chinese people.'⁴⁵⁰ Although Ou-Fan Lee offers insight into the way in which films were constructed, he is extremely dismissive of post-1949 cinema, stating that films made were 'devoid of human interest.'⁴⁵¹ As cinema became institutionalized, it became more highly politicized. There were, nevertheless, significant differences as he argues that the message of hope in these Pre-revolutionary films was very 'vaguely defined.'⁴⁵² This is most certainly evident in *The Life of Wu Xun*, The message of hope was so poorly defined in the original cut, that the filmmakers felt the need to add an introduction and a coda to explain more fully that hope for the future lay with the Communist Party and the leadership of Mao Zedong. This was an attempt to rectify the more ambiguous original version.

The division between these two studios would also go some way to explain the artistic direction of earlier films as they presented characters in a far less 'black and white' way than later attempts. Earlier films had more complex characterization. However, Mao's

⁴⁴⁹ L. Ou-Fan Lee 'The tradition of modern Chinese cinema: some preliminary explorations and hypothesis,' in C. Berry (ed), *Perspectives on Chinese Cinema*, (BFI Publishing, 1991), p.6.

⁴⁵⁰ Ibid, p.8.

⁴⁵¹ Ibid, p.15.

⁴⁵² Ibid, p.8.

belief in simplicity for both ideological reasons and expediency, as noted in his talks at the Yan'an forum,⁴⁵³ were to triumph as plots and characters became increasingly simplified in order that they could be more easily understood by a population with a low level of education. Shanghai-based film-makers were gradually combined with those who had been at Yan'an. Film studios were initially independent following the Revolution, although they still had to contend with CCP censorship.

How film-makers felt about the way in which their medium was being used can be explored in their responses during the Hundred Flowers campaign. Clark claims that the main complaints were about the obsession with dogmatism and sectarianism. The sectarianism refers, not to the content of the film, but the distrust the authorities had of those who were not Party members or who had not been at Yan'an. Film-makers complained that, 'Artists were expected to do a bit of everything: making films in the form of "commemorative monuments for the heroes of the past," while at the same time tying their work into current political movements and campaigns.'⁴⁵⁴ This appears to indicate that the film-makers did not realize that they were, in effect, propagandists, not artists. The centralization of cinema was made more palatable to the intellectuals that had been working in independent studios by the creation of the 'Dianying Shiye Zhidao Weiyuanhui' (电影事业指导委员会) - 'Film Guidance Committee' in 1950. This was a group of 32 members that contained a large number of non-Yan'an associates who were tasked with, 'Raising the ideological and artistic standards of the new films.'⁴⁵⁵ However, the committee was disbanded in 1952. This was almost certainly because cinema had, by then, come under direct state control and the committee was consequently no longer needed. Nationalisation of all film studios was complete by the

⁴⁵³ Mao, p.217.

⁴⁵⁴ P. Clark, 'Two Hundred Flowers on China's screens' in C. Berry (ed), *Perspectives on Chinese Cinema*, (BFI Publishing, 1991), p.43.

⁴⁵⁵ Clark, (1988), p.35.

mid-1950s and Chinese cinema, as a whole, came under full state control as early as 1953. However, it took many years for the film-makers to begin producing films that perfectly matched Mao's vision of the Model Worker, as expressed in his 'Talks at Yan'an.'

When it comes to the ideological theory behind cinema of this era an appraisal becomes quite difficult. At first glance it would appear that the government was following the Soviet approach of 'socialist realism.' However, as Zhang notes, the government appeared confused as to what this actually meant.⁴⁵⁶ Indeed, Zhou Enlai used two different ways to explain the meaning of socialist realism which contradicted each other. At first he stated, 'Socialist realism is the combination of revolutionary realism and revolutionary idealism.' On a later date he declared that socialist cinema had created, 'New styles that combined revolutionary realism and revolutionary romanticism.'⁴⁵⁷

As Zhang notes, realism and romanticism are not wholly compatible ideals.⁴⁵⁸ However, I would argue that Zhou's second interpretation may better explain what the CCP were trying to achieve with film media. Their revolutionary romanticism was intended to represent revolutionary realism, that is, an idealised version was to replace the more realistic truth. As I have explored above, it is clear that the 'correct' depiction of history was an important ideological concern for the leadership of China. Although class struggle and the development of socialism were also undoubtedly dominant themes during this era, the focus on presenting history 'correctly' was overwhelming, as is evident from the sheer volume of films devoted to historic

⁴⁵⁶ Y. Zhang, *Chinese National Cinema*, (Routledge, 2004), p.202.

⁴⁵⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁵⁸ Ibid.

conflicts. Zhou's stated aspiration, to see the combination of 'revolutionary realism' with 'revolutionary idealism' led to the use of heroes that would relive difficult moments in China's history. These heroes would provide inspiration for the masses that would unify the new nation for the socialist mission ahead. Furthermore, and of equal importance, provide a more positive record of China's more recent history, fulfilling the requirements set out by Mao at Yan'an. Thus, the themes of Nationalism, Socialism and Social Reform were given birth in the medium of cinema. In the next section I will explore the extent to which these themes were presented.

Zhao Yiman (1950).

'Anyone who wants to fight against the Japanese, anyone who doesn't want to be a slave is welcome.'



Development Background.

There was a considerable evolution of the Model Worker theme throughout the 1950s. It is possible to chart this evolution by examining a number of key films that adopted the theme throughout the decade. By doing this, I will demonstrate the extent to which the dominant themes already identified above, remained constant, but were also open to adaptation. This adaptation was an inevitable consequence of the continual changes in

the political landscape of China following the 1949 Revolution. For example, the dominance and importance of Mao Zedong above and beyond the Party is readily apparent in the film *Lei Feng*, produced in 1964. However, in *Zhao Yiman*,⁴⁵⁹ produced in 1950, Mao is never mentioned and the Party is instead the locus of power. Consequently, it is possible to see how the political struggle between Maoists and those who supported the leadership of Liu Shaoqi and Deng Xiaoping developed throughout the decade. During this period the land reform propaganda campaign was well under way and is represented in the film.⁴⁶⁰

However, despite the need to adapt film-making to better represent ideological developments, the main themes noted above remained. The evidence for this can be found in the first of the Model Worker films investigated as part of this study. *Zhao Yiman* was released in May 1950 by the Changchun film studio and was directed by Sha Meng (沙蒙) who would later go on to direct both *Shang Gan Ling*⁴⁶¹ and *Shangrao Jizhongying* (上饶集中营) – *Shangrao Concentration Camp*,⁴⁶² both hugely successful films at the box office. I have chosen *Zhao Yiman* because it was one of the first Model Worker films to be produced and can be directly compared with another depiction of a heroic female worker, *Liu Hulan*.⁴⁶³ The position of women in society would appear to have been of great importance as the North East studio released two films in 1950, *Zhao Yiman* and *Bai Mao Nu* (白毛女) - *The White Haired Girl*⁴⁶⁴ that dealt with the issue.⁴⁶⁵ In addition, its proximity to the successful conclusion of the Revolution makes it an

⁴⁵⁹ *Zhao Yiman*, (1950), Directed by Sha Meng, [Film], China: Changchun Film Studio.

⁴⁶⁰ Chapter 2, p.65.

⁴⁶¹ *Shang Gan Ling*, (1956), Directed by Sha Meng, [Film], China: Changchun Film Studio.

⁴⁶² *Shangrao Concentration Camp*, (1951), Directed by Sha Meng, [Film], China: Shanghai Film Studio.

⁴⁶³ *Liu Hulan*, (1950), Directed by Sun Yu, [Film], China: Kunlun Film Studio.

⁴⁶⁴ *The White Haired Girl*, (1950), Directed by Wang Bin and Shui Hua, [Film], China: Changchun Film Studio.

⁴⁶⁵ For further information about the impact of *The White Haired Girl* and its relation to *Zhao Yiman* see Leyda, p.185.

ideal contender for exploring the genesis of the themes that were to dominate cinema over the next decade.

Plot Summary.

The film details the experiences of the eponymous heroine as she endeavours to organise resistance against Japanese rule in the northern city of Harbin. Zhao Yiman first organised strikes in the city before fleeing to the countryside to escape the occupying Japanese forces that were in league with local Chinese collaborators. Whilst in the countryside, she helped to train peasants in the art of resistance, but was eventually captured during a battle against a ‘clean up’ contingent sent by the Japanese. After capture she was tortured, but refused to reveal information before she escaped back to the countryside. Eventually she was recaptured by the Japanese and executed, but not before urging her fellow citizens to rebel, proclaiming, ‘Long live the Communist Party.’

It is significant that this film was made by what would become the Changchun film studio as this was one of the first studios to be controlled by the state. It was staffed by a large number of workers who had come from Mao’s Yan’an base. These workers had been part of the Northeast Film Company, a renamed remnant of the Japanese Manchukuo Film Company. Inspired by Mao’s Talks, they had endeavoured to create films that adhered to a more simplistic style that could be appreciated by all sections of society. The Changchun film studio did not however solely comprise workers from Yan’an and parts of the film have clearly been made with a more educated and sophisticated audience in mind.⁴⁶⁶ This is because the narrative is frequently conveyed

⁴⁶⁶ For further details of the development of the Changchun film studio, see Clark, (1988), p.29.

to the audience by the use of newspaper cuttings (fig 1.1), something that only a more literate audience would have been able to understand.



Figure 1.1 - 'There are a lot of bandits in Nanman who are trying to stir up the local people to fight the Japanese Imperial Army, the Police department is considering how to prevent this.'

Even the language used in the newspaper is clearly calculated to emphasise the anti-imperialist nature of the battle and the extent of Chinese collaboration. The author chooses to use the word 'Huangjun' (皇军) - 'Imperial Army' to describe the Japanese forces, thus underlining the threat posed by imperialism. In addition, stylistically there is a considerable difference between the scenes set in the cities and those that are set in the countryside. The cities are depicted as being exceptionally developed. They have modern facilities, good transportation and citizens engage in a range of social activities. This was arguably a model for the future, whereas in contrast to later films, little time is spent glorifying the simplistic life of the countryside. Indeed, it would certainly appear that urban audiences were the target for this film. This assertion is supported by six articles from the film magazine *Dazhong Dianying*. These provided what was clearly intended to be supplementary propaganda to the films during 1950. Of particular interest is an article from the third issue of the year entitled 'Film Zhao Yiman Preview Symposium',⁴⁶⁷ contributed by Lin Jiang. I will return to this document a little later as

⁴⁶⁷ L. Jiang, 'Film 'Zhao Yiman' Preview symposium,' *Dazhong Dianying*, Issue 3, (1950), p.14.

it provides considerable insight into the propaganda aims of the film. However, I will firstly explore the ways in which the key themes of Nationalism, Social Reform and Socialism are represented in the film.

Nationalism.



Figure 1.2.

Because of the film's close proximity to the conclusion of both the civil war and the Japanese occupation, it takes place between 1933 and 1935, it is perhaps unsurprising that nationalist themes are the most dominant. The more socialist aims of the Communist Party are never stated as the main focus is on the unification of the people and the defeat of the Imperial enemy. Indeed, anti-Imperialist images can be found right from the outset. The film opens with scenes of Harbin overlaid with images of occupation. The city is bathed in smoke and a sinister, but slightly comical looking Japanese commander, watches over people's movement in the city (Fig 1.2.). It is this aspect that produces a sense of fascination with respect to Chinese anti-Japanese film propaganda. Attempts are made to balance the necessity for their enemy to appear dangerous with the need for him to be seen as a figure of ridicule. Japanese leaders typically have prominent teeth and bizarre facial expressions that are often cruel. There is a clear development in depictions of the Imperialist enemy as the Japanese are given considerable screen time and talk about their plans and motivations. In later films the

enemy are much more faceless, they are rarely seen engaging in conversation.

However, when detailing the cruel behaviour of the enemy, there is little difference between *Zhao Yiman* and later films.

Interestingly, one of the other negative consequences of occupation, that is collaboration, is dealt with in *Zhao Yiman*. In later films collaborators are solely members of the despised landlord class. In *Zhao Yiman* many Chinese citizens are actively involved in collaboration with the Japanese, these characters range from police to hospital workers. Indeed, this serves as a plot point towards the end of the film where Zhao manages to convert a collaborator to the nationalist cause. Whilst this depiction may have been more realistic, it was clearly considered to be divisive as the technique was not used again in subsequent films that form part of this study. As in later films, geographical areas under Japanese occupation are permanently dark. However, *Zhao Yiman* goes a step further in demonstrating the difficulties of Japanese occupation. Inside the city the people whisper to each other, trying to avoid attracting attention. By contrast, in liberated areas of the countryside they talk proudly, with no fear. Whilst perhaps more realistic, this technique was not used in later films. This is conceivably because it indicated that citizens under occupation were scared, which hardly fits the idea of a heroic population desperate to rise up and overthrow their oppressors. Indeed, the way in which people in the cities express their anger with Japanese oppression is far more indirect. There is reference to striking workers, but the only visual evidence of resistance in the film is the use of satirical cartoons and defaced statues. The first of these (fig 1.3), states that the people must be loyal, but it has been disfigured to claim that the people need to fight the Japanese and overthrow the Manchu government.



Figure 1.3.

As with the use of newspapers, images and text are used to convey story and plot points in a way that later films avoided. The ideological and moral justification for resistance is conveyed through a series of cartoons thirteen minutes into the film. In the first of these cartoons (fig 1.4) the satirist details the story of how Jiang Jieshi betrayed the north of China by failing to fight Japanese aggression. The character on the left is Jiang Jieshi who is restraining Zhang Xue Liang (张学良), a resistance fighter, from engaging the Japanese. This technique, the use of satirical cartoons is not repeated in the later films that form part of this study. This is conceivably because it is possible that they could be misinterpreted. In addition, as with the newspaper extracts, they would only be understood by more educated sections of the population.

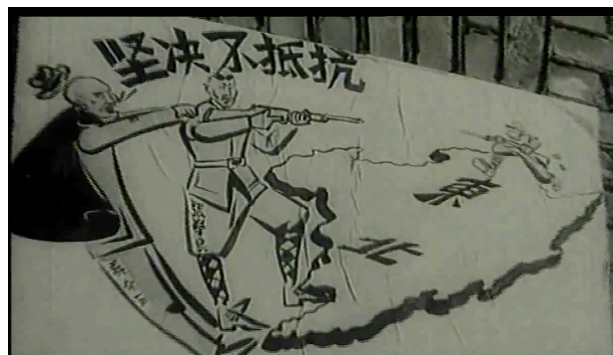


Figure 1.4.

Social Reform.

By contrast with the message of anti-imperialism, the other aspect of nationalism, that of social reform is more muted. Although all six measures of social reform that I have identified are present, that is, empathy, community spirit, selflessness, hard work, self-criticism and a desire to fight, the way they are illustrated is far less obvious. Zhao Yiman herself is not present for much of the film. This is most probably because the director was trying to show the impact of her actions on others, rather than leading the audience ‘by the hand’ to the ‘correct’ conclusion, as was to happen in later films. Zhao’s passion for the cause and desire to fight are continuously emphasised, especially in contrast to the actions of Jiang Jieshi, as noted above. The sequences during which Zhao is tortured, but refuses to succumb, are clearly meant to inspire those around her. Her heroic actions convince a collaborator to switch his allegiance. When describing Zhao’s actions he states, not too subtly, ‘That’s how Chinese should be.’⁴⁶⁸ When her husband is killed whilst imprisoned by occupation forces, Zhao’s resolve does not waiver, the source of her power is revealed in a scene shortly afterwards, (fig 1.5).



Figure 1.5.

⁴⁶⁸ *Zhao Yiman*, 1:19:00.

It is increasingly clear that it is the Party that takes centre stage in *Zhao Yiman*. Zhao takes no credit for the success of her decisions and urges others to follow the Party line. This is in contrast to later films wherein more personal initiative is taken by each Model Worker and credit is frequently given to Mao and his inspirational works. In this film, the Party is the source of all power, the saviour of the people. As one peasant states, ‘there is only one way for us poor people, be led by the Communist Party.’⁴⁶⁹ All decisions are taken according to Party directives, thus suggesting that the Party guarantees victory for the people. Crucially, Zhao ‘serves the people,’ by expertly performing the task of uniting them. As noted above, Mao’s Talks at Yan’an had detailed the need for those in the cities to reach out and unite with those in the countryside. Satirical cartoons are used to demonstrate the power of unification, (fig 1.6). In this cartoon, the text on the hand states ‘Chinese People,’ it is preventing a Japanese soldier from ‘eating’ ‘Dong San Sheng’ (东三省) - ‘The Three East Provinces.’ The unification of the people is fulfilled completely by Zhao as she follows Mao’s directives and serves as teacher for the peasants, thereby crucially raising their level of political consciousness.



Figure 1.6.

⁴⁶⁹ Ibid, 36:40.

Socialism and Supplementary Propaganda.

It is clear that thematically the aim of this film was primarily the promotion of nationalism; it does little to address the benefits of socialism and focuses almost entirely on the advantages of national unification. Whilst Zhao Yiman is clearly a role model to be emulated, her positive attributes are more subtly defined than in later Model Worker films. It is this subtlety that is gently criticised by the symposium covered by *Dazhong Dianying*. The symposium was a gathering of workers from The National Democratic Women's Federation, Beijing Democratic Women's Federation, the Beijing Municipal Federation of Trade Union Post and Telecommunication Department. Interestingly the lead actor portraying Zhao Yiman, Shi Lianxing (石联星), was also invited to engage in the discussion and 'criticism.' The discussion lasted over two hours and offers a clear insight into the aims of the propaganda department. The following statement made by a representative of the National Democratic Woman's Federation makes it quite clear,

'It shows that the reason Zhao had such courage was because she was a Party member and was led by the Party. The reason the Northeast allied army could continue fighting against the Japanese was because of their dependence on workers and farmers.'⁴⁷⁰

Thus, obedience to the Party, anti-imperialism and the unity of the Chinese people were clearly intended to be the key themes. The importance of suppressing personal ego and total adherence to the Party line is exceptionally clear, indeed, a later section of the article is simply titled 'without the Party's lead, there will be no Zhao Yiman.' The anti-imperialism message of the film is eagerly discussed by workers and the line is clearly drawn between the historical context and the present time in comments such as,

⁴⁷⁰ Jiang, p.14.

‘Japan’s inhuman behaviour in the film reminded me of American’s support to Japanese these days. We should raise our alert and soon liberate Taiwan.’⁴⁷¹

Other aspects of Maoist rhetoric that feature in his, ‘Talks at Yan’an’ and that the film covered, were also commented upon by the audience. His directive that encouraged intellectuals and city workers to visit the countryside and unite with the peasants was, according to the assembled symposium, expertly detailed in the film. In addition, a representative from the Beijing Woman’s Democratic Federation argued that the film made it absolutely clear who was thought to be responsible for losing the North of China. However, her comments were not without some criticism, she argued that, ‘We feel it’s not enough to just show Jiang Jieshi’s non-resistance policy in picture form.’⁴⁷²

It is difficult to determine whether these comments were genuine opinions. Indeed, one female worker from a clothes factory claims that she is not well educated, but then incisively details the key plot points and themes from the film. Consequently, these articles have a great deal of value when evaluating the overall propaganda objectives for the film. It is clear that the magazine articles were intended to function as companion pieces to further reinforce propaganda objectives. In addition, criticisms made by ‘representatives’ could conceivably have been directives from Party officials to be followed in future film productions. It is evident that although extremely well received, *Zhao Yiman* was probably not clear enough for the masses. Another representative from the clothes factory stated that, ‘Overall, the film was very good, but it’s a shame that Japanese imperialism’s cruelty hasn’t been shown enough.’⁴⁷³ However, it certainly appears to have some impact with another clothes factory representative who

⁴⁷¹ Jiang, p.14.

⁴⁷² Ibid.

⁴⁷³ Ibid.

commented, 'I was deeply touched by the film. I couldn't stand up when the film finished. I was overwhelmed by it.'⁴⁷⁴ Other responses to *Zhao Yiman* are a little more difficult to find, although Leyda mentions the film briefly in his account of films throughout 1949-1951. Although not as overwhelmed by his viewing experience as the audience from the symposium, he does praise the film, particularly the lead's performance arguing that its strength comes from its subtle portrayal of characters.⁴⁷⁵ This subtlety was to disappear in later films as film-makers attempted to get closer to Mao's ideal of simplicity and more direct narratives.

Zhao Yiman had been a 'safe' attempt by a politically 'safe' film studio and had, at least according to *Dazhong Dianying*, garnered a large amount of praise. To demonstrate the extent to which there was clearly a vital mission to provide the 'correct' type of hero, I will now examine the *The Life of Wu Xun*. This film is worth further investigation for two reasons. Firstly, it represents how important the 'correct' handling of a Model Worker was deemed to be in post-revolutionary China. Secondly, through an examination of supplementary propaganda in the film magazine *Dazhong Dianying*, it is possible to see the extent to which the media was increasingly representing the opinions of the leadership and Mao Zedong. This is significant as it marks the point at which journalistic independence perhaps began to decline and the magazine began to be used more explicitly as a tool of supplementary propaganda.

⁴⁷⁴ Jiang, p.14.

⁴⁷⁵ Leyda, p.185.

The Life of Wu Xun (1950).

'If poor people can read, then they won't be bullied anymore.'



Filming of *The Life of Wu Xun* had begun in 1948, but was not completed until December of 1950. The film was written and directed by Chongqing born Sun Yu (孙瑜), a 'leftist' director who had previously made anti-Japanese war films during the Japanese occupation. The film was produced by the Kunlun Studios. Paul Clark argues that the film was thus used a 'stick' by which this more 'unreliable' city studio could be beaten.⁴⁷⁶ However, this view, whilst valid was arguably just a happy by-product for those who wished to see the dominance of the Shanghai studios ended. The real problem with *The Life of Wu Xun* lies in its portrayal of Chinese society and the extent to which, at least according to Mao, it failed to present a positive model for emulation. Indeed, Mao stated in his article, 'Pay serious attention to the discussion of the film the life of Wu Xun' that, 'The appearance of the film *The Life of Wu Xun*, and especially the many praises of Wu Xun and of the film *The Life of Wu Xun* indicate the extent of

⁴⁷⁶ Clark, (1988), p.38.

confusion the thinking of our nation's cultural circles has reached.'⁴⁷⁷ The film was to deal a fatal blow to Sun Yu's career, indeed Leyda states that it was to be his last film.⁴⁷⁸ However, this does not appear to be accurate as he was later to direct the film *Song Jingshi* in 1955.⁴⁷⁹

Plot summary.

The Life of Wu Xun begins by detailing the existence of an underprivileged young Wu Xun and his impoverished background. As he grows older he determines that through studying he will be able to better his existence. However, he is rejected from the school system because of his poor background. Initially, Wu Xun accepts a life of servitude to the local Qing officials, but is repeatedly cheated and abused by those in power. He becomes convinced that education is the path to liberation for his social class and resolves to build free schools for poor children. For the remainder of the film he spends his time begging, working on odd jobs and being given money by those who pay to beat him. In the background, revolutionary feeling is building, but Wu Xun maintains his aim, to provide free schools for poor children. By the end of the film he achieves this, but not without considerable sacrifice of his pride.

Wu Xun would appear to be a natural heroic choice. However, according to Mao, a heroic Model Worker must be dignified, fearless, self-sacrificing and willing to overturn the existing order for the good of the masses. Whilst Wu Xun may fulfil one of these requirements, he fails spectacularly, to meet the others. The film strays significantly from Mao's belief that only the enemy should have negative representation. The

⁴⁷⁷ Z. Mao, 'Attention Must Be Paid to the Discussions of the Film The Life of Wu Xun' in J. K. Leung and M. Y. M. Kau (eds), *The Writings of Mao Zedong, 1949-1976: September 1945 – December 1955*, (M.E. Sharpe, 1992), p.198.

⁴⁷⁸ Leyda, p.223.

⁴⁷⁹ *Song Jing Shi*, (1955), Directed by Sun Yu and Zheng Junli, [Film], China: Shanghai Film Studio.

creators of *The Life of Wu Xun* were clearly aware that the film contained politically ambiguous messages. Consequently, they attempted to ‘plant their flag’ clearly in the CCP’s camp. They did this by adding both an introduction and coda to the film to explain the flaws of Wu Xun from a Marxist-Leninist perspective. However, this was not enough to save the film from significant criticism. Responses in the magazine *Dazhong Dianying* are particularly interesting. Initial feedback on the film was extremely positive; however, this was reversed following Mao’s criticism in May 1951.

Nationalism.

The Life of Wu Xun fails to successfully address the core values of Model Worker, nationalism, social reform and the development of socialism. Indeed, it is the issue of Chinese nationalism that is, in particular, problematic. Only one fleeting mention is made of foreign powers. Towards the end of the film,⁴⁸⁰ the Empress explains how the British and Americans helped the Chinese state to crush rebellion. However, this point is not developed any further and no additional comment is made of influence or control by foreigners. Indeed, it is the portrayal of Chinese society as a whole that is exceptionally problematic. Those who physically attack Wu Xun are not simply corrupt landlords or imperialist lackeys; they are ordinary local people and part of the same social class as the protagonist. The enemy of the people is far more uncertain.

⁴⁸⁰ *The Life of Wu Xun*, 2:57:12.



Figure 2.1 – Citizens gamble in an opium den.

Broadly, the whole society is presented as being corrupt at all levels, poor people steal, rich people exploit and poorer people assault one another. There is no sense of class unity or of a noble people struggling to emerge from the oppression of imperialism. For example, at one point an opium den with citizens in different strata of society gambling together, becomes the focus.⁴⁸¹ Here, the money Wu Xun invests is lost by his banker in a game of chance. (Fig 2.1). Here there are examples of people at all levels of society conspiring to cheat each other, indeed they are not assisted, influenced or manipulated by foreigners.

[Social Reform.](#)

With regard to the Nationalist ambition of social reform, there is little to promote the core goals that have been identified and outlined above. The values of empathy, community spirit, selflessness, hard work, self-criticism and a desire to fight are mostly absent. The common people are generally indifferent to those who suffer injustice. The oppressed complain about their treatment, but fail to unite to overcome it. Moreover, the peasant class are themselves stratified and appear keen to protect their own positions

⁴⁸¹ *The Life of Wu Xun*, 2:10:00

and tend to ignore the wider society. However, there is one theme in which the film-makers arguably had more success; their approach to the issue of 'face' and selflessness. Wu Xun's intentions are most certainly honourable, he only desires to help others and cares little for his own personal enrichment. However, he lacks dignity and the way in which he tries to achieve his goals fails to match Mao's high ideals. He begs and allows people to pay money to beat him and in return thanks them for their 'business' (fig 2.2).⁴⁸² This is undesirable on two levels. Firstly, it demonstrates that an individual can achieve his goals without recourse to hard, honest work. Secondly it also paints an extremely negative picture of society as a whole.



Figure 2.2 - Wu Xun is physically assaulted in return for money.

Wu Xun also lacks the ability to critically examine his own actions. This is demonstrated by his naivety in dealing with others as he is frequently cheated. He repeatedly fails to learn from his mistakes and rarely questions the effectiveness of his strategy. After a particularly harsh series of events, he suffers spiritual devastation and doubt, conditions that would never affect the more approved Model Workers such as Lei Feng or Dong Cunrui. This doubt does not lead to introspection, only frustration at

⁴⁸² *The Life of Wu Xun*, 1:45:00.

the injustice of the world in which he lives. Rather than considering an alternative strategy he decides to continue on his current path.

Furthermore, there is a general lack of unity and fear of conflict. Early in the film Wu Xun plays with a toy Weeble. This is clearly meant to symbolise his character, he will not give up easily and will eventually achieve his aims. However, he appears unable or unwilling to unite with others and fight injustice. This results in suicide when his 'love interest' kills herself rather than be forced into an arranged marriage. Although perhaps realistic, this does not match the positive theme of youth overcoming the evil of the old society, a theme that permeates later Model Worker films. Wu Xun is clearly embarrassed by his own poverty. For example, on one occasion he is asked to meet the local Lord. He tries to avoid eye contact and physically trembles as he kneels before him. When the Lord sneezes on him he does not flinch (Fig 2.3). This is in stark contrast to later Model Worker films wherein the heroes are proud of their peasant roots.



Figure 2.3 – The local Lord sneezes on Wu Xun.

Socialism and supplementary propaganda.

Whilst the theme of nationalism appears to be mostly non-existent, the promotion of socialism is dealt with more extensively. Class stratification is a dominant theme throughout the film and is exemplified by the suffering of the poorer people. They help each other so they can survive, but as already noted, they do not unite together to fight injustice, at least not until there is extreme provocation. In addition, the servants are also stratified; some are treated with more respect than others. Class struggle is largely absent and lacks the clear confrontation that is ever present in later Model Worker films.

There is little evidence of solidarity as those who abuse and assault Wu Xun are frequently from his own social class. The social problems in society are made very obvious in the film, but solutions to them are not made wholly clear. Wu Xun believes that education is the answer to the condition of the people, but he even doubts this himself at the conclusion of the film. The film-makers clearly realized that ideologically, this vision of society was unsuitable as they added a lengthy coda. They stated that although Wu Xun fought against feudal society for his whole life in order to give poorer people opportunities to be educated, that was not enough. Following his death, his schools were appropriated by landlords. In addition, the film-makers state that the Chinese people liberated themselves of imperialism under the leadership of the CCP. It is significant to note this inclusion of the theme of imperialism in the coda as there is little evidence of it in the film.

The Life of Wu Xun was arguably too ambiguous for Mao's tastes, it committed the ideological and stylistic error of complexity over simplicity and therefore it was more likely to be censored. It failed to further the nationalist or social reform agenda and the elements of socialism it dealt with were played out in front of a background of a society

riven with systemic conflict at all levels. The Model Worker movement was conceived to overcome precisely the problem of ideological confusion and to provide a clear message that it was the peasants and the working class that were the true liberators of China. The criticism levelled against the film is perhaps best summed up by Jia Ji, a propaganda official of the era who stated, as Clark notes, 'Wu Xun is not xun (exemplary) enough.' These comments appeared in the Literary Gazette and were placed alongside similar statements criticising Wu Xun made by Lu Xun.⁴⁸³

However, initial responses to the film were extremely positive. Advertisements for the film featured in *Dazhong Dianying* and in issue nine published on the 16th of October 1950, Zhao Dan (赵丹) the actor who portrayed Wu Xun, gave an interview. He explained the reasons why he had taken the part and what the character of Wu Xun meant to him. He relates his own experience of imprisonment in Xinjiang province. This separated him from the film industry and caused him to feel alienated from it. He notes that reading about Wu Xun strengthened his desire to 'serve the people' and gave him a new respect for hard work. However, although Zhao Dan speaks positively about the character he appears less sure about the cinematic representation of him. One criticism, in particular, that he makes pre-dates the vitriolic piece penned by Mao. He criticises the way in which Wu Xun is linked with the masses by claiming that the film 'hasn't combined Wu Xun's persecution with the pain that millions of peasants suffered for thousands of years, that's why its educational theme is not strong enough.'⁴⁸⁴ Comments like these demonstrate the extent to which *Dazhong Dianying* had greater autonomy before it was moved to Beijing in February 1952. Articles published appear

⁴⁸³ Clark, (1988), p.48

⁴⁸⁴ Z. Dan, 'Why Did I Portray Wu Xun?' *Dazhong Dianying*, Issue 9, (1950).

at that time to have had a greater degree of balance and introspection, something that was to become less common as the magazine came under tighter political control.

Existing commentaries on *The Life of Wu Xun* generally focus on the belief that Mao's words caused the literati to reverse their opinions. The above article from *Dazhong Dianying* would seem to indicate that this was not completely correct. Whilst it is true that the film did receive extensive praise and was promoted by *Dazhong Dianying*, criticism did exist before Mao's interjection. This criticism was to increase considerably following the publication of, 'Pay serious attention to the discussion of the film the life of Wu Hsun.' Indeed, in Issue 23 of the 1951 edition of *Dazhong Dianying*, published on the 20th of June 1951, writer Bao Chang echoed Mao's attack. Bao appears to have been careful to follow Mao's line as he argues that Wu Xun's actions perpetuated the old system and strengthened the position of the ruling elite. He argues that the evidence for this lies in the fact that the Qing emperor supported Wu Xun's actions because they strengthened his rule, or as Bao puts it, 'the emperor was not an idiot.' Far from being selfless and lacking personal ego, Bao states that Wu Xun's actions were highly egotistical and reasons that Wu's actions were 'not "hard work" but "disgusting work" and "evil work."⁴⁸⁵ Bao Chang fails to discuss the depiction of society in general or the stylistic choices of the director. Instead he focuses entirely on the social reform aspect of nationalist development. This demonstrates the extent to which the ideology of correct social reform was of paramount importance in the propaganda effort. As Bao argues, 'What can we learn from him? Learn from his kneeling to a landlord, learn from his eating rubbish, learn from his begging instead of working hard, learn from his exploiting loan interest from people?'⁴⁸⁶ From Mao's

⁴⁸⁵ B. Chang, 'Who did Wu Xun actually serve?' *Dazhong Dianying*, Issue 23, (1951).

⁴⁸⁶ Ibid.

perspective, Wu Xun was far from a harmless ‘do-gooder,’ he was dangerous precisely because he offered an alternative model for national development.

Liu Hulan (1950).

‘we have won the war, now we have more confidence in ourselves.’



Development Background.

The North East Film Studio decided to build on the success of *Zhao Yiman* by further developing the Model Worker formula in another film released later in 1950 that was clearly designed to support the ongoing Land Reform propaganda campaign.⁴⁸⁷ *Liu Hulan* follows the same ‘defiance’ model as *Zhao Yiman*, but character depictions are far less ambiguous. This technique was exceptionally common in Model Worker films, but first featured as a major plot device in *Liu Hulan*.⁴⁸⁸ I have selected this Model Worker film for two reasons. Firstly, it builds on the aforementioned ‘defiance’ formula featuring a female lead. Secondly, because it demonstrates the way in which

⁴⁸⁷ Chapter 2, p.65.

⁴⁸⁸ Leyda, p.195.

film makers were attempting to follow more closely the precepts laid out by Mao in his Yan'an talks. Filmed by the same studio as *Zhao Yiman*, the film clearly develops the Model Worker formula. Whilst *Zhao Yiman* was made with a more literate audience in mind, the film makers of *Liu Hulan* considered more carefully the wider audience. In *Zhao Yiman* plot points are conveyed via newspaper cuttings, in *Liu Hulan* text is used far more simplistically and directly, as can be seen in Figure 3.1. In addition, the actors detail plot direction directly to the audience. Although use is made of written material, it is far more basic and is employed more sparingly as can be seen in Figure 3.2. Text is generally instructional or specifically didactic. There is little room for confusion about who the characters are and what their motivations are because these are laid out extremely clearly.

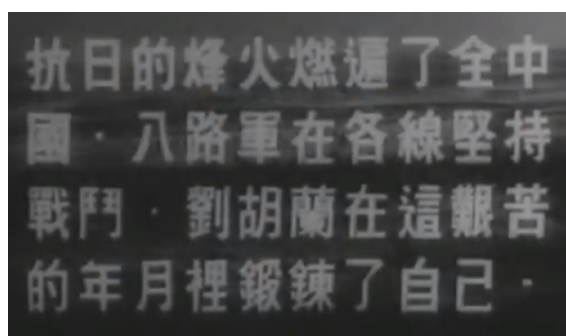


Figure 3.1, This text reads: 'The anti-Japanese war has spread throughout the country, the 8th Army are engaged in battle, Liu Hulan trained herself during this tough time.'



Figure 3.2, The text reads 'Long live the Communist Party.'

Plot summary.

Liu Hulan was a 14 year old girl from Shanxi Province who had worked as a spy for the Communist Party during the Civil War. She was eventually captured by the Guomindang, tortured and executed, but not before, according to legend, stating that victory would soon belong to the Communist Party. There are obviously a number of similarities between Liu and Zhao Yiman. Both suffered torture and were martyred for their beliefs. However, Liu was not only considerably younger than Zhao, but she was also a civilian and from a peasant background. Consequently, she was an even more ideal candidate to be immortalised as a Model Worker and prior to the filming of *Liu Hulan*, her story had been the subject of an opera. Details regarding this opera were included in *Dazhong Dianying* in an article recording audience feedback.⁴⁸⁹ In the film version of her life there is little room for character development. From the beginning, even at work in the fields as a child, Liu is defiant. She confronts the exploitative landlord and his wife and celebrates the eventual arrival of the People's Army. She works to undermine the Japanese occupation and then the Guomindang forces before being captured and executed. However, this is where an important distinction must be made between Liu Hulan and the earlier heroine, Zhao Yiman. Whereas Zhao primarily fought the Japanese, Liu was active during the Civil War. This clearly presented problems for the director as depicting those loyal to the Guomindang was obviously a sensitive issue. Consequently, as with other films of this era, considerably more screen time is dedicated to the war against Japan than the Guomindang. Indeed, the film only changes focus to the Civil War in the final twenty minutes.

⁴⁸⁹ 'Criticism from the workers about the film 'Liu Hulan.' *Dazhong Dianying*, Issue 28, (1951).

Thematically, *Liu Hulan* is considerably denser than the earlier *Zhao Yiman*. Despite coming from the same production studio there are some notable thematic differences between the two films. Whereas *Zhao Yiman* focussed almost entirely on nationalism and the unification of the nation, *Liu Hulan* deals in more detail with the benefits of socialism and social reform. The nationalist theme is still strong, however the film has more in common with *The Life of Wu Xun*, in its representation of the difficulties of peasant life. Nevertheless, an important caveat is that it displays a more simplified class system; that of exploiters and exploited. Considerable time is spent in both discussing and portraying the problems of the old society, but little is seen of the way in which Liu was solving these problems with the aid of the Party. It is perhaps for this reason that the reception of *Liu Hulan* was, according to articles published in *Dazhong Dianying*, far more negative.

Nationalism.

Liu Hulan's status as a civilian made depictions of nationalism no more complicated than they had been in *Zhao Yiman*. Throughout the film it is made exceptionally clear who is responsible for the problems that China was facing. However, the way in which collaboration was dealt with in *Liu Hulan* is far less nuanced than in the earlier film *Zhao Yiman*. Instead of detailing a more conflicted and confused city population, the peasants of Shanxi are far more polarised. The poor are oppressed and the rich are cruel collaborators who share little in common with their countryside kin. Indeed, the director goes out of his way to portray those who worked with the Japanese, in this case a landlord, as being not only beyond redemption, but appearing to be distinctly 'foreign.' Early in the film a thunderstorm erupts upon the arrival of the Japanese forces. This is repeated when the landlord returns to oppress the people after their liberators are forced into temporary retreat. A clear connection is thus made between the collaborator and

the Imperialist oppressors, they are one of the same. Indeed, the link between the 'class enemy,' the Guomindang and Jiang Jieshi in particular, is made explicit early in the film. When the People's Army arrives its commander proclaims, 'We are the Red Army, we journey to eastern China to resist the Japanese invaders, we aim to annihilate Japanese imperialism and overthrow the quisling Jiang Jieshi and help you to defeat the rich.'⁴⁹⁰

Liu Hulan goes much further than earlier films in depicting history as the propagandists would like it to have been, rather than how it arguably was. This is clearly undertaken for nationalist reasons as major events, such as the defeat of the Japanese, are credited solely to the actions of the Communist Party. Indeed, two thirds of the way through the film, word comes that the Japanese have been defeated with the assistance of Soviet forces in the north. The soldier bearing the news then states that Mao has demanded that they seize the abandoned guns and use them to take the cities.⁴⁹¹ It is implicitly indicated that the Japanese have surrendered to the People's Army, there is no mention of the role that the United States or the Guomindang forces had in the defeat of Japan.



Figure 3.3. In the left shot the landlord assists the Japanese in assaulting his village, in the right shot he joins with the Guomindang to interrogate Liu Hulan.

⁴⁹⁰ *Liu Hulan*, 10:30.

⁴⁹¹ *Ibid*, 59:40.

Indeed, when the conflict shifts to the Civil War, the new oppressors bear a striking resemblance to the Japanese forces. The differences between the landlord class, the Japanese and the Guomindang becomes exceptionally blurred, as can be seen in Figure 3.3. In the visual comparison above, the landlord is first seen acting as a Japanese collaborator, but in the second can be seen leading the Guomindang interrogation of Liu Hulan. The similarity in style and the military clothing he wears is striking and was intended to demonstrate the foreign nature of his allegiances. The propaganda message is clear, only those aligned with the Communist Party are true patriots; only by unifying under its leadership will China be great again. Earlier in the film Liu's writing confirms her patriotism (Figure 3.4), however as she states herself when she joined the Party, her actions are only possible because of its guidance. The Nationalist road ahead is made clear by the closing song which states, 'we will surge forward for our national liberation, we must defeat the aggression of Jiang Jieshi and America.'⁴⁹²



Figure 3.4, The text reads, 'I love my country.'

Social Reform.

The topic of social reform is clearly taken a great deal more seriously in *Liu Hulan* than it was in *Zhao Yiman*. Although Liu is similarly not on screen for considerable periods

⁴⁹² Ibid, 1:24:50

of time during the film, there are some additional and major differences between the characters and the way they function as Model Workers. Whilst Zhao Yiman was already a more fully formed model with only minimal room for development, *Liu Hulan* tackles a number of social issues that were thought to be problematic, particularly in the countryside. The director spends a substantial amount of time dealing with the issues of female inferiority. Prior to liberation, Liu can be seen undertaking manual labour traditionally carried out by appropriate livestock. In one particularly memorable scene this link is made explicit when she grinds corn accompanied by her exhausted mother (figure 3.5). Whilst they are working, her grandfather engages in conversation with a neighbour and laments his bad luck at having a granddaughter. Although the neighbour argues that this 'deficiency' could be remedied by Liu marrying a more wealthy man, it is not enough for her grandfather who states, 'when she grows up, she becomes another family's, 'a daughter is always a loss.'⁴⁹³



Figure 3.5

It is through this social commentary that the director drives the social reform agenda. By the end of the film Liu is a confident, successful woman and succeeds in her mission, independent of any male assistance. However, it is interesting to note that it was this aspect that was to cause some critical concern in *Dazhong Dianying*.

⁴⁹³ Ibid, 15:40

Nevertheless, the core values of social reform, empathy, community spirit, selflessness, hard work, self-criticism and a desire to fight, are all well represented here. Indeed, as a Model Worker Liu represents these qualities in a far more unambiguous way than *Zhao Yiman*. As the anti-Japanese war rages, Liu can be seen dutifully taking care not just of her family, but in the interests of community spirit, also the needs of other villagers. She displays empathy for their suffering and donates food from her own family to those with starving children. Liu is selfless and unafraid of hard work. Moreover, in what was to become a common theme in later films, Liu works so hard that she collapses. However, when offered additional food to aid in her recovery she refuses, and states that it would harm the socialist spirit of the community.

When social reform is considered it is Liu's desire to fight oppression that stands out. Whereas Zhao Yiman's back story is not explored, Liu's struggle is detailed from the earliest stages of her life as she struggles with exploitative landlords, by defiantly opposing them. Throughout the film she struggles uncompromisingly with her oppressors. This culminates with her defiant last words at her execution when she states, 'we didn't bow our heads to the Japanese invaders, let alone the reactionaries, their doom is certain, victory will be ours.'⁴⁹⁴ Liu personifies the concept of the Chinese People 'Standing up.' This point, is made exceptionally clear when Liu states, 'We have won the war, now we have more confidence in ourselves.'⁴⁹⁵ This new-found confidence, inspired by the Party, is then displayed in the Civil War which follows. Very little is actually seen of this conflict. Liu is seen helping wounded PLA soldiers and also evading anonymous enemy sentries. However, she really comes into her own during a brief battle with Guomindang soldiers. She is confident and highly proficient

⁴⁹⁴ Ibid, 1:24:20.

⁴⁹⁵ Ibid, 1:00:57.

in the use of grenades and uses rifles extremely effectively, despite appearing to have had no prior experience.

Liu has clearly 'stood up' and despite being captured her spirit is unbroken. Yingjin Zhang argues that these execution scenes served to fulfil two functions. Firstly to incriminate the class enemy, but also to strengthen the resolve of the revolutionaries to overthrow their oppressors.⁴⁹⁶ Whilst these two points are certainly valid, I would argue that these scenes also serve a third function; to reverse the idea that China was the 'sick man of Asia,' and to demonstrate that its people had value, a fighting spirit and a social and moral conscience. Liu Hulan and Zhao Yiman's resolute actions were the ideal antidote to the humiliation of the past century; they were citizens of which the masses could be proud.

[Socialism, supplementary propaganda and responses.](#)

Although nationalist and social reform themes dominate *Liu Hulan* the propaganda message of the benefits of socialism are far more detailed than in the earlier *Zhao Yiman*. However, the form that this propaganda takes is extremely simplistic. The message focuses to a large extent on land and the eventual benefits of socialist liberation. At the beginning of the film the audience witnesses the miserable exploitation of the peasants and their slavish existence at work in the fields. Following liberation, the same fields are worked by happy, motivated peasants. The heavy work is performed by animals whilst the peasants each gain an equal share from their labour, boasting to each other about how much land they now have (figure 3.6). Land was vitally important and was to become a common theme as the CCP attempted to

⁴⁹⁶ Zhang, (2003), p.177.

strengthen their connection with their largest source of popular support, the peasantry. Liu herself states that it was because of the liberation by the People's Army that the people of her village could have hope again and that the ideal of socialist equality could be realised.⁴⁹⁷ She credits the Party with being the guiding force of this liberation and promises to follow it for the rest of her life. As in *Zhao Yiman*, there is no mention of Mao.



Figure 3.6 - In the first shot can be seen the landlord and his wife watching over the peasants as they labour in the fields. In the second shot can be seen the peasants as masters of the land.

On the surface it would appear that *Liu Hulan* should have fulfilled the criteria for creating a successful film based on the concept of the Model Worker. However, responses recorded in *Dazhong Dianying* were more negative than I expected. The film appeared on the cover of Issue 27 published in 1951 on the 1st of October.⁴⁹⁸ However, it was subject to criticism in a number of articles. In one of these the responses from 'workers from many factories' are recorded. These workers complained that the depictions were not vivid or passionate enough. Furthermore, one worker stated that, 'this film hasn't shown us the passion and love between Liu and the people from her social class, that's why when Liu was executed we can't feel how mighty and glorious she is to sacrifice her life for the benefit of her social class and people's happiness.'⁴⁹⁹

⁴⁹⁷ *Liu Hulan*, 51:00

⁴⁹⁸ Appendix item 1.2.

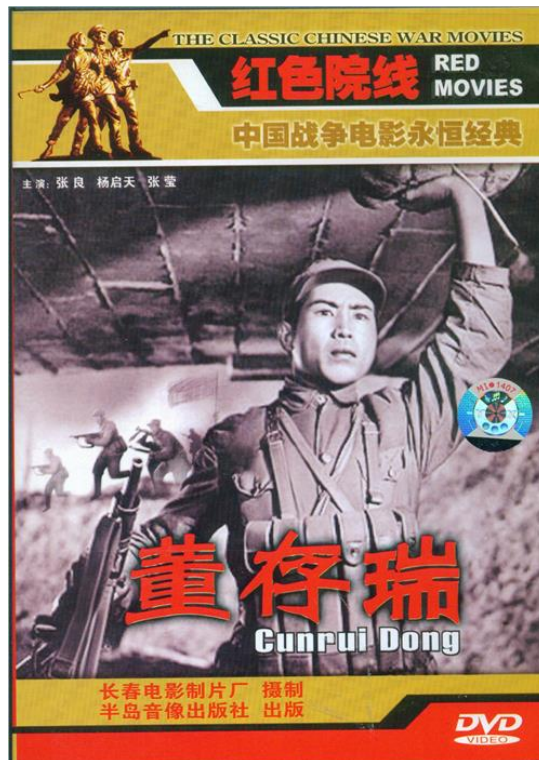
⁴⁹⁹ 'Criticism from the workers about the film *Liu Hulan*.' (*Dazhong Dianying*, Issue 28, 1951).

Similarly the article also states that a worker from a 'pen factory' complained that the link between Liu and the Party was not clear enough by stating, 'we didn't see the Party's cultivation (of Liu) and its influence on (her) development as a hero.'⁵⁰⁰ The depiction of Liu clearly was not heroic enough, an element that was to be rectified in the later films. Once again I would like to speculate on the extent to which these observations by 'factory workers' were not only supplementary propaganda, but intended to guide film makers towards a more specific goal. At this stage of the post-Revolutionary period, the film studios had greater levels of autonomy. Could it be considered that these critical articles were designed to point film makers in the approved direction?

⁵⁰⁰ Ibid.

Dong Cunrui, (1955).

'Forward for the New China!'



Development Background.

The 'Model Worker' theme was developed further in *Dong Cunrui*, directed by Guo Wei (郭维) and released in 1955 by the Changchun film studio. The film was successful and won the Ministry of Culture Award for best film in 1957.⁵⁰¹ Released in the same year as the 'Sufan Yundong' (肃反运动) - 'Against Counterrevolutionaries Movement' to reveal hidden 'counterrevolutionaries,' *Dong Cunrui* focusses on the importance of loyalty to the Party and the nation.⁵⁰² Whilst the militaristic theme existed in *Zhao Yiman*, it is considerably more developed in *Dong Cunrui*. Zhao is clearly part of a guerrilla, resistance army, with volunteers from different backgrounds

⁵⁰¹ Y. Zhang and Z. Xiao, *Encyclopaedia of Chinese Film*, (Routledge, 1998), p.146.

⁵⁰² The 'Sufan Movement' lasted from August 1955 to 1956 and primarily targeted former Guomindang members, landlords and intellectuals.

fighting to resist the Japanese. It is in *Dong Cunrui* that the military Model Worker becomes professionalised. Leyda notes that by 1955 films produced by the major studios in China had become more warlike.⁵⁰³ The Korean War was not long concluded and these films perhaps reflected an environment in which there was a genuine fear of further conflict. Model Worker films such as *Dong Cunrui* and the later *Shang Gan Ling*, were clearly designed to not only continue the nation-building efforts of earlier films like *Zhao Yiman* and *Liu Hulan*, but were intended to give immediate confidence to the people that they would be protected. This was in contrast to the previous century when the country had been at the mercy of exploitative, hostile foreign powers. Indeed, this view would appear to be confirmed by the actor who portrayed Dong Cunrui, Zhang Liang (张良). He claimed in an interview that the director Guo Wei stated to the crew before filming that the aim of the film was to inspire those 'fighting to liberate Taiwan,' that they would 'gain some strength after watching this film.'⁵⁰⁴ Yingjin Zhang argues that Chinese cinema became increasingly Nationalist during the 1960s.⁵⁰⁵ Whilst this may be true, earlier films also contained extremely strong elements of nationalism. Indeed, when *Dong Cunrui* is compared with both earlier Model Worker films that form part of this study, the focus on nationalism is particularly obsessive.

Plot summary.

Dong Cunrui was born in 1929 in Hebei province. During his adolescence he was exposed to Japanese conflict and resolved to join the resistance effort. As a film, *Dong Cunrui* stands apart from the other Model Workers that are part of this study because it features one element that the others all lack; significant and meaningful character

⁵⁰³ Leyda, pp.213-215.

⁵⁰⁴ Z. Liang, 'My Experience Playing the Role of Dong Cunrui,' *Dazhong Dianying*, Issue 5, (1956).

⁵⁰⁵ Zhang, (2004), pp.189-224.

development. Wang Ban argues that films of this era focussed on 'development from a private "self" into a collective "self" engaged in the movement of national liberation.'⁵⁰⁶ Whilst this is a powerful and attractive idea as it fits well with the idea of socialist cinema, *Dong Cunrui* is the only film in this study where there is clear evidence of this development from 'private self' to 'collective self.' The plot of *Dong Cunrui* services this development as the audience experiences Dong's growth from glory seeking Nationalist to self-sacrificing hero of the Revolution. By comparison, Zhao Yiman, Liu Hulan and Lei Feng are all essentially 'ready-made' heroes, they remain paragons throughout their experiences. As a teenager, Dong pesters the local People's Army commanders to allow him to fight with them, despite his comparative youth. He is rebuffed, but never loses his resolve to fight the Japanese occupation. Throughout the film the audience witnesses the tempering of his spirit as he joins the army and learns that the Revolution is meant to serve the people and not an individual's ego. His journey from 'private self' to 'collective self' is completed when he sacrifices himself by holding explosives to a bridge to prevent the Guomindang from achieving victory (Fig 4.1).



Figure 4.1 – Bombing the bridge.

⁵⁰⁶ B. Wang, *The Sublime Figure of History: Aesthetics and Politics in Twentieth Century China*, (Stanford University Press, 1997), p.140.

Dong Cunrui's journey epitomised the early stage of the Model Worker movement and served to demonstrate that any person could become a hero of the nation as long as they followed the directives of the Party to improve themselves. The film certainly had an impact on Zhang Liang, the actor chosen to play the lead. In a piece of supplementary propaganda published in *Dazhong Dianying*, he detailed his experiences playing the role. This will be examined a little later, but firstly I will investigate the extent to which the film expands upon the Nationalist formula outlined above.

Nationalism.

Whilst *Zhao Yiman* and *Liu Hulan* both had elements of the glorification of war, *Dong Cunrui* drives this aspect even further. The opening scenes of the film depict happy villagers celebrating their liberation by the People's Army, whilst Dong and his friend discuss the possibility of joining the fight. The villagers only speak of the worthy goals of the anti-Japanese struggle and when the soldiers depart they are surrounded by girls bearing flowers (fig 4.2). In earlier films the brutality of the occupation was detailed first, before the People's Army would arrive to save the day. It would appear that a different propaganda strategy was chosen for *Dong Cunrui* as the focus was now on the positives of recruitment and the heroic and noble cause upon which the soldiers are about to embark. Whereas in the earlier films already discussed the soldiers are peasants, forced into fighting for their community, in *Dong Cunrui* it would appear to be more of a personal choice.



Figure 4.2 – The text reads 'anti-Japanese group meeting.'

Whilst this aspect may differ from earlier films, the way in which the enemy is depicted remains consistent with earlier portrayals. As in *Liu Hulan*, the majority of the combat takes place between PLA and Japanese soldiers, with only a short section at the end of the film devoted to the Civil War. Similarly, to *Liu Hulan*, this is a curious choice as Dong sacrificed himself in the war of liberation and yet the main focus is once again on the external enemy. This external enemy is, by contrast to the film *Zhao Yiman*, faceless and anonymous. As in *Liu Hulan*, the director uses the technique of shifting colour tone. Each scene featuring the Japanese is markedly darker, with storm clouds overhead. In addition, both the Japanese and the Americans are shown to be inhuman. They attack and kill civilians and appear to have no respect for the conventions of war. In one extended battle sequence, forty-five minutes into the film, the People's Army fight against the Japanese in front of the backdrop of the Great Wall (fig 4.3). The not so subtle propaganda message being that the Japanese represent a continuation of the barbarian hordes from the north that have tried to ravage the country in the past. The message is clear, only the People's Army stand as protectors of the nation against the inhuman monsters that threaten it.



Figure 4.3 – Dong and comrades fight in front of The Great Wall.

As in earlier films there is a very clear distinction made between the loyal soldiers of the People's Army and the traitors of the Guomindang. *Dong Cunrui* takes the theme of aligning Jiang Jieshi and by extension the Guomindang, with foreign aggressors much further. There is a clear evolution of intensity with these depictions. In *Zhao Yiman* they are hinted at, in *Liu Hulan* they are expanded upon slightly, but in *Dong Cunrui* the link is made clear and explicit. When the film turns to the Civil War and the Guomindang attack the villages by air, Dong notes that the planes are American, although one of them clearly has a Guomindang symbol painted on it (fig 4.4). Following the attack, the company commander makes a speech wherein he explains to the survivors of the bombardment that the war is caused by Jiang Jieshi and the United States.⁵⁰⁷ He states, 'The hatchet man of the United States, Jiang Jieshi, is throwing bombs towards our heads!' In order to avoid the awkward problem of disunity caused by the Civil War, the Nationalist solution is simple, those who fight the People's Army are not Chinese, they are being controlled by foreigners. For example, when the People's Army engage the Guomindang in battle their adversaries have the same war cry as the Japanese.

⁵⁰⁷ *Dong Cunrui*, (1955), Directed by Guo Wei, [Film], China: Changchun Film Studio, 59:00.



Figure 4.4 – Guomindang planes overhead.

The concept of anti-imperialism runs throughout the film. For example, on numerous occasions PLA soldiers link Jiang Jieshi with both the Japanese and later, the United States. The importance of this propaganda message is apparent just over an hour through the film as text on the screen states, 'In 1948, the People's Liberation Army launched a large counterattack against the lackey of Yankee imperialism, the bandit gang of Jiang Jieshi.' The mission of Dong and his comrades is clear; they are the unifying force of a new China, dedicated to sweeping away the humiliation of the past. Indeed, following a victory over Japanese forces the soldiers gather with the local peasants and sing a highly nationalistic song, 'we beat little Japan, the people are the masters now.'⁵⁰⁸

Whilst the nationalist themes identified above were present in earlier films, *Dong Cunrui* adds another important aspect that demonstrates the extent to which the glorification of China as a nation was a clear aim of propagandists. Following the defeat of the Japanese, Dong discusses with his comrades their plans for the future. Many soldiers talk about returning to the fields, with one stating, 'we need to go back to

⁵⁰⁸ Ibid, 54:58.

our land. The wives, children, the fields and the crops are waiting for us.⁵⁰⁹ The audience then witnesses scenes of the peaceful countryside filled with abundant crops. The scene turns to chaos as the Guomindang attack, destroying the land, destroying China. This identification with the actual and tangible land is an aspect of nationalism that is greatly expanded upon in later films. Dong and his comrades are not fighting simply for the people, but for the land that has given them life.

Social Reform.

As stated above, one of the propaganda strengths of *Dong Cunrui* was the amount of time dedicated to the technique of character development. Although the Nationalist theme is exceptionally strong it never overshadows the importance of social reform and the development of the self in service to the nation. All six measures of social reform are expanded upon in *Dong Cunrui* with a particular focus on the concept of self-criticism and the individual not allowing his or her ego to distract from their duty to the wider community. Indeed, in *Dong Cunrui* is seen the Model Worker programme personified. As the film begins Dong wants to join the fight to fulfil his own desire to be a hero. He is educated repeatedly by older soldiers who question his mentality and ask him to consider why he wants to fight. Dong's desire to be a hero results in a number of incidents where his actions damage the rest of the group. The Party, represented by Commander Zhao, played by Zhang Song Yang, acts as a father to Dong, offering gentle criticism, encouragement and wisdom, 'to win the battle we must correct our thoughts.'⁵¹⁰ Dong's 'conversion' to the 'correct' mode of thinking occurs when he eventually joins the Party. His 'conversion' is quasi-religious as he states, 'I

⁵⁰⁹ Ibid, 56:08.

⁵¹⁰ Ibid, 36:18.

know joining the Party is just the beginning, there will be more tests during our struggle.⁵¹¹

Dong achieves his goals through hard work and the education provided by the Party. However, it is made clear that slavishly following orders will not achieve success. At one point, Dong argues with a senior officer and disobeys orders. His actions result in success and he is awarded a medal, whilst the more timid senior officer is excluded from the celebration. During this section, a portrait of Mao is frequently in view and upon receiving his medal Dong shouts, 'Long live Chairman Mao' (Fig 4.5). Dong's bold 'correct' actions are carefully linked with Mao. Education can only take an adherent so far; passion and decisive action are also the hallmarks of a Model Worker, as long as they are inspired by the Chairman.



Figure 4.5 – Dong receives a medal for his heroic actions.

In addition, and in contrast to the cruel enemy that they were facing, the soldiers are exceptionally empathetic to those around them. Soldiers build relationships with the peasants who help them and orphaned children are cared for by the community. The

⁵¹¹ Ibid, 1:02:20

unified humanity of the soldiers is particularly apparent whenever a comrade falls in battle. To mark the importance of each individual, his compatriots take time to remove their caps and mourn his passing (fig 4.6). This instructional technique is used extensively in later films, such as *Shang Gan Ling*.⁵¹² The soldiers that represent a new China are clearly differentiated from the callous and indifferent individuals representing the nation in *The Life of Wu Xun*.



Figure 4.6 – A sign of respect.

[Socialism and supplementary propaganda.](#)

In contrast to the themes identified above, there is limited promotion of the benefits of socialism. In marked contrast, the film focuses on the concept of serving the people and the benefits of land reform for the peasants. Soldiers speak frequently of the need for revolution but never discuss the justification for it beyond the message of anti-imperialism and national self-determination. It is precisely because of the sparse discussion of the benefits of socialism, that a scene towards the end of the film is so conspicuous. One of Dong's comrades reads aloud a letter from his wife. The letter details how his family have been assigned land and cattle and that his children have

⁵¹² *Shang Gan Ling*, (1956), Directed by Sha Meng, [Film], China: Changchun Film Studio.

been going to school, 'days of hunger and coldness have passed, our family lacks nothing now.'⁵¹³ The letter concludes with his wife asking the soldiers to work hard to defeat Jiang Jieshi so that their new life can continue. Once again can be seen the way in which the socialist message was adapted to appeal to the largest number of people; the peasants. Land reform was seemingly the chief benefit of the socialist revolution. There are, however, some more subtle hints at the benefits of a socialist society. The film often dwells on elements of social levelling wherein commanders and regular soldiers talk with each on the same level, share jokes and use nicknames. Indeed, before he reads the letter from his wife, Dong's comrade takes to the stage and drinks from the company commander's cup, thus showing familiarity and comradeship.

Dong Cunrui was clearly an important film for the propaganda department. It featured on the cover of *Dazhong Dianying* in 1956, Issue 5⁵¹⁴ and was frequently advertised inside the magazine with both colour shots from the film and artistic portrayals of Dong.⁵¹⁵ In addition, in Issue 5, Zhang Liang detailed his experiences playing the role and how Dong's actions had strongly affected him. This is an interesting piece of supplementary propaganda as Zhang spends a great deal of time detailing the reasons for Dong's actions, reinforcing the desired message, that when he sacrificed himself he was thinking of 'the country, people, life and victory.'⁵¹⁶ Zhang's experiences in making the film serve to demonstrate to readers what they were expected to think and feel having seen it. He details the hardship he experienced whilst filming, but explains how he was inspired by Dong to continue and not give up. He concludes by stating that, like Dong, 'I know I need to live and fight like him.'⁵¹⁷ Articles like these were clearly

⁵¹³ *Dong Cunrui*, 1:24:32.

⁵¹⁴ Appendix item 1.3.

⁵¹⁵ Appendix items 1.4 & 1.5.

⁵¹⁶ Liang, 'My Experience Playing the Role of Dong Cunrui.'

⁵¹⁷ Ibid.

intended to remove any ambiguity from the minds of readers about the meaning of what they had witnessed on screen. By including this small sample of articles connected to the films that are part of this study, it is possible to see the way in which the magazine was developed as a propaganda tool. Whilst articles discussing the earliest film, *Zhao Yiman*, allowed readers the opportunity to make judgements for themselves, later pieces were far more didactic. This was to intensify with material connected to the ultimate Model Worker, Lei Feng as I will explore shortly.

Huang Baomei (1958).

'I am nothing, it is the Party's guidance and all the effort from the members of my workshop. There's nothing from me.'



Development background.

By comparison to the other films that form part of this study, *Huang Baomei*, directed by Xie Jin (谢晋) and produced in Shanghai by Tianma Film, is unique. Whereas the other films were either based on historical events (*Dong Cunrui*, *Zhao Yiman*, *Liu Hulan*) or an 'interpretation' of a revolutionary life (*Lei Feng*), *Huang Baomei* strove for an even greater level of authenticity. The film is a 'documentary drama,' with the role of the protagonist played by a genuine Model Worker. In addition, other members of the cast also play themselves, the intention clearly being to provide the viewer with a conceivably more genuine account of the life and the work experience of a Model Worker. The production of this style of film was attractive for three reasons. Firstly, cost, 'docu-dramas' were believed to require half the financial outlay of a feature production. Secondly, production could be completed in a relatively short space of

time, two to three months instead of a year.⁵¹⁸ Thirdly, for the purposes of propaganda, a documentary provides a rather different level of engagement for the viewer than a feature film. The decision to cast a Model Worker in the title role was not an easy one for the director, Xie Jin. In my interview with Huang Baomei about her role in the film, she stated that Xie Jin was initially not sure if using a worker for a feature production would be wise. The issue was resolved when the director and propaganda department from the factory visited Huang at her home. She was unaware that she was being considered for the part and that she talked with the director for thirty minutes. This conversation appears to have convinced Xie Jin that she would be suitable for the part.

Scripting for the film was handled by the studio and overseen by the factory's propaganda department. Huang stated that the scripts were based primarily on newspapers reports of her achievements. The process by which the script was created is described by Huang as being highly collaborative. The director, actors, propaganda department and studio writers worked together to create the script and final approval was achieved by means of consensus. As well as Huang, other workers, as noted above, portrayed themselves. Those chosen to take part were involved in other aspects of the factory's cultural work, including the Yue and Hua Opera groups and the literature and art group. Huang states that they were chosen for their ability to memorise lines.⁵¹⁹

⁵¹⁸ Clark, (1988), p.81.

⁵¹⁹ Appendix item 3.2, p.405.

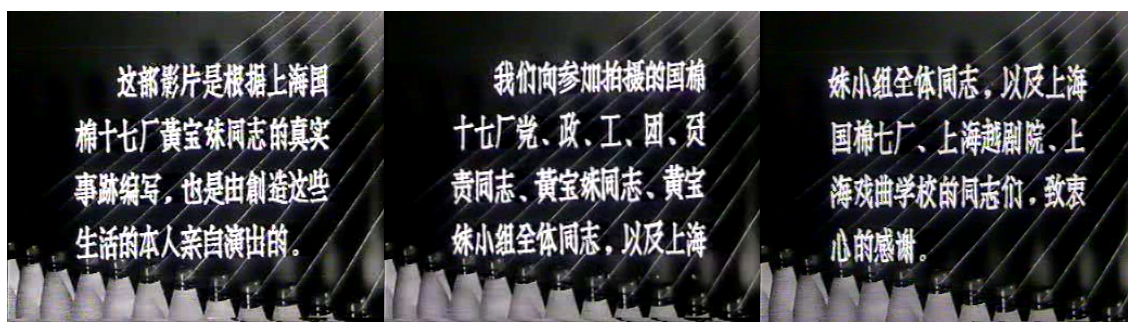


Figure 5.1 – The text reads ‘This film is based on the real story of comrade Huang Baomei who works in Shanghai number seventeen cotton factory. It has been performed personally by the people who created this life. We want to give our sincere thanks to the comrades who are in charge of the factory’s Party political administration work, Huang Baomei, members of Huang Baomei’s group and comrades from the Shanghai No7 Cotton Factory, Shanghai Yueju Group and the Shanghai Traditional Opera School.

Films such as *Dong Cunrui* relied on casting and script to engage the viewer and provide authenticity. However, in a feature film, there always exists a layer of abstraction. The viewer, no matter how engaged with the material, knows that the piece is an interpretation of events and not a completely genuine reproduction. The documentary form has the benefit of obscuring the extent to which events are being accurately displayed. This is possible because of the involvement of the individuals who ‘were there.’ In the case of *Huang Baomei*, it is not only the Model Worker who is part of the proceedings, but also her fellow factory workers, who all ‘play themselves.’ The extent to which this point was important for propagandists, can be seen in the opening text (fig 5.1). This states that the film features real people, not actors and that it is a portrayal of their real lives. Recognition is also given to the factory, the Party, the unions and the people in charge for taking part. In addition, there is also acknowledgement of ‘the comrades that were part of her group’ and the Shanghai State Cotton 7th factory, Shanghai Opera Group and also the Shanghai Traditional Opera School.

The reason for the prominence of this display was to increase engagement with viewers, particularly in Shanghai where the film was produced. The acknowledgement given to institutions in the city was clearly intended to help reinforce the message that the events of the film were completely real. Therefore, the narrative would be highly relevant to viewers, some of whom would most certainly have been working in similar occupations and would have been aware of the factories and groups mentioned. The ‘documentary’ style was thus intended to combine, in true ‘Great Leap’ style, reality with ‘revolutionary romanticism.’ The workers in the film may have appeared to have been thoroughly ordinary to the viewers, but their accomplishments were depicted as being extraordinary. Thus, the intention was to reinforce the message of the Great Leap Forward, that through hard work and revolutionary spirit, the impossible could be achieved. The film was almost certainly intended primarily for a literate urban audience as a great deal of written text is used throughout to convey both plot points and propaganda messages.

Plot summary.



Figure 5.2 – Huang Baomei has returned to the workshop to manage quality control.

Huang Baomei opens on a film set. A worker referred to as a ‘film producer’ finishes a scene and then leaves the set to take a tram. This scene in itself was clearly intended to

draw a line between fiction and reality. The 'film producer' has left the fantasy world of which she has played a part in construction and has now re-joined the real world of socialist China. Whilst on the tram, she reads a newspaper that details the achievements of Huang and her factory. Intrigued, she decides to visit the factory to discover more about the impressive achievements in which the workers have been involved. The 'film producer' thus serves the function of narrator and also proxy for the viewer as her experience with Huang Baomei teaches her and by extension the viewer, why Huang is special and worth emulating. She experiences a journey that eventually brings her enlightenment as she sees the way in which the core messages of nationalism, social reform and the development of socialism are of benefit to the factory workers and by extension, society as a whole. Although each scene is cinematic in quality, great effort is taken to emphasise the reality of the situation. In the opening scenes inside the factory, the 'film producer' looks for Huang so that she can interview her, indicating to the viewer that what is unfolding is reality, not a story.

The viewer then follows her as she not only watches, but also becomes involved not only in Huang's efforts, but the struggle of the whole factory to improve quality and productivity. This battle takes on truly 'Great Leap' proportions as Huang and her comrades battle and ultimately overcome a significant production problem. Along the way, the factory workers have their doubts and anxieties quashed as they witness the transformative power of allowing the Party to guide their thinking. By following Huang, they unite together and solve the problem. However, for a 'Great Leap' era film, this was clearly not believed to be sufficient. The technique that Huang has developed to solve the production problem must be applied to the whole factory. However, the speed at which this can be achieved is questioned by the workers. Huang initially states that she believes that it will take two weeks. However, the other units

begin to argue about who can achieve it more quickly. The workers engage in what the ‘film producer’ describes as ‘socialist competition,’ that is, a search for a collective solution. The ‘competition’ is thus not intended to create ‘winners’ or ‘losers.’ As a result of this ‘socialist competition,’ the estimate for the amount of time needed to complete the modifications to the machinery is continuously revised downwards.



Figure 5.3 – ‘Congratulations to Huang Baomei and all the comrades in her group.

They enthusiastically responded to the party’s call and eliminated the white spot after 4 hours of hard work instead of 1 year.’ Factory party political work section, 14-03-1958.

Consequently, the estimated time for completion drops from the initial two weeks to an astonishing four hours. This is the spirit of the Great Leap (Fig 5.3). The film culminates with Huang being sent to Beijing to attend a National Congress. Upon her return to the factory, she speaks of her encounter with Mao and the way in which the meeting was a vivid re-education for her in Marxist-Leninism and that Mao directed the delegates to liberate their thinking. In a final meeting with the production manager it is explained that output will be increased and that this will mean new challenges. Huang is undaunted by this. The ‘film producer’ stands, tears in her eyes as she is inspired by Huang's dedication to her work. When pressed on the veracity of the achievements depicted in the film, Huang Baomei maintains that the events depicted in the film are entirely accurate. She concedes that the problem of ‘the white spot’ was not entirely

eliminated and continued to persist, but in far smaller numbers. However, she also argues that by the time the film was produced the production problem was fixed. In addition, when detailing the amount of time it took to make the necessary changes to the factory, she firmly stated that the time frame was indeed accurate as they had worked through the night, as detailed in the film.⁵²⁰

Nationalism.

Huang Baomei's story focusses primarily on the benefits of social reform and the development of socialism. However, a strongly nationalist message still permeates the film as viewers are reminded of the ability of their fellow citizens and the global competition for productivity in which they are engaged. Shanghai is presented as a thoroughly modern, developed metropolis, on a par with any international city. The director uses a number of shots to demonstrate the extent to which it has successfully been developed, the message that China is no longer either the playground of imperial powers or a backwater, is clear. Nationalism is also apparent with the inclusion of extended sections of 'Yueju,' (越剧) an opera style with significant difference to the traditional Beijing style. Its inclusion is important because the Yueju style evolved in Shanghai and was influenced by the presence of the western colonial powers. As the author of, 'Women Playing Men Yue Opera and Social Change in Twentieth-Century Shanghai,' J. Jiang argues, Yueju was 'a native opera that combined a Chinese influenced acting style with Western-influenced stage design and the theatre discipline appealed to metropolitan audiences by means of its refreshing modernity and familiar

⁵²⁰ Appendix item 3.2, p.405.

native sensibility.⁵²¹ This style was then developed, prior to the Revolution, to focus on patriotism, revolution and plays concerning family morality.⁵²²

As a statement of nationalism the inclusion of Yueju opera is important precisely because it is a combination of Chinese culture and western development. Consequently, it fully represents the Maoist aim of studying what was believed to be useful from the West, taking aspects and then applying them to Chinese culture; its inclusion in the film is therefore clearly no accident. Indeed, the leading Cadre in the factory makes a speech that emphasises the connection between the fairies represented in the opera and the factory workers. He states that although the ‘seven cotton fairies’ from the traditional fairy-tale produced the finest cotton, they did not exist. The people who can actually perform the feat are the workers, they are the real heroes, not the mythical creatures of legend. This theme continues throughout, culminating in a scene at the end of the film where the workers can be seen at their looms, transforming into fairies (fig 5.4).⁵²³



Figure 5.4 – The transformation.

More overt nationalist sentiment can be found in statements regarding the Great Leap Forward. Huang Baomei states that the factory is fully committed to the Great Leap,⁵²⁴

⁵²¹ J. Jiang, *Women Playing Men Yue Opera and Social Change in Twentieth-Century Shanghai*, (University of Washington Press, 2009), p.92

⁵²² Ibid.

⁵²³ Huang Baomei, (1958), Directed by Xie Jin, [Film], China: Tianma Film, 47:13.

⁵²⁴ Ibid, 16:19.

particularly the goal to catch up with and exceed the production capability of the United Kingdom. The extent to which China is winning this competition can be seen in a later scene when a newspaper article details the success of one factory in overcoming a significant production problem (Fig 5.5). The factory workers comment that even foreign countries have struggled to successfully eliminate the same issue.⁵²⁵ Therefore, the viewer is not only made aware of the international competition in which China is engaged, but is also given the confidence that the battle is being won.



Figure 5.5, The text states 'Li Sulan created a miracle, she eliminated the white spot in seven days.'

Social reform.

Although ever present, the significance of the nationalist aspect of the Model Worker is not focused on to the same degree as the propaganda aim of social reform. The film obsessively details the benefits of the 'correct way' of thinking throughout. Indeed, the advantages of rectification of both attitudes and behaviour is continuously promoted to the viewer. The opening scenes in the factory, demonstrate the benefits of hard work. When the 'film producer' first visits the factory at the end of the work day, she finds that Huang is still on the factory floor trying to improve her skills. The 'film producer' is surprised to see her learning from others and states, 'so strange, the National Model

⁵²⁵ Ibid, 17:40.

Worker, how can she learn from someone else?’⁵²⁶ This aspect of social reform, ‘humility,’ is also continually focused upon to a great extent in the film adaption of the life of Dong Cunrui. Although Huang is a Model, she never places herself above the other workers in the factory. At the beginning of the film she states, ‘I am nothing, it is the Party's guidance and all the effort from the members of my workshop. There's nothing from me.’⁵²⁷

This theme is further developed following the successful elimination of ‘the white spot’ as her fellow workers try to give her praise. However, she refuses and repeatedly states ‘I am nothing.’⁵²⁸ This is further reinforced by one of her comrades who earlier claimed, ‘learning humbly from others is one of the characteristics of Huang Baomei’s group.’⁵²⁹ The ‘film producer’s’ journey, to understand what makes a Model Worker significant, is further developed in a section that focusses on the value of ‘community spirit.’ She visits the classroom where the workers expand their knowledge of Marxist-Leninist-Maoist Thought. The room is festooned with propaganda and instructional posters and the students are working hard to clean the class, each taking collective responsibility for the effort. The ‘film producer’ states that she cannot just watch the others, that she must be involved. She rolls up her sleeves and begins to help scrub the classroom. This scene is also used to further demonstrate the difference between a Model Worker and other members of society. A comparison shot (fig 5.6) shows the amount of effort and attention to detail Huang puts into her work.

⁵²⁶ Ibid, 03:54.

⁵²⁷ Ibid, 04:30.

⁵²⁸ Ibid, 33:36.

⁵²⁹ Ibid, 18:44.



Figure 5.6 – To the left the non-Model's work, to the right, Huang Baomei.

The 'film producer' then states, 'I used to think that a national Model Worker had something so outstanding, so different from other people, but now what I see is ordinary, regular work, every little, bit by bit, hard work.'⁵³⁰ This element of social reform, the commitment to working hard, is a core focus of the propaganda throughout the film as Huang overcomes all problems not solely through skill, but through diligence and persistence. When faced with the problem of 'the white spot,' the viewer is presented with scenes of Huang in her home, working to solve the issue outside of her regular working hours, demonstrating her single-minded commitment to the cause. Huang also demonstrates the attribute of empathy when other workers in the factory fail and feel they cannot achieve their targets. She patiently works with them until they can reach the same level of achievement as herself. The empathy she has for her fellow workers is reinforced by the 'thank you' message she receives which states, 'Our group eliminated the white spot in 3 hours with the selfless help of Huang Baomei's group. Therefore, we would like to report our good news to the Party committee and give our sincere thanks to Huang Baomei's group for their support. - Spun Yarn Group A, Number Two Factory, Yang Guizhen Group.'⁵³¹ These written notices are used continuously throughout the film. This reinforces the verbal propaganda message with

⁵³⁰ Ibid, 07:20.

⁵³¹ Ibid, 32:58.

written (or textual) material. The factory is presented as a microcosm of a modern, culturally reformed, socialist society; the agency for this being a united workforce guided and inspired by the Party.

The development of socialism.

The root of Huang Baomei's success is, from the outset, related to the development of socialism in China subsequent to the Revolution. The benefits of socialist education are stated from the beginning. When the 'film producer' visits the 'culture school' attached to the factory, she is told that before liberation, Huang was illiterate, but that she is now educated to secondary school level.⁵³²



Figure 5.7 – The banner states, 'Socialism is heaven, without knowledge you can't go there.'

Once again, this element of propaganda is emphasised through the use of visual material (fig 5.7). Similarly, to Lei Feng, Huang's position in 'the old society' is used to demonstrate the difference that liberation has brought for the people. The 'film producer' notes that Huang has been working on the machines since she was fourteen years old. Prior to the Revolution she states that Huang felt she was a slave of the machine, but that now she feels that she owns it and is consequently responsible for it.

⁵³² Ibid, 05:37.

Socialism has thus been achieved; as a worker, Huang owns the means of production. Once again, this point is visually made as two contrasting photographs are used to demonstrate the way in which the development of socialism has transformed Huang's life (fig 5.8).

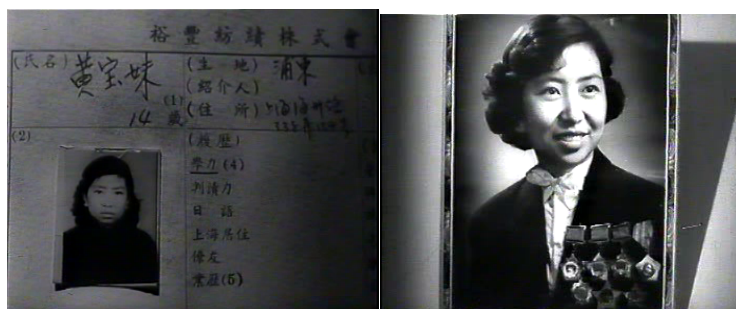


Figure 5.8 – The left image is Huang Baomei's registration document for when she joined the factory. It states that her age was '14' and her place of residence. The second photo features the medals that she has won for her work.

Huang Baomei, as a worker, has been liberated by the socialist system. In addition, the theme of female liberation and equality, one of the key aspects of the film *Liu Hulan*, features prominently in *Huang Baomei*. The 'old society' depicted in *Liu Hulan* was far from equal. Liu had to fight hard to get recognition and be taken seriously by those around her. Post-liberation Shanghai is considerably different. Female workers are in prominent positions inside the factory, indeed, the union leader is a woman, however the Party leadership is still dominated by male cadres. The issue of female equality is thus presented differently in *Huang Baomei*. Rather than being part of the larger social reform agenda it is presented as a key benefit of the socialist system as by allowing woman to be involved with jobs traditionally done by men, productivity is increased. The latter parts of the film focus on this aspect as a sceptical male worker has his 'thought rectified' after Huang and her comrades successfully learn how to repair the machines themselves without any male assistance.

It is at this point that the viewer sees Huang at her lowest, as she struggles to understand why the male workers have what she believes is such a reactionary view. However, she overcomes her feelings of frustration with the aid of a Party cadre who helps her to focus her thinking. She decides, with the cadre's assistance, that a rectification campaign should be held within the factory. She designs the campaign propaganda to challenge the preconceptions of the male workers. This is achieved through the use of 'Dazibao' (大字报) - 'big character posters' to gently counter the traditional perspective (fig 5.9). The eventual success of the female workers in their determination to repair the machines breeds understanding. The male workers accept that with regard to gains in productivity, the new socialist society is unlocking the full potential of both male and female workers.

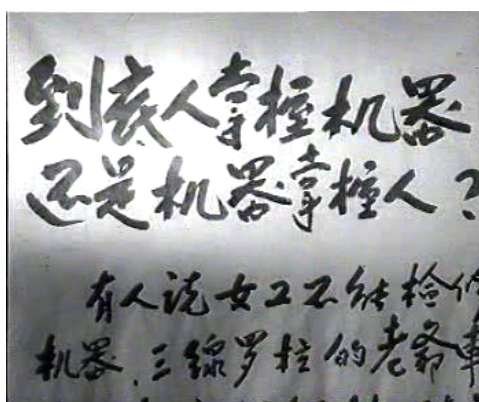


Figure 5.9 – 'Should people control machines or should machines control people?'

This new approach is summarised at the end of the film by the 'film producer' as she makes comparisons with the 'mythical fairies.' She states, 'We can achieve what an immortal cannot. The view which does not exist in the heaven can be created by us. We are the ordinary people but we are also the most marvellous people. We are writing a

mighty book by our work and hands. The name of the book is communism and it is the mightiest book.’⁵³³

Supplementary propaganda.

Huang Baomei never quite reached the same level of popularity as some of her fellow Model Workers. Although she was featured in other forms of media it was not to the same extent as models such as Lei Feng or even Liu Hulan. Poster depictions of Huang were primarily produced to promote the film and were released by the film production company.⁵³⁴ There were, however, a number of articles written that were clearly intended to operate as companion pieces. One of these, written in *Chinese Cinema* is particular informative as it details the importance of the documentary style of filmmaking. It is argued that this is because the documentary style allows those involved with production to engage more effectively with the working masses. An article written by Lan Qing entitled, ‘Life and performance techniques—thoughts from the film Huang Baomei, a worker’s acting performance.’ The article focusses on the suitability of a Model Worker playing him or herself in a film, noting that, ‘the most important thing is Huang herself has such noble quality, therefore its quite easy for her to reflect an advanced figure’s spirit.’⁵³⁵ Lan Qing argues that even though professional actors spend many years perfecting their art, ultimately they are still unable to fully portray a hero because, ‘most of our film actors these days have a bourgeoisie or petty bourgeoisie intellectual background. There is still a certain distance between them and the workers, peasants and soldiers who are the masters of this era.’⁵³⁶ He argues that

⁵³³ Ibid, 47:16

⁵³⁴ Chapter 5, p.327.

⁵³⁵ Q. Lan, *Chinese Cinema Issue 12*, (China Film Association, 1958), p.9.

⁵³⁶ Ibid, p.10.

this 'distance' can only be narrowed if the actors engage in manual labour and involve themselves more fully with the lives of the working people.

Lan Qing's words clearly echo those of Mao at Yan'an.⁵³⁷ The importance of the rectification of thought is further emphasised as Lan states that the very nature of the actor's profession is inherently inappropriate. This is because the actors were from the bourgeoisie and therefore allowed negative aspects of their social class to influence their performances. For example, he notes that regarding one of the key aspects of social reform, 'community spirit,' the bourgeoisie actor cannot hope to understand how to make a correct portrayal. This is because, 'the bourgeoisie's human nature theory can never explain this communist spiritual quality which is totally opposite to bourgeoisie's profit-before-everything mentality and individualism.'⁵³⁸ Lan argues that there was a purity to the acting of the workers in *Huang Baomei*. That they were not concerned with 'petty individualism,' but only that the overall creation was correct. The article indicates the extent to which propaganda was shifting at this stage towards a more combative approach to the bourgeoisie, one of the classes of the People's Democratic Dictatorship. Companion propaganda pieces such as this one demonstrate the way in which the intention was to shift towards a more binary society of those who were ideologically sound and those who were not. Although written as a critique of the film with the stated intention of guiding actors in their work, the piece was clearly designed to criticise a social class that did not have much time left after the Great Leap Forward.

⁵³⁷ Chapter 1, p.18.

⁵³⁸ Lan, p.10.



Figure 5.10 – ‘Study from the Model Worker, Huang Baomei.’

Aside from articles and posters, Huang Baomei’s image was also used on other materials, both to promote the film and reinforce the propaganda message. Huang was actively involved in promotion events for the film and was invited by Zhou Enlai to join the ‘10 years anniversary of Liberation’ event. She stated that the film was intended to be a gift to the workers for the National Day celebrations.⁵³⁹ In addition to these events material items were also produced. Figure 5.10 is a bookmark that bears the inscription ‘study from the Model Worker Huang Baomei.’ The bookmark uses a still image of Huang superimposed on a background featuring the fruits of industrialisation, a factory and electricity pylon. Stars are prominently displayed around Huang, indicating the bright future that she and her fellow workers are guaranteeing for the people. Although it is not possible to properly date this image, or know its exact origin, it is likely that it

⁵³⁹ Appendix item 3.2, p.405.

was produced at the same time as the film. This is because propaganda related to Huang Baomei was largely limited to the period within which the film was produced. Her popularity never reached the level of the other more national Model Workers such as Dong Cunrui and Lei Feng. In addition, the film has not yet been released to the general public⁵⁴⁰ and was not heavily promoted in the years following its cinematic release. This is most likely because it contains a number of aspects that, during the Cultural Revolution period in particular, may have been problematic. For example, when Huang visits Beijing and attends the conference it appears that Liu Shaoqi is one of the speakers. Following his removal from power,⁵⁴¹ media that featured him was more restricted. In addition, the inclusion of 'Yueju' opera may, also during the Cultural Revolution, have been considered inappropriate because of its association with the era of foreign imperialism.

To conclude, although not as widely promoted as many of the other Model Workers during this era, Huang Baomei is still worthy of study. An examination of the film demonstrates the extent to which the socialist society was now believed to have been established. In addition, the film offers a further opportunity to explore the role of the Model Worker propaganda campaign within this new context. It is clear that the dominant themes of nationalism, social reform and the development of socialism were still carefully interwoven into the narrative of this 'docu-drama.' The film promotes the intended role of the Model Worker, as guide and inspiration for their fellow workers during this pivotal period of the 'Great Leap Forward.' Furthermore, through my interview with Huang Baomei I have gained some insight into the impact that being

⁵⁴⁰ The film is still not available on general release. My thanks go to Liu Yajuan for providing me with a copy of the film for this thesis.

⁵⁴¹ Liu Shaoqi was the President of the People's Republic of China until being labelled a 'Capitalist Roadster' at the beginning of the Cultural Revolution. He was expelled from the Party and disappeared from public view.

chosen as a 'Model Worker' has on an individual. Huang is extremely positive about the experience and detailed the extent to which her life was enhanced as she became a celebrity during the period particularly as she was chosen to travel to other countries to represent China. The period clearly defined her adult life and she still identifies herself as a 'Model Worker.' In the post-Maoist era she has continued to enjoy publicity through both state media and the publication of a book detailing her experiences.⁵⁴²

Lei Feng (1964).

'The spirit of Comrade Lei Feng is worth following.'



Of the extensive pantheon of Model Workers, Lei Feng is almost certainly the most renowned. To this day the People's Republic celebrates, 'Learn from Lei Feng Day'⁵⁴³ and of all the models that form part of this study he is undoubtedly the most recognisable and memorable. From a young age children are told the story of Lei Feng, the way in which he selflessly dedicated his life to the people and acted as a model citizen. Since the end of the Maoist era his status as a

⁵⁴² Appendix item 3.2, p.405.

⁵⁴³ On this day, the 5th of March, everyone is encouraged to do good works to assist the community in the spirit of Lei Feng.

socialist revolutionary has been muted somewhat, the focus instead shifting towards the good work he did for the community. Whilst the authenticity of Lei Feng and his diary in particular, has been disputed by academics,⁵⁴⁴ his status as an effective instrument of propaganda is self-evident. Aside from the 'Learn from Lei Feng' Day, numerous films were made and the image of Lei was ever present in the form of posters throughout the Maoist era and particularly during the Cultural Revolution. The film was released during the height of a number of propaganda campaigns designed to improve the nation through a greater adherence the 'correct' form of ideology; the Socialist Education Movement and the 'Learn from Comrade Lei Feng' campaign in 1963.⁵⁴⁵

The first attempt to immortalise Lei Feng on celluloid came in 1964. It was produced by the August First Film Studio, directed by Dong Zhaoqi (董兆琪) and starred Dong Jin Tang (董金棠) in the title role. The film is set sometime between 1959 and 1962 when Lei Feng worked in Shenyang as a mechanic for the PLA. By 1964 there was a significant tonal shift in the portrayal of characters on screen. In the earlier films that form part of this study, there was a degree of subtlety in the way in which positive and negative characters were portrayed. In *Lei Feng* this subtlety has been abandoned. The audience is presented with not just an individual to emulate, but a complete idealised version of an inspirational society.⁵⁴⁶ Leyda makes an excellent summary of the film where he states that '*Lei Feng* is so crammed with lessons, sermons and virtuous examples that there is no room for anything else.' He also notes that Lei Feng was one of the first Model Workers to be presented in this way in the cinema. Although the intensity is far greater in *Lei Feng*, similar themes existed in earlier films to lesser or

⁵⁴⁴ H. M. Tanner, *China: A History*, (Hackett Publishing Company, 2009), p.522 and R. Mitter, 'China' in N. J. Cull, D. Culbert & D. Welch, *Propaganda and Mass Persuasion: A Historical Encyclopedia, 1500 to the Present*, (Santa Barbara ABC-CLIO, 2003), pp.73-77.

⁵⁴⁵ Chapter 3, p.126.

⁵⁴⁶ Leyda, p.316.

greater extents. However, Leyda is rather dismissive of popular post-1949 cinema as he tends to focus on films he considers to have artistic rather than propaganda value.

The image and the words of Mao dominate this film. Whereas in earlier Model Worker films he is featured rather sparingly, in *Lei Feng* Mao's image takes centre stage. Billboard posters, busts and his writings all feature heavily. Lei Feng may be the hero of the film, but he walks in the sometimes literal shadow of Mao. Whilst Mao was alive he resisted being portrayed in any documentaries or works of fiction. The perfect revolutionary life exemplified by Lei Feng served to fill this gap. If the Chairman could not be filmed, then Lei Feng, his devoted disciple was the closest alternative. The evidence for this lies in both the reverence with which Mao is displayed in the film and the supplementary propaganda published in the magazine *Dazhong Dianying*.

Plot Summary.

Lei Feng's story begins in Shenyang, the audience witnesses his humble existence working as a technician and helping the community in his spare time. One of the earliest examples of this is the way in which he interacts with children. Throughout each of the films examined, there is a common theme in which children are attracted to PLA soldiers who graciously help to entertain and educate them. There is an almost biblical parallel here as Lei Feng appears similar to Jesus. His uniform shines as he is surrounded by the pure and innocent children.⁵⁴⁷ Similarly to Jesus he tells them parables, although these stories explain the benefits of the socialist Revolution. It is at this point that Lei reveals his background, which neatly serves as an allegory for all of the problems with the old society. He states, 'My father was beaten to death by the

⁵⁴⁷ This is strikingly similar to the gospel of Matthew Chapter 19 verse 14 where Jesus is surrounded by children and indicates that heaven belongs to them. Similarly, Lei Feng is surrounded by children, their future secured by the victory of the Revolution.

Japanese scoundrels, my-twelve-year old brother died because of the enormous workload imposed upon him by the capitalists, my younger brother was starved to death as my mother held him in her arms. My mother's fate was far more tragic, she was unable to tolerate the attentions of the landlord's young master, she hung herself. I was the only one left in my family.⁵⁴⁸

By 1964 the August First Studio had clearly perfected Mao's call at Yan'an for simplicity in film-making. Lei Feng's story is essentially the model for Model Workers. However, because of the way in which it addresses all the main propaganda points, it arguably makes the tale less believable. Following the retelling of this story the audience is then treated to a day in the life of a Model Worker. Lei Feng goes out of his way to assist others and to help build the community, often at the expense of his own health. There are elements of character development however, but these seem forced compared with earlier cinematic presentations. In *Dong Cunrui* the development of the protagonist is necessary because he is egotistical and obsessed with personal glory. Lei Feng's 'development' is significantly different. Because Lei always acts with the best of intentions, when he is admonished by senior officers and encouraged to study the work of Mao more intensely, the criticism appears to be slightly hollow and mean spirited. From the beginning to the end of the film he serves as a virtually perfect model to all his fellow soldiers. This renders any likelihood of character development questionable.

The plot is essentially serviced through Lei's interplay with those around him. Indeed, the audience is intended to relate to the character of Wang Dali (王大力), a comrade of Lei Feng played by Yang Gui Fa (杨贵发). However, because in this idealised world all citizens are essentially good people, Wang Dali's 'conversion' to the 'correct' way of

⁵⁴⁸ *Lei Feng*, (1964), Directed by Dong Zhaoqi, [Film] China: August First Film Studio, 09:15

thinking after being inspired by Lei, lacks real significance. Indeed, this was one of Jiang Qing's main criticisms of the film, in 'Important Speeches by Comrade Jiang Qing—a great victory for Chairman Mao's revolutionary line in the arts,' she attacked the portrayal of the characters and the presentation of Mao. The veracity of this article is rather difficult to determine as it was allegedly featured in a 'rebel publication' in 1967. The article has been translated by the website 'morningsun.org,' but no source is given for the original version. However, given Jiang Qing's more well documented criticism of other films it seems likely that the quotation has been correctly attributed.⁵⁴⁹ Problems with the film were rectified in a later remake titled, *A Song for Lei Feng*⁵⁵⁰ in which the Wang Dali character is portrayed in a far more negative way, thus making his 'conversion' more striking. There are other considerable differences in style between the two films as Chinese society is depicted in a far less utopian way in the later film; there are more references to the problems the country was undergoing with the Soviet Union. In addition, the society is far less politically united as the film mirrored the reality of the unstable period following the death of Mao.

The plot is primarily used to service the social reform theme. This is because Lei Feng helps others and displays a model character designed to encourage the viewer to correct his or her own behaviour in line with the presented ideal. The film is basically a series of events wherein Lei demonstrates approved and appropriate behaviour. He assists in building construction during his spare time, fixes a broken down bus, donates his salary to a village hit by a flood and anonymously sends money to another soldier's family to assist them during hard times. The film concludes when his closest comrade Wang Dali reads a newspaper report stating that Lei has died in an accident (Fig 6.1).

⁵⁴⁹ Morning Sun. 2016. *Smash the Old World! Jiang Qing Critiques Feature Films* [Online]. [Accessed 29 April 2014]. Available from: http://www.morningsun.org/smash/jq_films.html

⁵⁵⁰ *Lei Feng's Song*, (1979), Directed by Wang Shao Yan, [Film], China: August First Film Studio.

Thematically, the main focus of the film is undoubtedly the social reform element of building a new Chinese nation; however, the message of socialism and the need for national unity remain important themes.

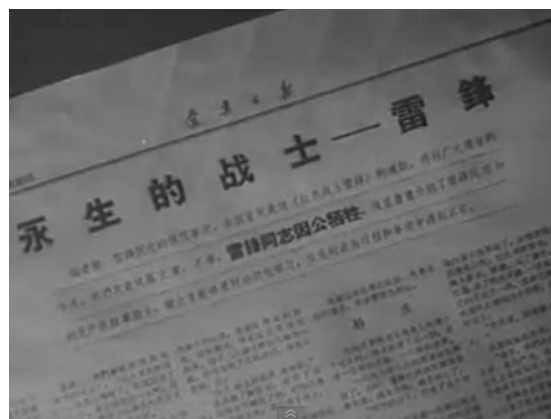


Figure 6.1 – The text reads 'Immortal Soldier: Lei Feng.'

Nationalism.

When *Lei Feng* was released, China was technically at peace. Although the relationship with the Soviet Union had deteriorated it was not yet at its lowest ebb. In addition, the Korean War, the last major conflict with Western Powers ended ten years before. China had entered a period of semi-isolation and beyond a brief mention of Taiwan, there is little comment about other nations. However, in this film the fiery anti-American rhetoric is still very much in place and as with earlier films is linked with Jiang Jieshi. A radio report states that, 'with the support and encouragement of American Imperialism, the gang of Jiang Jieshi occupying Taiwan is preparing for a mass military strike to invade the coastal areas of Mainland China.'⁵⁵¹ After this brief exchange, foreign powers are rarely if ever mentioned. This was considerably different in the later remake released in 1979. The menace of the Soviet Union surfaces at numerous points

⁵⁵¹ *Lei Feng*, 12:25

during the film, perhaps reflecting the changing political relationship between the two countries. Although Lei and his comrades regularly engage in military exercises, the urgency that was apparent in earlier Model Worker films is largely absent. These soldiers may be ready to fight, but of more importance is building the peace that they have won.



Figure 6.2 – Learning from Mao.

The nationalism presented in *Lei Feng* is thus focussed primarily on the concept of nation-building through the reform of society. However, whereas in *Zhao Yiman*, *Liu Hulan*, *Dong Cunrui* and *Huang Baomei* the inspiration for the revival of the nation came from the instruction of the Party, in *Lei Feng* it is the Thought of Mao that is clearly driving changes in society. Pictures of Mao are prominently displayed at various points in the film. In one particularly reverential section Lei enters a room where a shining white bust of Mao, flanked by posters of his writing, lights the room (Fig 6.2). After Lei is appointed as a liaison officer to the Communist Youth League which is in itself an indication of the future of the nation, he walks along a street saluting children. Mao watches this approvingly – from a large street poster (Fig 6.3). Lei Feng and by extension Mao Zedong, are therefore depicted as being in touch with

the future of China. Furthermore, they are the guiding hand by which national success will be achieved.



Figure 6.3 – Mao watches over Lei Feng.

Social Reform.

Whereas Lu Xun's *Ah Q* represented what was wrong with Chinese society, *Lei Feng* offers the model for a more 'correct' future.⁵⁵² The didactic element of *Lei Feng* overshadows all other themes as the audience experiences exemplification of strategies for dealing with the core concepts of social reform identified above. Indeed, *Lei Feng* is the first of the six films clearly designed to give equal status to all six areas of reform. Each of Lei Feng's 'good deeds' shown in the films are designed to address one or more of the following elements of social reform; empathy, community spirit, selflessness, hard work, self-criticism and a desire to fight. These elements are dealt with in a far more instructional way than in earlier films. For example, an investigation of the first element, empathy, demonstrates this. In one scene Lei is going for a walk in the countryside on his day off. He meets an older woman struggling to carry a crying child. By this point a heavy thunderstorm has begun and the grandmother claims she is

⁵⁵² X. Lu, *The Real Story of Ah-Q and Other Tales of China: The Complete Fiction of Lu Xun*, (Penguin Classics, 2009).

travelling to another village twenty miles away. Why she has chosen to travel in such appalling weather is not explained, but Lei is moved by her plight and resolves to help her by carrying her child through the mud soaked fields and torrential rain. With his task complete he slips away before he can be thanked, content in the knowledge that he has done the right thing. At a stroke, Lei has displayed qualities of empathy, community spirit and selflessness.

The theme of selflessness is further developed and combined with the concept of 'self-criticism' when the political Commissar attached to Lei's unit tests his knowledge of Mao's work. He directly references Zhang Side⁵⁵³, Huang Jiguang (黄继光)⁵⁵⁴ and finally Dong Cunrui. Lei is thus linked with other Chinese soldiers who had sacrificed themselves, supressing their own desire for importance for the greater good of the community. However, whereas the others had allegedly been inspired by the Party and the Revolution to sublimate themselves, for Lei it's all about Mao. He states, 'After reading the works of Chairman Mao, I perceive it deeply that for the revolutionary undertaking, a person functions as a screen in a machine, I am willing to be a stainless and revolutionary screw.'⁵⁵⁵

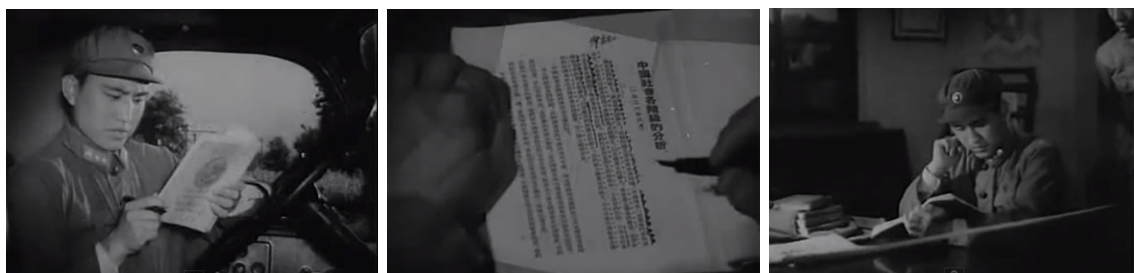


Figure 6.4 – Studying the work of Mao.

⁵⁵³ A soldier who died when a charcoal kiln fell on him in 1944.

⁵⁵⁴ A soldier who sacrificed himself in combat during the Korean War. He was part of the inspiration for the film version of the battle of Shang Gan Ling.

⁵⁵⁵ *Lei Feng*, 19:00

The film contains a number of montages wherein Lei studies the work of Mao, (Fig 6.4). These sequences function almost as quasi advertising for the 'Selected Works' as the audience sees the way in which Lei's life has improved by following its precepts. Indeed, the regularity in which Mao's work is displayed bears some resemblance to 'product placement' in more modern films. Shortly after Lei's realisation that everything he does should be for the community, he is given the opportunity to prove himself. Whilst taking a break from his job, he overhears that there are problems at a local construction site. Despite suffering from a cold he hurries to help the workers, another common theme in Model Worker films, as noted in *Liu Hulan*. During this section he once again demonstrates what is required of a modern Chinese citizen dedicated to building the socialist society. He works extremely hard for the community as he assists in construction of the building. When asked to identify himself, he avoids doing so, preferring his good work to be anonymous. It is not enough for the propagandists at the August 1st Film Company to make this point implicit. In order that there is no confusion or doubt, a journalist makes a radio broadcast to ensure that the audience is without any uncertainty. She states, 'A soldier comes here to join in our voluntary work during his relaxation time. In addition, he is sick. But what deserves the most appreciation is that he doesn't want to reveal his name and the number of his unit. The leaders call for all the employees to learn from this comrade PLA soldier.'⁵⁵⁶

Lei Feng's desire to fight is clear from the outset, his background narrative is used to justify his longing to fight for the 'New China.' Lei Feng may not have died a spectacular heroic death like Dong Cunrui, but the film studio clearly intended the masses to believe that by emulating him, which in turn would mean emulating Mao, they could all be heroes.

⁵⁵⁶ Ibid, 29:00.

Socialism and Supplementary Propaganda.

The society illustrated in *Lei Feng*, is based upon one simple conclusion; socialism was established and society was on the verge of harmony. As in earlier films there are few discussions about the benefits of socialism or revolution, instead they are presented visually. Everywhere is clean, the people are friendly and polite and appear to want for nothing. There appears to be no social stratification and the whole of society appears to be functioning as a unified family. Indeed, when Wang Dali visits his mother and expresses concerns about her health she states, 'don't worry, people in the community all care about me.'⁵⁵⁷ Discussions about money are only included to demonstrate how irrelevant it had become to society with the focus instead shifting to the message of making good use of resources, Lei states, 'life in our unit is satisfying, money is of no use to me.'⁵⁵⁸

It is however made clear that this utopian society has been achieved through Maoist principles and means. It is interesting to note that when *Lei Feng* was being made, Chinese society was retreating from the policies Mao had instigated during the Great Leap Forward. Liu Shaoqi had initiated a New Economic Policy that was designed to restore central control to economic planning and reverse Maoist ideas. However, although at this stage Mao was politically on the retreat, his connection with Lin Biao, who was head of the military, meant that his ideas still dominated the army, which in turn controlled the August First Film Studio and by 1963 a 'Learn from the PLA' campaign had been launched as part of Mao's Socialist Education Movement.⁵⁵⁹ *Lei Feng* was thus used to promote the Maoist 'brand' of socialist development.

⁵⁵⁷ Ibid, 1:09:43

⁵⁵⁸ Ibid, 1:04:29.

⁵⁵⁹ Chapter 3, p.126.

This 'brand' development was assisted by articles published in *Dazhong Dianying*. Lei Feng featured as both a cover star and appeared in a number of colour advertisements.⁵⁶⁰ In addition, in an article written by 'soldier Tan Yongshan', published in 1965 entitled 'Chairman Mao's work is "food, weapon and steering wheel," the reader can see the extent to which the real focus of *Lei Feng* was Mao himself. This short article mentions Mao twenty-three times, whilst Lei Feng is referenced just twelve times. Whilst earlier articles allowed for criticism and debate regarding the portrayal of characters and film plots, this article simply rephrases the basic message of the film. If citizens work hard, do not give up and follow the Chairman's words then they will receive 'endless power' that will guide the country to great success.⁵⁶¹ The article itself functions as effective propaganda and is a means by which the social reform agenda could be further perpetuated. The author discusses his own journey towards enlightenment and makes a series of critical statements about his own life that were designed to resonate with the readership. The article contains little to no discussion of the film itself. The main focus is the propaganda message that the film-makers intended the audience to absorb. By following Mao's ideas, the individual could become great, and by extension, the nation.

Conclusion.

In conclusion, the development of post-revolutionary propaganda was clearly intended to answer the question of how China could once again be 'great.' Chinese cinema was clearly influenced by a desire to remould not just existing Chinese society, but also to

⁵⁶⁰ Appendix item 1.8.

⁵⁶¹ T. Yongshan, 'Chairman Mao's work is "food, weapon and steering wheel.'" *Dazhong Dianying*, Issue 23, (1965).

provide a re-evaluation of the historic past. This re-evaluation was designed to counter the perceived continuous 'humiliation' by foreign powers since the late 19th century and allow the Chinese people to regain pride in themselves again. Chinese scholars of the late 19th century had been forced to consider the possible reasons for China's decline from its position of dominance; the propagandists of the 1950s delivered a heady, culturally nationalist antidote to their findings.

This antidote was to contain a number of elements, shaped by the words of Mao in the three key articles noted in Chapter 1.⁵⁶² Firstly, and most importantly, was the concept of social reform. Earlier scholars questioned the reasons for China's decline and focussed on both structural and more material reasons. Liang Qichao had spoken of the need for a 'New Citizen' to take China forward and Mao continued this work by offering ways in which the people could improve themselves. In the propaganda films that form part of this study, it is possible to observe the way in which the propagandists used the Model Worker as a means to solve this problem for the benefit of the nation as a whole. This was a developing theme that would find its apex with the establishment of Lei Feng as the ultimate symbol of the new ideal citizen.

The second element was the way in which adversaries were presented. In each of the films studied, there is a very clear line that exists between the oppressed and their oppressors. This line became clearer in successive films as representations of those who collaborated with the enemy became less and less complex. Undoubtedly one of the reasons why the *The Life of Wu Xun* was so poorly received by Mao was because its heroes and villains were so poorly defined. Liang Qichao had written about the battle for the survival of Chinese civilization; it is clear that propagandists had in mind a

⁵⁶² Chapter 1, pp.15-20.

certain type of citizen that would fight to guarantee this survival. Consequently, depictions of this ideal became less and less complex as the decade reached its conclusion. In earlier films adversaries and collaborators were given a voice by which they could condemn themselves or by which the audience could perhaps understand their actions. Later films dispensed with this device and instead followed a more binary formula of good versus a more faceless evil. Indeed, one of the defining characteristics of the enemies that feature is the way in which they were portrayed as being particularly sub-human. Conceivably, this fulfilled two functions, firstly to thoroughly demonise those who opposed the People's Republic and secondly to help further define the humanity of the Model Worker and the way in which the new nation was morally superior. It is perhaps interesting to note that in films presenting the Civil War, Chinese nationals who were serving the Guomindang are either never seen or are closely associated with the hated Japanese. Thus, it is made clear that they are not an authentic part of the Chinese nation. In each film, from *Zhao Yiman* (1951) to *Lei Feng* (1964), Jiang Jieshi personifies this trend as whenever he is mentioned it is always in collaboration with the foreign enemy.

The final part of the nationalist 'antidote' was the promotion of socialism. As stated above, it is clear that at the very least it could be claimed that one of the reasons for Mao's adherence to Marxism was as a means to make China a great power once again. Mao came to power in the CCP by displacing Wang Ming (王明), an advocate of Soviet socialism. He used his time in power crafting his own version of socialism which he believed would be the most effective for China.' This version of socialism was designed to return the country to its former illustrious position as quickly as possible. Mao's insistence that the message of socialism presented through propaganda must be simple and easy to understand for the masses, clearly influenced the films of this era,

particularly those that form part of this study. In reality, socialism as a concept is rarely if ever explored or explained. References are made to land reform and the equality of the people in earlier films, but they are largely ignored in later films. The focus clearly shifts to what was to be expected of an ideal socialist citizen.

The use of Model Workers to promote certain ideas or a way of life was hardly a new concept, but why did Chinese propagandists embrace it to such a great extent? The politics of Chinese nationalism are complex, but with regard to Model Workers they featured three interesting concepts; iconoclasm, rebounding from humiliation and unification of the people. In consideration of these themes, the Model Worker was believed to be the ideal agent of change. The concept provided an ideal canvas upon which the propaganda department of the CCP were able to paint their vision of what the ideal 'New Citizen' should be. Film in particular gave the propaganda department the opportunity to depict historical events as they arguably would have liked them to have been and to remove elements of Chinese culture (iconoclasm) that were believed to be unsuitable. In addition, the actions of the Model Workers presented in these films were 'enhanced' (rebounding from humiliation). This was so that they might better serve to counter not just the social problems that Lu Xun believed existed in society, but also to demonstrate the inherent worth of the people. Finally, the didactic power of the Model Worker in films such as *Huang Baomei* and *Lei Feng* served to not only provide a model for unity of the people, but also, ironically and in almost a Confucian way, highlighted how individuals could better serve themselves, the wider society (their new family) and their Chairman (the nation).

Cinema was an ideal medium by which these ideas could be conveyed. The importance of this method is evident in the way in which it developed and also the way in which

any deviations from the formula were met with severe criticism, as demonstrated above in articles by Mao himself and in the film magazine *Dazhong Dianying*. Following the nationalization and eventual purge of the film industry, it was inevitable that the Model Worker theme would dominate Chinese cinema. Those who had been at Yan'an and had studied Mao's work were ideally placed to fulfil his vision of how the perfection of Chinese culture would be achieved. As Mao's vision of how to create a perfect China evolved, so did portrayals of the perfect Model Worker. Heroes such as Zhao Yiman and Liu Hulan demonstrated optimism for a more egalitarian future whilst Dong Cunrui represented the uncertainty, but optimism of the post-Revolutionary period. Finally, representations of Lei Feng, demonstrate the extent to which the society had begun to move towards a utopian ideal of simplistic socialism, which formed the base upon which cultural nationalism could be built; the quest to make the nation great once again.

Chapter 5 – A multimedia campaign, Post-1949 Poster Propaganda and the Model Worker.

Introduction.

China's model workers were part of a truly multimedia propaganda campaign. Through the use of cinema, posters, ideological documents and comic books, the message of their lives was delivered to the population along a variety of different trajectories. This message was tightly controlled and the strengths of each medium were exploited for maximum effect. Whilst the use of cinema propaganda gained considerable traction in the mid to late 1950s, it was 'the poster' that formed the opening salvo of the CCP's propaganda campaign. Cheap to produce and easy to distribute, it was the ideal medium upon which the CCP could disseminate its message to the public. In addition, the visual nature of the poster meant that problems of illiteracy could be largely sidestepped. The poster was thus an essential component in promoting the Model Worker to the masses. Whilst the 1950s saw a general standardisation of the form, it is important to consider how 'the poster' matured to the point that it dominated Chinese propaganda. In this chapter I will firstly explore key concepts related to the development of poster propaganda. This will include insight from my interview with the director of the Shanghai Propaganda Poster Art Centre, Yang Peiming, who aided greatly in my understanding of specific poster propaganda techniques. Following this analysis, I will examine a series of posters representing the different classes of the People's Democratic Dictatorship epitomised by Zhao Yiman, Liu Hulan, Dong Cunrui, Huang Baomei and Lei Feng. My purpose is to demonstrate that representations of these models in poster form worked in conjunction with film depictions to ensure a

unified propaganda message based on the values of nationalism, social reform and the development of socialism.

The early use of the poster and the adoption of the 'nianhua' style is the point from which an examination of poster propaganda must begin. This artistic style had been used over several centuries in China to create works designed to celebrate the coming of the new lunar year.⁵⁶³ They were an expression of cultural ideals promoted by Confucian schools of thought. These posters were exceptionally popular and were usually hung inside the homes of people, a practice that is still common to this day. 'Nianhua' had considerable social and cultural significance. Its significance was so great that it was deemed necessary to use it as a base from which early CCP propaganda could be developed. Although these 'nianhua' posters were not typically used to depict heroes of the Revolution, they were a safe form of experimentation for artists adapting to the new demands of the CCP. Indeed, once the CCP had consolidated its domination of the main artistic centres of the country, artists in training were required to take a course in 'propaganda painting.' During these courses, they were trained in techniques for the artistic representation of Model Workers, Liu Hulan was frequently used as one such model.⁵⁶⁴ Once the artists had successfully mastered the content of this course they were then allowed to move on to other artistic projects. The CCP's desire to create not simply their own understanding of culture, but also to emphasise the importance of the people in China's history is evident here. The practice described above is not so dissimilar to Renaissance artists and the way in which they mastered their craft by painting scenes with religious significance. For the CCP, artists would follow a similar process, by glorifying home-grown heroes of the Revolution. This is seen in the

⁵⁶³ For further details regarding the origin of the 'nianhua' poster see Appendix Item 3.1, p.396.

⁵⁶⁴ J. Andrews, *Painters and Politics in the People's Republic of China*, (University of California Press, 1994), p.221.

development of propaganda posters in which an understanding of 'nianhua' provides a greater contextual perspective.

It is also important to consider the debate regarding 'form' and the employment of artistic technique. This question is critically important because it fundamentally affects two specific issues regarding the deployment of posters. The first of these being the political/nationalist reasons for the choice of a specific style and secondly the reasons why these styles were deemed to be an effective form of propaganda. There was considerable debate surrounding the style to be adopted. This was further complicated by the success of the modified 'nianhua.' The CCP had promoted a variant of a traditional style through their use of 'nianhua,' however, this style was largely incompatible with the stylistic expectations of the urban proletariat, who had become accustomed to the more western influenced 'Shanghai Style.' In addition, the need to conform to the Soviet Union's adoption of Socialist Realism added a further complication. This style was, however, eventually established and adopted by artists, who then worked in accordance with specific themes.

Generally, the posters under consideration come under the following two analytic themes: a direct appeal to patriotism and the creation of inspiration, meaning the encouragement of people to emulate the role model. In addition, there are examples of the continuously changing enemy, firstly identified as the Japanese and then the forces of imperialism and their 'Guomindang lackeys.' Moreover, the all-pervasive themes of the idealisation of the people's role in the past and in the future of the nation were extremely dominant. These themes will be considered taking into account the overall propaganda aims discussed in my cinema section, that is of nationalism, social reform and the promotion of socialism.

Of considerable importance is the use of language in specific posters. The CCP established a clearly identifiable lexicon that was commonly used in visual propaganda. The development of this process will be considered. Finally, the reasons for choosing specific posters for analysis will be explored. Each Model Worker had a number of posters dedicated either specifically to him or her, or in partnership with another model. The reasons for this will be considered. The selected posters will then be critically examined taking into consideration the analytic themes outlined above. The position of 'the poster' in the CCP's overall propaganda strategy for the Model Worker will be detailed.

Before I examine the development of Chinese poster propaganda, a broader question must be posited. Are political posters an art form? This is a question that has preoccupied many collectors and historians since the dawn of the modern poster era in the late 19th Century.⁵⁶⁵ Universally, posters have been used to advertise ideas and products. In addition, they have been used as a vehicle of protest and to promote both unity and division in different societies throughout the world. Their artistic value has been questioned, but there is one aspect, as detailed by the former principal of the Chelsea School of Art, John Barnicoat, that makes them uniquely compatible with the mission of the CCP. The way in which posters are generally presented makes them wholly suitable to be described as being, 'The People's Art.' There is little or no barrier to entry for poster art, viewers do not have to pay an entrance fee to view the works, neither do they have to wait for exhibitions before they can gain access to the ideas implicit within the poster.⁵⁶⁶ They can be cheaply produced and viewed by large sections of the population. Whilst Chinese propaganda posters can be criticised on an

⁵⁶⁵ J. Barnicoat, *Posters A Concise History*, (Thames and Hudson, 1972).

⁵⁶⁶ Ibid p.12.

artistic level, the question of whether they were art or simply political persuasion is largely irrelevant. With his proclamation at Yan'an that all art was politically motivated, Mao appears to have answered this question.⁵⁶⁷ Despite his insistence that artists should be free to experiment with styles and designs following the Revolution, what was to follow was to be extremely prescribed. This was to have a tremendous impact on the Model Worker campaigns that were to run through the post-Revolutionary era. Artists such as Xu Jiping and Zhou Jun (周军) who were responsible for depicting martyrs of China's ongoing Revolution, had to consider, not simply whether their work had artistic value, but more importantly, whether they were using a style that had political approval. For it was not just the content of the message that mattered to Chinese propagandists, but also the medium.

The method of production for Chinese art was, in itself, an extremely politically loaded problem. I choose the words 'method of production' because of the mechanistic way in which posters were produced. As will become apparent when individual posters are analysed, production was designed to function as efficiently as possible, hence the similarities in style that exists between different artists. This was primarily for the promotion of nationalist ideology as the CCP struggled to decide what was an acceptable 'national form.' Once a style had been chosen and accepted, it became a standard which other posters were expected to meet. The issue of 'National Form' was a critical problem as more traditional forms of Chinese art were not wholly compatible with the eventual adoption of socialist realism. Earlier examples of 'nianhua' are evidence of this as artists struggled to portray either the people or those who ruled them. Artists had been more used to producing landscapes and other types of images,

⁵⁶⁷ Z. Mao, *Selected Readings from the Works of Mao Tse-Tung*, (Foreign Language Press Peking, 1967), p.224.

according to tradition. Indeed, even the way in which artists were trained had to undergo considerable changes. The CCP's extensive propaganda plans required a great number of artists for the plans to be achieved. Consequently, the more traditional method of training, that is, the 'master-pupil' arrangement, was hardly suitable for producing large numbers of suitable artists to fulfil the demands of the propaganda department.

Whilst the techniques of poster production were under review at this stage, the desired propaganda message most certainly was not. Earlier documents detailing the production of posters commonly expressed the following sentiments, 'Expressing their love for the country, all the able-bodied peasants in that province have organised themselves into Self-Protection Corps, ready to fight the Japanese should the latter dare to set their feet upon their soil.... And all the farmers that have thus risen to arms love members of the Artists War Publicity Corps for their art and patriotism and call them their "comrades."'⁵⁶⁸

One of the main propaganda aims of the CCP following their victory in 1949 was to reinforce the idea that it was the sole protector of the Chinese people. Statements similar to the one above were woven into propaganda material. For example, heroic Model Workers utter them before entering into battle against the Japanese. However, the above statement was not made by the CCP propaganda department, it was created by the Guomindang and was part of an article discussing 'Wall Posters' during the Sino-Japanese conflict. I include this statement here to demonstrate the extent to which the nationalist element of Chinese propaganda during the post-Revolutionary era was not

⁵⁶⁸ 'Wall Posters in China,' *News Release, China Information Committee, Chungking, China*, Number 326, 27 January (1939) pp.2116-2117. Available at: chinese posters.net. 1939. *Wall Posters in China*. [ONLINE] Available at: <http://chinese posters.net/resources/news-release-1939-01-27.php>. [Accessed 30 April 2014].

far removed from that which had come before. The CCP may have brought a revolution in control of the means of propaganda dissemination and control of the message, but elements of the message were unchanged. As I will demonstrate a little later, the threads of nationalism were woven into post-1949 revolutionary rhetoric, but their origin can be found in these earlier documents.

The desire for the Chinese nation to be seen as 'winners,' able to stand up to the superior military force of foreign nations can be seen in early propaganda posters during the Sino-Japanese conflict of 1937 to 1945. Later depictions of Model Workers standing tall against the enemy have, I would argue, their origin in earlier Guomindang sanctioned works, such as that of Mr Kao Lung Sheng whose cartoon titled 'Looking Up' depicted a giant Jiang Jieshi dwarfing a rather diminutive Japanese Emperor (see figure 1.1).



Figure 1.1 - 'Looking up' - Kao Lung-sheng (1939).

For this theme, Post-Revolutionary propaganda was to follow a similar structure, although with the national leader replaced by the heroes of the People. The message however remained the same; China was a land of strength, with heroes ready and able to defend it against incursions by evil foreign powers. The goal for CCP propagandists

was however, slightly different. They were attempting to prove that it was the people that had worth, not simply the leadership of the country.

Practically, poster propaganda had proven to be one of the most efficient forms of information dissemination at the disposal of the CCP during their time vying for power with the Guomindang. Following the ‘Chang Zheng’ (长征) - Long March (October 1933 to October 1935), CCP propagandists lacked the resources to be able to make use of cinema and other more technically complicated forms of media. This was to benefit the CCP as the people they were attempting to influence were based primarily in the countryside. These people were largely illiterate and had no access to modern technology of the time; conceivably they were more susceptible to simpler forms of propaganda. Posters were already a mainstay of the Chinese household in the form of the above noted ‘nianhua.’ It was through their adaptation of ‘nianhua’ that CCP propagandists were to have their first real successes in public relations. The propagandists took existing nianhua styles and altered them by depicting socialist values instead of the ones traditionally promoted. As can be seen in figure 1.2 the existing style was based primarily on the promotion of harmony and the ideal environment. The CCP message was significantly different, as can be seen in figure 1.3.



Figure 1.2 - 'Plenty of Food' (Qing Dynasty Era).



Figure 1.3 - 'Learn to Read and Write.' (date unknown).

Figure 1.2 is a stylised picture showing four children posing in a scene of harmony. The two children are holding vases, one contains a lotus flower meant to symbolise peace and happiness whilst the second contains peony, meant to represent wealth. The composition of the picture, the clothing and the colour suggests order, harmony and affluence. The text 'Wugu Fengdeng' (五谷丰登) - 'A bumper grain harvest' is surrounded by heavenly clouds. By contrast, the later CCP designed nianhua features an entirely different type of social situation and activity. The figures that make up the second poster (figure 1.3) are placed in a far more egalitarian arrangement. Whereas in the earlier Qing dynasty nianhua, the children are preoccupied with an apparently trivial

activity, the peasants in the later CCP nianhua are focussed entirely on self-improvement through education. In the earlier Qing nianhua the people are presented wearing luxurious clothes. By contrast, the peasants in the CCP poster are clothed in practical garments, but are far from poverty stricken. Of significance is the red star that features at the centre of poster. The text and title of the poster states, 'Xue Wenhua' (学文化) - 'learn to read and write' whilst the writing on the chalkboard states that 'we will not be the peasants who blindly follow the Revolution,' the implication being that they will study and fully understand it.

However, the artistic style was strikingly similar. Although it is extremely difficult to gauge the effectiveness of these propaganda posters as data related to audience feedback is very limited, it is clear that this style must have been believed to be effective as the CCP produced the posters in large numbers. In my interview with the director of the Shanghai Propaganda Art Centre, Yang Peiming argued that audience feedback was not a consideration, primarily because there were so many new propaganda campaigns. He argues that there was insufficient time to gauge effectiveness of specific posters because of the relentless pace of new campaigns and the pressure departments were under to produce material.⁵⁶⁹ The early use of nianhua was logical as although the pictures had generally been Confucian in nature and although they did not overtly give instructions on how to behave, they still offered ideas of norms expected in society. Stefan Landsberger argues that these prints were used to promote good luck or to ward off evil spirits.⁵⁷⁰ However, it is clear that they were also designed to promote Confucian values. As Landsberger notes, 'nianhua' art presented scenes of the opulent lives of rich people and the spectacular houses within which they lived. This was perhaps

⁵⁶⁹ Appendix item 3.1, p.396.

⁵⁷⁰ S. R. Landsberger, *Paint it Red*, (Groningen: Intermed Publishers, 1998), pp.23-37

intended to indicate that it was because of Confucian values that people could achieve such social success. However, nianhua had one significant flaw. It hardly matched the image of a modern, revolutionary Party, one intent on creating a new world. It may have suited the audience in the countryside, but it was unlikely to be appreciated by one of the main groups from which the CCP wished to win support; the proletariat of cities such as Shanghai.



Figure 1.4 - 'swan cigarettes' (1943 approx.), Figure 1.5 - 'The Great Eastern Dispensary Ltd.' (1930 approx.)

Shanghai in particular, had become a testing ground for advertising in urban China. The influence of foreign advertising meant that citizens had been exposed to a different, more commercial form, which became popularly described as 'Shanghai Style.' However, following on from the Revolution, it was deemed unsuitable for use with Party Propaganda. As can be seen from figures 1.4 and 1.5 it is not difficult to see why. Although the style is bright, colourful and realistic, the use of woman in somewhat suggestive poses was clearly incompatible with Communist ideological propaganda. However, of more importance was the political background for the change in style.

Nianhua was not regarded as being suitable for the cities. Although enjoyed the by the proletariat, the 'Shanghai Style' was too western in form. Politically it was inconceivable that this style could be adopted by the CCP. This was not simply because of the more risqué nature of the art, as this could have been ameliorated, but because politically it was expedient to follow the lead of the new nation's main benefactor, the Soviet Union.

By adopting the Soviet style of 'Socialist Realism' the CCP could guarantee inward Soviet investment in the artistic sphere. Indeed, Beijing's Art academy began to follow the work of Pavel Petrovich Chistiakov believing it to be 'scientific, systematic, and successful at raising standards.'⁵⁷¹ Socialist Realism was ideally suited to echoing the 'nianhua' print, but with a more modern style and its superstitious elements removed. The adoption of Socialist Realism was inevitable, because despite Mao's desire to create a fusion with past artistic traditions or modernisation of Chinese art, many artists were far more iconoclastic in their aspirations for the future of the form.

This was to have a considerable impact on the way in which Model Workers were depicted in poster propaganda as a more Internationalist style was adopted. It was only natural that the CCP would wish to continue emulating the Soviet Union. Aside from the shared ideological perspective at that time, there was a great historical precedence for cooperation between the two nations with respect to artistic undertakings. However, pre-revolutionary documents reveal a slightly different approach by the Guomindang than the CCP to cooperation with the Soviet Union. In documents released by the 'China Information Committee,' a department within the Guomindang's Ministry of Information, released on the 13th of April 1939, the government's strategy is clear.

⁵⁷¹ Andrews, p.136.

Undoubtedly because of the plight that had befallen the nation resulting from the continuing war with the Japanese, examples of propaganda were sent from China to the Soviet Union in order that the war of resistance could be better understood. The anonymous author from the 'China Information Committee' mentions how woodcuts and cartoons were sent for display for exhibition in the Soviet Union. This document would seem to indicate that cultural exchange was less one way at this time, as Soviet citizens were encouraged to learn of China's plight through the medium of art. By contrast and subsequent to the Revolution, the Chinese learned, through the examples of Socialist Realist art, of a possible bright future if they adopted the examples of the Soviet Union. There were however, a number of considerable differences in the execution of this art form; Chinese styles were far more relentlessly optimistic than their Soviet counterparts.

Chinese Cultural Historian Chang-Tai Hung states that a number of propaganda posters were rejected by the authorities because they were considered to be too 'gloomy' and not optimistic enough.⁵⁷² Indeed, despite the call to use the 'socialist realism' style, anything that realistically detailed the horrors of war was rejected. This was to have a considerable impact on the presentation of Model Workers in poster propaganda. One of the central themes of the model was the way in which they were willing to sacrifice themselves. It was thus a challenge for the artist to present this sacrifice in a positive and meaningful way. Artists had, however, already had some experience in producing optimistic propaganda through their involvement with the nianhua movement; the shift towards the adoption of 'optimistic socialist realism' was a natural step in this direction and was fully implemented by the mid 1950s.⁵⁷³

⁵⁷² C.T. Hung, 'Oil Paintings and Politics: Weaving a Heroic Tale of the Chinese Communist Revolution,' *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, Vol. 49, No. 4 Oct, (2007), pp.783-814.

⁵⁷³ Appendix item 3.1, p.396.

The architect of this shift in style, Jiang Feng (江丰), had implemented the use of the 'nianhua' style for poster propaganda in order that the peasants be swayed to the Communist's cause during the Revolutionary period. His use of nianhua for political purposes would initially seem to suggest that he agreed with Mao's beliefs, that more traditional Chinese forms of art could be 'reformed' and improved, but not extinguished. However, Jiang Feng's outlook was far more radical than Mao's, as noted by Julia Andrews. His conception of artistic creation was thus, as paraphrased by Andrews, 'that Western realism was scientific and, therefore, the only appropriate means of reflecting the life and ideals of modern people.'⁵⁷⁴ Nianhua and the appropriation of former styles had been useful for propaganda purposes, but without significant modifications it was not to be the future of Chinese art. Jiang Feng's contribution to the development of art during the early stages of the People's Republic is exceptionally important as he laid the groundwork upon which styles and themes should be built and the system by which they would be implemented. His fate also goes some way to demonstrate how political the importance of artistic direction was for the CCP as later he fell out of favour. This was almost certainly because of his internationalist outlook, which clashed with Mao's mission to create a re-invigorated China, not simply a country that was part of an international socialist brotherhood. He was highly critical of any attempts to 'rehabilitate' older Chinese art forms, because he believed that this was simply prolonging the life of something he considered to be both redundant and irrelevant in modern China.

From a reading of earlier official sources, it would appear that the decision to follow Soviet styles was inevitable, in part because of a belief that the Soviets were the most

⁵⁷⁴ Andrews, p.23.

advanced in all forms of cultural and scientific development. Whilst in public, this may have been the official line, in private it appears that artists had more misgivings about following the Soviet style, although this is disputed by the director of the Shanghai Propaganda Art Centre, Yang Peiming. He argues that the artists were very enthusiastic about taking on propaganda work.⁵⁷⁵ Artist Li Shaomin, who was later to paint Mao after his death, was in retrospect extremely scathing of the Soviet style of art. He argues, in contrast to Jiang Feng that Socialist Realism was far from being 'the only appropriate means of reflecting the life and ideals of modern people.' In an article detailing his time painting a portrait of Mao he also gives a frank appraisal of the CCP's relationship with art. He argues that the Soviet style adopted by the CCP was far from revolutionary or modern and was indeed 'old-fashioned and retrograde.'⁵⁷⁶ It must however be taken into consideration that Li Shaomin was not actively involved in the artistic scene at the time when policy decisions were being made. Furthermore, although he painted an officially sanctioned portrait of Mao he was later to become a dissident and his account is thus highly subjective. However, his assertion that artists in China 'had virtually no freedom in form or style,' would appear to be valid.⁵⁷⁷

The control of the system of artistic production in China after the Revolution clearly demonstrates how important the CCP considered it to be with regard to propaganda, but also as a potential vehicle for dissenters. Posters were produced on a regional level, but strictly followed political trends from the key centre in Beijing. Consequently, although artistic styles may have varied slightly, the political message would remain the same.⁵⁷⁸ All poster production would go through three levels of control as each publishing house

⁵⁷⁵ Appendix item 3.1, p.396.

⁵⁷⁶ S. Li, 'My Life as an Art Soldier in Mao's China: Art and Politics,' *Modern China Studies* Vol. 18, No. 2, (2011), p.62.

⁵⁷⁷ Ibid.

⁵⁷⁸ Appendix item 3.1, p.396.

had to adhere to controls at the office level, publishing house and city propaganda office levels. Each poster had to have a publishing license number, without which the poster would not be permitted for printing.⁵⁷⁹ Shanghai, the centre of modern art in China was essentially stripped of its position as the CCP relocated the central art academy to Beijing, presumably to maintain closer supervision. Shanghai was not granted any particular academy or institute and instead the smaller nearby city of Hangzhou was chosen to host a large art academy. However, museum director, Yang Peiming disputes this interpretation as he argues that although a centre was established in Hangzhou, Shanghai was still a location of considerable importance where artists associations were set up to engage in poster production. Yang argues that because Shanghai had the most advanced printing presses in China, it was logical that poster production should be undertaken in the city as the machines had already been imported, primarily from Europe. After printing, posters were then distributed to other regions. Yang states that a large quantity of resources were put into the production of posters. These resources were not just financial, but also included foodstuffs as wheat was required to create sticking paste for the paper.⁵⁸⁰ Yang's account of production methods is persuasive as moving all the equipment and building new factories would, following the aftermath of the Civil War, been prohibitively expensive. Whilst artists did move to the Hangzhou academy, production remained in Shanghai. The importance of control is clear in the speed by which these events took place. It was not until 1932 that artistic creation was centralized in the Soviet Union; for the CCP it was achieved immediately.⁵⁸¹ These developments in poster production were to have a lasting impact on the way in which Model Workers were utilised for propaganda purposes, as I shall now explore.

⁵⁷⁹ Ibid.

⁵⁸⁰ Appendix item 3.1, p.395.

⁵⁸¹ Hung, p.811.

Zhao Yiman.

As one of the earliest films to employ the Model Worker template, *Zhao Yiman* was, as I have discussed in Chapter 4, riddled with concerns related to both presentation and message.⁵⁸² As the film was one of the first produced, this may have been a contributory reason for its relatively poor reception. However, this was only part of the reason for the difficulties that plagued *Zhao Yiman*. Of greater importance was Zhao's position in the alliance of workers, peasants, petty-bourgeoisie and intellectuals. Whilst not part of the most troublesome petty-bourgeoisie class, she was a member of the politically contentious 'National Bourgeoisie' or 'intellectual' class. As noted in Chapter 1, Zhao's position made her ideal in order to serve as a Model in the promotion of the alliance of the People's Democratic Dictatorship.⁵⁸³ However, even at this stage, her social class was not fully trusted by the new government and consequently, depictions of those persons connected with the 'National Bourgeoisie' were, politically, rather sensitive. The life of Zhao Yiman may have inspired a film version, but her presence in the poster propaganda is extremely sparse. Zhao was, after all, not a member of the favoured 'soldier-worker-peasant' grouping. There was a very real concern that if resistance to the new government were to flourish, it would emanate from the National Bourgeoisie, primarily because of their pre-revolutionary activity and involvement with alternative ideologies of liberation. The fact that intellectuals such as Zhao were treated with such caution would help to explain the scarcity of poster propaganda related to her. Zhao may have been part of the alliance of the People's Democratic Dictatorship, but it was not the part favoured by the leadership.

⁵⁸² Chapter 4, p.164.

⁵⁸³ Chapter 1, p.21, Chapter 2, p.35.

The extent to which political and class considerations played a part in the promotion of her as a Model Worker, can be seen in the volume of posters produced before and after Mao's death. From 1949 until the early 1980s it is extremely difficult to find examples of Zhao in poster form. It was during this period that the intellectual class were first cautiously embraced, then tolerated and finally marginalised entirely. However, following Mao's death, the values of the intellectual class began to be restored and Zhao's status as a Model seems to have increased considerably. The extent to which propaganda posters have been successful is always rather difficult to gauge in China. However, by an analysis of the aspects of design that remained consistent from 1945-1965, it is possible to determine the extent to which some elements were, perhaps, believed to be the most effective. However, because of the scarcity of poster depictions of Zhao Yiman during the 1949-1965 period this is difficult to conclusively prove.

Because of the dearth of material, I have decided to structure this section slightly differently to that of the other Model Workers. Firstly, I will examine two posters, in accordance with the propaganda values of nationalism, social reform and the development of socialism. This will be undertaken with respect to the following criteria; content analysis, visual analysis, contextual information and interpretation. Secondly, I will make a brief examination of a poster from the post-Mao era. Whilst this may appear to be outside the remit of this thesis, it is perhaps instructive as the reader may gain some insight into how images of Zhao continued to portray her as a member of the military forces, rather than as a member of the National Bourgeoisie. In addition, through a brief analysis of this poster, it is possible to gauge the extent to which aspects of the core mission of the Model Worker, the promotion of nationalism, social reform and the development of socialism, continued to persist following the demise of its architect, Mao Zedong in 1976.



Figure 2.1 - Film Promotion Poster. (1950).

Figure 2.1 was originally intended to serve as a companion propaganda piece for the promotion of the film *Zhao Yiman*. There are elements here that continue to promote the overall aim of the Model Worker concept and it is thus worth attention. However, this poster also differs from the others that form part of this study in another significant way. In other posters the artist created his own depiction of the subject. The designer of this poster is unknown. In Figure 2.1, use is made of still images from the film *Zhao Yiman*. Colour has been added to the images and they have been arranged deliberately

to emphasise key aspects of the plot and the message that the propaganda department was attempting to impart, as I shall now examine.

Content Analysis.

By comparison with the more traditional style of Model Worker poster under investigation, this poster is visually dense. There are four layers upon which different aspects of the story are presented to the viewer. Clearly the image was designed to promote the film *Zhao Yiman*, however, the way in which it has been constructed indicates that this was not the only consideration. Key scenes from the film are presented, the most striking of which features Zhao, pistol in hand, rallying the people to fight for a new China. Agitation work in the form of one of Zhao's compatriots earnestly talking with a nurse and a bedridden Zhao, features particularly prominently, as does a figure of Japanese oppression in the symbolised by a soldier who appears to be fleeing the advance of the Chinese people. The selection of these particular characters in the poster is understandable as they represent each of the key points of the story. However, it is of note that the designer chose these specific stances to represent them. For example, why did the designer choose this image of Zhao, rather than that of her defiant in the face of execution?

The position of the National Bourgeoisie in the People's Democratic Dictatorship makes the reason clear. During his talks at Yan'an, Mao had stated that one of the responsibilities of the intellectuals was to go amongst the people, to learn from them, but also to lead them.⁵⁸⁴ It is for this purpose that the designer has chosen this specific pose for Zhao. She has spent time in the countryside, she has learned from the

⁵⁸⁴ Z. Mao, *Selected Readings from the Works of Mao Tse-Tung*, (Foreign Language Press Peking, 1967), p.207.

peasantry and now she is leading them to victory over the imperialist enemy. Similarly, the presentation of Zhao's fellow revolutionaries at the base of the picture, demonstrates the goal of equality as the ordinary people are present in the discussion. The revolutionary is not towering above the workers, but standing on their level in discussion.

In the top right of the poster a Japanese soldier can be seen, fleeing from the advance of the peasant masses who appear to be holding spears. The lower half of the Japanese soldier is consumed by the red flag of the Party as he is pursued by the shadowy masses. As a visual image, the poster is highly effective as it manages to address the key points of the National Bourgeoisie's position in the People's Democratic Dictatorship. It also demonstrates the way in which the Party, represented by the flag, was the rallying point around which the forces of imperialism would be destroyed. Beneath the image, the viewer is presented with text detailing information about the film.

Visual Analysis.

The visual density of the image makes an analysis of 'foreground' and 'background' rather more difficult as four layers make up the design of the poster. The bottom layer features the young revolutionary and his discussion with the nurse and patient. This image in itself has depth, but is rather overshadowed by the next layer, the flag of the CCP. This layer encompasses nearly two thirds of the poster. Significantly, the depiction of the shrouded peasants in revolt, in the top right of the poster, appears to be woven into the flag, thus representing the Party's unbreakable connection with the masses. The next layer features the Japanese soldier in retreat, whilst the top layer is naturally dominated by Zhao herself. Although the image is visually dense, there are clearly some elements to which the artist wished to draw the viewer's attention. The

hammer and sickle of the CCP's flag is flanked by Zhao's handgun. In his work 'Problems of War and Strategy,' Mao had stated in 1938, that, 'Every communist must grasp the truth; 'Political power grows out of the barrel of a gun.'⁵⁸⁵ Here the designer was making Mao's words a visual reality as the political power of the CCP had been literally allied with the gun. In reality, although it is Zhao that dominates the image, it is the flag that is the most important visual element. Symbolically, it consumes the Japanese aggressor, provides direction for the peasants in revolt and flies above the young revolutionary in the lower left layer.

Colour is used, as in other propaganda posters, to draw attention to specific elements. The red of the CCP's flag is clearly significant because it catches attention and therefore serves to highlight other parts of the image, specifically the dull brown of Zhao's rather utilitarian clothing. Whilst her fellow revolutionary in the lower left frame may provide a projection of modernity with his suit and tie, Zhao provides a more inclusive image for the majority of the population as, despite her class status, she wears more traditional peasant clothing, emphasising her connection with the labouring masses. By contrast, the range of colours used for the Japanese soldier draw attention to how well equipped the enemy was with regard to ammunition and the ability to withstand the elements. The soldier is wearing what appears to be white animal furs, perhaps a further indication of the barbaric nature of the enemy. By contrast to more traditional Model Worker propaganda posters, there is very little subtlety in the presentation of this poster. It was intended to serve primarily as a film promotion aid, so the design choice of bolder and brash colours is understandable. The particular focus on the Model Worker's name in the lower frame 'Zhao Yiman' (赵一曼) was clearly designed to immediately focus the

⁵⁸⁵ Z. Mao, *Problems of War and Strategy*, (Foreign Language Press, Peking 1960), p.13.

viewer's attention on the central character and to associate the actress, Shi Lian Xing with the part that she was playing.

Contextual information.

With the exception of the 'Qingnian Yingxiong Ping' (青年英雄屏) – 'Young Heroes Scrolls,' traditionally very little contextual text accompanied Model Worker propaganda posters. However, as this image was designed to function as a film promotion poster, there is in the lower frame, a great deal of contextual information, however none is specifically related to propaganda. The top, most prominent text reads 'Zhao Yiman' and the smaller text to the right details the actors. Below, the smaller text details the film studio responsible, 'The Central Film Department North East Film Production Company' and the distributor, 'China Film Management Corporation.' No other written contextual information is provided, the design of the poster is clearly intended to visually provide, all the context necessary for the urban audience at which the film was targeted.⁵⁸⁶

Interpretation.

Although the poster was primarily intended to function as additional propaganda for the promotion of the *Zhao Yiman* film, there are still elements of Nationalism, Social Reform and Maoist Socialism. The film depiction of Zhao Yiman's life focussed most strongly on nationalism and it is thus no surprise that the poster follows suit. The imperialist Japanese aggressor features prominently, but is engulfed by the red flag of the CCP, the only legitimate rulers of the 'New China.' Here, the function of the flag of the Communist Party is important as it operates in clear visual contrast to the Japanese

⁵⁸⁶ Chapter 4, p.164.

solider. It is a quasi-national flag, unifying the people who are led by Zhao with her raised pistol. This 'national flag' also features the peasant masses who appear almost embroidered into the fabric; the masses become the nation.

Aspects of social reform are stronger with several elements on display including community spirit, hard work and the desire to fight. Community spirit is represented by two design elements. Firstly, the united peasants in the upper right of the poster as they stand together, weapons raised, chasing away the imperialist Japanese invader. Secondly, in the bottom left of the poster the viewer can see the way in which this community spirit is being built by the young revolutionary in his discussion with the nurse and Zhao who has been hospitalised following an encounter with Japanese interrogators. These images, combined with that of Zhao in the centre with raised pistol, represent two combined aspects of social reform; hard work and the desire to fight. Viewers of the film *Zhao Yiman* would also have been aware of the extent to which the bottom left layer represented the importance of empathy, promoted by the CCP. The still frame presents a part of the film where the nurse and indeed the watching audience, are being asked to consider the heroism of Zhao's actions and to have feeling for her suffering at the hands of the enemy. Interpretations of Maoist socialism are rather more difficult to define as the film is set some time before the success of the Revolution. However, the guiding light of the CCP, the guarantee of a better future, is represented by the all-encompassing flag. The East was indeed, at least according to this poster, about to become red, led by the power of the gun and controlled by the Party.



Figure 2.2 - 'Snow Topped Mountain, Red Pine Tree.' (1965).

Following the muted reception of the film depiction of *Zhao Yiman* and the rather ambiguous status of the National Bourgeoisie during the 1950s, depictions of Zhao in poster form dried up entirely. Zhao may have served as a soldier during the liberation period, assisting the peasantry in their resistance to the Japanese and Guomindang enemy, but her background, which was solidly urban and national-bourgeoisie, did not match the favoured 'worker-soldier-peasant' of her contemporary Model Workers, such as Liu Hulan and Dong Cunrui. For this reason, as noted above, poster depictions of her are exceptionally rare. This is not to say that more may not exist, but those which are readily available and thus significant regarding propaganda value, are extremely limited in number. Consequently, the next poster I will examine was produced considerably later than the first in this series. In addition, the visual style is noticeably

different to the other posters that form part of this study. Both the Hundred Flowers and Anti-Rightist campaign had a considerable impact on the direction of artistic styles pursued by artists during the period following the Great Leap Forward.⁵⁸⁷ As noted by Julia F. Andrews in her work, *Painters and Politics in The People's Republic of China, 1949-1979*, the result of further purges of intellectuals during this period was a system of art production that became less centralised and more fragmented.⁵⁸⁸ Furthermore, the focus on the duplication of Soviet style 'socialist realism' was greatly reduced. Indeed, it was during this period that 'Guohua' (国画) 'traditional Chinese painting' began to be experimented with, particularly outside of China's Urban centres.⁵⁸⁹ This goes some way to explain both the different visual style of figure 2.2 above, and also perhaps the re-emergence of Zhao as a subject, as artists were, to a greater extent, left to their own devices. 'Guohua' is, in itself, a specifically national form of art and was traditionally used in landscape paintings, depicting the beauty of China. During the Cultural Revolution, control from the centre was greatly diminished and the linguistic unity of propaganda was largely shattered as Red Guard publications offered differing interpretations of Mao's ideology.⁵⁹⁰ Similarly, during the 'Guohua' period following the Great Leap Forward, the lack of any central control of art produced differing interpretations. These interpretations did not fit the tightly controlled structure of the preceding years. Figure 2.2 is an example of this, as I shall now examine.

Content Analysis.

Stylistically, the interpretation of Zhao by designer, Li Wenxin's (李文信)⁵⁹¹ is less

⁵⁸⁷ Chapter 3, p.104.

⁵⁸⁸ Andrews, pp.177-314.

⁵⁸⁹ Ibid, p.202.

⁵⁹⁰ J. Fengyuan, *Linguistic Engineering: Language and Politics in Mao's China*, (University of Hawaii Press, 2004), p.221-247.

⁵⁹¹ chinese posters.net. 1927. Li Wenxin (李文信). [ONLINE] Available at: <http://chinese posters.net/artists/liwenxin.php>.

sophisticated and ideologically barren when compared with earlier depictions. Indeed, Zhao is the only character present in the poster, surrounded by a floral border and explanatory text. The image presents Zhao, dressed as a peasant soldier wearing a winter coat and surveying an unseen situation. The image presents her as a leader, her hand on hip, her gaze fixed; Zhao fills the entire frame. Text accompanies the image, both above and below. She is presented as a well-equipped, well-fed, peasant soldier, with no hint of her background as a member of the National Bourgeoisie. This is in contrast to the earlier poster image, in which Zhao's background was more apparent from the style of her clothing. Now she is identified squarely with the peasant masses. As a visual message, figure 2.2 is arguably less effective than earlier propaganda posters. By using a single image of Zhao with no further contextual information, the power of her story is weakened considerably. The artist's chosen pose for Zhao is hardly iconic, it is neither the rallying cry pose of the film poster, nor the steadfast defiance in the face of execution. In this image, Zhao could be any peasant soldier, only the text provides a hint of what the artist was meaning to convey. As the National Bourgeoisie fell out of favour following the Hundred Flowers campaign the image of Zhao shifted. She was now depicted as a member of the more favoured worker-peasant-soldier group.

Visual Analysis.

Visually the image is extremely sparse, with only the foreground providing any detail, the background being simply the canvas. Zhao's clothing is clearly the most important visual element as the most attention has been given to its presentation. Of particular significance are Zhao's shoes. As a member of the National Bourgeoisie, Zhao was formerly a city-dweller, it is unlikely that she would have worn the peasant slippers favoured by members of the People's Army. However, the artist has chosen to depict

her wearing these slippers, thus creating the impression that she was a peasant soldier in the People's Army. In addition, the fur lined coat and hat provide the image of not just an ordinary foot soldier, but of a commander. In this image Zhao is a leader, not just of men, but of the People's Army. Her physique is masculine, indeed her head does not quite match the rest of her body. Colour has been used primarily to draw attention to her uniform, the brown fur coat serving to enhance the blue. The floral border, a light red, gives the impression of a mirror frame, with the viewer perhaps seeing a reflection of the ideal citizen. Design choices are rather more difficult to analyse than in earlier posters because of the rather sparse nature of the content. As already noted, it differs greatly from those that followed the socialist realism style. It is a simple portrait. Its style and the lack of clearly defined propaganda value are representative of the political upheavals that the country had been undergoing, as alluded to above.

Contextual Information.

Written contextual information initially appears limited in this poster depiction. The top text reads 'Revolution Hero' and the bottom simply states 'Number 1, Zhao Yiman (coloured roll) and the designer's name. However, the red stamp next to Zhao's knee provides a great deal of information of the intention of the designer for this depiction. The stamp reads: 'Xue Ling Chisong' (雪岭赤松) - 'Snow Topped Mountain Red Pine Tree.' On first inspection it would appear that there is neither a snow topped mountain, nor a red pine tree. However, the intention is clearly for Zhao to be understood, symbolically, as being the pine tree. She is both red (politically) and her actions mirror the strength of the non-deciduous pine tree, her strength is never lost, her will unbending. The snow topped mountain is perhaps represented by the white background, intended to provide contrast to the red pine (Zhao).

Interpretation.

The era of ‘Guohua’ painting was essentially nationalistic, so it is unsurprising that the propaganda value of the image is primarily focussed on this aspect. Here, Zhao is presented as a commander in the war against imperialist Japanese aggression. By presenting Zhao as a peasant soldier, the war is depicted as being a straightforward conflict between standing armies. Whilst the filmic depiction of Zhao Yiman focussed to a great extent on the guerrilla nature of the conflict, indeed CCP forces were described as being ‘bandits’ by newspapers of the day,⁵⁹² this poster focusses entirely on the military campaign. This gives a different, more ordered impression of the conflict, a fight between two national armies, rather than the more complex situation that existed at the time of foreign invasion and internal disagreement that eventually led to civil war. Indeed, Zhao is no longer a bandit, or member of the National Bourgeoisie or even a member of the CCP’s underground resistance, she is a soldier fighting foreign aggression, backed by the power of China’s legitimate government. It is this element above all others that dominates the image. Aspects of social reform are limited to a clear desire to engage the enemy and fight. Zhao is depicted as a rugged individual, clearly unafraid of hard work.

Elements of the promotion of socialism are similarly limited. The promotion of equality is apparent through the lack of any rank insignia, although from her stance she is clearly intended to be presented as a commander of fighting men and women. The image links, primarily, the concept of heroism with the military, an aspect that was not originally the dominate theme of the *Zhao Yiman* film. This depiction offers a significant commentary on the development of the Model Worker concept and its

⁵⁹² Chapter 4, p.164.

relationship with both the nation and its people. The artist decided to focus on the military aspect of Zhao's career, rather than her position as one of the people. This clearly indicates the extent to which Lin Biao's 'Learn from the PLA' campaign had begun to dominate the depiction of Model Workers.⁵⁹³ The dual nature of Zhao's background, first as a member of the National Bourgeoisie and later as a soldier of the People's Army, would not be explored again.

Post-Mao Depictions.

Poster representations of Zhao re-emerged following the death of Mao, however the National Bourgeoisie nature of her background remained hidden. Figure 2.3 was created by Pan Zhihong in 1983 and adheres more strongly to the socialist realism style than earlier interpretations. However, it is interesting to note the striking similarity in concept between the version created in 1965 and this later depiction. Although no direct link can be confirmed, there is a strong probability that the posters are linked because of the way in which this later version essentially matches the title of the 1965 edition. As noted above, the title of the earlier poster was 'Snow topped mountain, red pine tree.' In Figure 2.3 below, both of these features figure prominently. The symbolism of the pine tree in the background providing a visual reference for the viewer, rather than the textual cue of the earlier version. In this later edition, Zhao stands tall, unbending, able to weather the elements, similarly to the red pine tree growing behind her. The poster is a visual realisation of the message of the 1965 edition, with a stronger emphasis on the nature of the anti-Japanese war; that of professional Chinese soldiers fighting for their country.

⁵⁹³ Chapter 3, p.144.



Figure 2.3 – Anti-Japanese Female Hero Zhao Yiman. (1983).

The later poster also depicts Zhao solely as a military commander. This representation has shifted her even further away from her roots as a member of the National Bourgeoisie. Although the 1965 edition depicted Zhao as a soldier, her uniform indicated that she was one of the peasant masses. Figure 2.3 is considerably different in that she is now presented, not simply as one of the masses, but as a professional soldier. Her feet are no longer protected by the slippers worn by veterans of the People's Army; now she wears boots, a further indication of her more elite status. Her coat no longer looks so makeshift and is instead a fur-lined military jacket. Zhao's position as a military commander is further strengthened by the binoculars she is holding, indicating that she is surveying a battlefield, not directing guerrilla troops. The title of the poster provides further indication that this was the intention as it is entitled 'Anti-Japanese Female Hero – Zhao Yiman.' Zhao is now a military Model Worker, she is presented

as an idealised image of female participation in a struggle for national survival. Indeed, it is this aspect, the concept of nationalism that overrides and survives the elements of social reform and socialism appear no longer quite so important.

Liu Hulan.

In 1950, director Sun Yu produced the first film portrayal of the iconic heroine Liu Hulan.⁵⁹⁴ As noted in Chapter 4, the reception of the film was not wholly positive.⁵⁹⁵ Criticism centred largely around a perceived lack of connection between Liu, the people and the Communist Party. Liu Hulan was a critical role model for the government as she represented three important aspects of the country's earlier struggle for liberation; the importance of the vast peasantry, defiance in the face of foreign opposition and female emancipation. With Liu Hulan, these three elements, were combined with the Party's overall propaganda mission of nationalism, social reform and the promotion of socialism. As a Model Worker, Liu Hulan had great significance for propaganda artists learning their craft during the early 1950s. She had been selected to be one of the models that artists were required to represent before they were allowed to move on to other projects.⁵⁹⁶ Consequently, a great deal of care and attention was given to portrayals of Liu as artists used her likeness to hone their skills and master the challenges of painting in the style of Socialist Realism.

Numerous posters were produced of Liu throughout the 1950s and early 1960s.

Although each of them share attributes in common, particularly the presentation of Liu as 'defiant,' there were subtle differences dependent on the time in which they were produced and the intended audience. I have selected three posters, the first produced in 1954, the second in 1956 and the third in 1965 to demonstrate the extent to which artists pursued their mission to present the three key propaganda themes of nationalism, social reform and the development of socialism through ever more idealised versions of the

⁵⁹⁴ *Liu Hulan*, (1950), Directed by Sun Yu, [Film], China: Kunlun Film Studio.

⁵⁹⁵ Chapter 4, p.185.

⁵⁹⁶ Chapter 5, p.243.

defiant peasant; Liu Hulan and the community in which she served the Party. The reaction to the success of these posters is, as ever, rather difficult to gauge. However, it is possible to gain some insight into what had been deemed to be successful from the way in which certain posters either appropriated elements of design from their predecessors, or were outright facsimiles. To analyse the posters in accordance with the propaganda values of nationalism, social reform and the development of socialism, I will examine them in chronological order, with respect to the following criteria; content analysis, visual analysis, contextual information and interpretation.

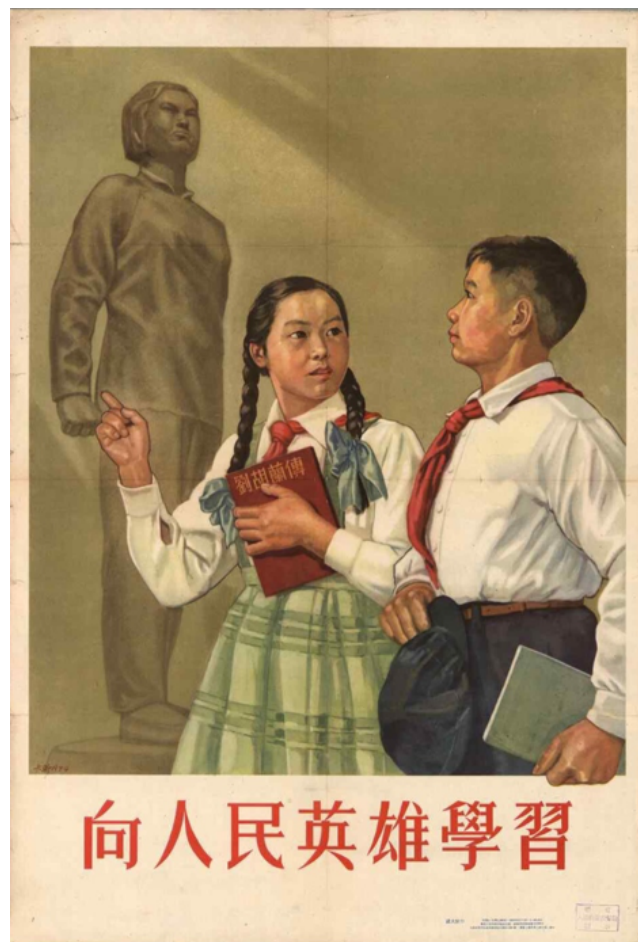


Figure 3.1 - 'Learn From the People's Hero.' (1954).

Film director Sun Yu had been criticised for failing to correctly demonstrate the connection between Liu and the people.⁵⁹⁷ Poster depictions of Liu largely avoided making the same mistake, as by contrast to the posters of Dong Cunrui, Liu is never alone. In later posters her connection is quite clearly with the people of her social class, the villagers she had been attempting to liberate. However, in this early depiction of Liu, designed in 1954 by the artist Qian Daxin⁵⁹⁸ (钱大昕), and published by 'Huadong Renmin Meishu Chubanshe,' (华东人民美术出版社) - East China People's Art Publisher, Liu's connection is not with the village she sought to liberate, but with the 'present' and the school children that her story was intended to inspire. The presentation of Liu is clearly a precursor to what would become the standard for depictions of the 'ultimate' Model Worker, Lei Feng. Lei was often surrounded by children as he told stories of his harsh upbringing in the 'old society.' In Figure 3.1, the children are similarly learning, inspired by the image of the defiant Liu as she faces the harsh reality of her situation. This connection, between a model and the future of China, that is its children, was to be developed further throughout the 1950s, finding its pinnacle with Lei Feng shortly before the onset of the Cultural Revolution.

Content Analysis.

By comparison to the later 'Young Heroes Scrolls' propaganda posters, the layout of this early 1954 print is rather less complex. The image is composed on two planes of perspective, with a statue of Liu dominating the background. There is no other detail in the background to distract the viewer from Liu as the light and shadows draw attention to her defiant pose. Posters of Dong Cunrui depicted his final moments before his death.

⁵⁹⁷ Chapter 4, p.185.

⁵⁹⁸ chinese posters.net. *Qian Daxin* (钱大昕). [ONLINE] Available at: <http://chinese posters.net/artists/qiandaxin.php>.

Similarly, posters of Liu Hulan focussed on the moment prior to her execution. This is perhaps an interesting stylistic feature as it undoubtedly further reinforced the nationalist message of Model Worker propaganda. 'Revolutionary Martyrs' such as Liu were heroes not simply because they fought the Japanese, but also because they had died for their communities and the people of China as a whole. In this poster, Liu's defiant pose is clearly intended to reinforce this message as she stares ahead unafraid, with her eyes fixed on her adversaries, her lips pursed and her fists clenched as she faces execution.

In the foreground, two teenage school children provide a contrast to the statue of Liu as the girl appears to be explaining to the boy who Liu was. This is made explicit by the copy of the book that the girl is clasping to her chest, titled 'The Biography of Liu Hulan.' The boy stands in awe and appears to be attempting to replicate Liu's defiant pose, his hands similarly clenched, his chest pushed outwards and his head looking upwards. He carries both a book and a cap of the type similar to those worn by factory workers. This detail is perhaps intended to emphasise his place as part of the next generation. The peasant life of Liu Hulan has been left behind and thanks to her sacrifice, youth will be part of the determination to create a new economy based on industry. Similarly, the girl is presented as an image of modernity, representing the gains made because of Liu's sacrifice, her clothing and hair style in stark contrast to the peasant she stands beside. As a visual message the image is particularly effective. The key elements of the poster, which are the statue, the book and the juxtaposition between peasant Liu and the modern children, are clearly communicated to the viewer.

Visual Analysis.

In contrast to posters of Dong Cunrui, this 1954 depiction of Liu Hulan is far less visually complex. The background is dominated by Liu, who is bathed in light shining down from above. There is a clear similarity here with the heavenly first frame of images of Dong Cunrui from the same era. Liu may be standing in defiance, but she appears to be blessed from on high, her form casting not shadows, but light on her surroundings. Her expression may be fearsome, but the children in the foreground appear unafraid; they are inspired. The way in which the image is enclosed is also of interest as the boy's hand overlaps the frame, providing a further connection with the viewer who could almost reach out and touch him.

The most important visual elements of the piece are clearly the statue, the children's clothing and the objects they are holding. Interestingly, in contrast to images of Dong Cunrui, who was always the focal point of each poster, in this depiction the focus is instead on the children. Although Liu dominates the background the viewer's eye is drawn primarily to the children as they make up two thirds of the frame. This indicates that there are actually three models in this poster and not one. The children are also presented as models. Visually they represent both the present and future of modern China. However, the book being carried by the girl, 'The Biography of Liu Hulan,' is intended to demonstrate the link the children have with the revolutionary past. The objects being held are exceptionally important visual elements as they represent the Party's exhortation to never forget the revolutionary struggle, but to work hard to build the industrial future. The children's clothing is also of importance and serves to provide a contrast with Liu. They represent modernity with their western style school clothing that appears colourful and clean. Liu is dressed as a peasant, wearing the clothing of a serf. The girl's pigtails are also a significant visual element, perhaps representing a

more carefree life following liberation. Naturally the children are ‘Shaonian Xianfengdui’ (少年先锋队) - ‘Young Pioneers,’ represented by their red scarfs.

Although the viewer’s eye is drawn to the children’s red scarves, the use of colour overall was intended to reinforce the message of contrast. The pre-liberation days represented by the background are grey, dark and austere with only shades of darker colours and the light of Liu breaking through the darkness. By contrast, the present is bright and colourful. The clothing is overall lighter in colour, which helps to draw greater attention to the red scarves, symbolic of the Party and its connection with the youth of China. In addition, the deep red, perhaps representing the martyr’s blood, is used to highlight the copy of Liu’s biography. The colour used to present the children’s complexion is also of significance, designed to present a further contrast with Liu. Their skin is a particularly pale colour, their hands clean. Liu’s statue may be monotone in colour, but the artist has chosen to use a darker shade for her face and hands, perhaps to indicate how hard her life has been working as a serf in unpleasant environmental conditions. The children’s fair skin also demonstrates the extent to which their lives are improved, they are no longer required to toil in the fields at the behest of a master, but are now able to study, thanks to the sacrifices of revolutionary martyrs such as Liu Hulan. Although Mao Zedong would later embrace the hardier image of a peasant worker as being an ideal, at this stage the perception that lighter skin meant better education and a higher social standing, was still current. The design choice of a pale complexion for the children consequently demonstrates the extent to which their position has been improved in contrast to their peasant predecessors. There is therefore a subtle, but obvious difference between the two eras of pre and post liberation; this would have been clear to viewers of the poster.

Contextual Information.

Contextual information in the form of written text is relatively sparse in this poster. It was not from the ‘Young Heroes scrolls’ series and consequently the life of Liu Hulan is not explicitly detailed through the use of text. This is unsurprising as earlier posters rarely contained a great deal of text to ensure that the message could be understood by as wide a range of people as possible. What text there is in this poster is simple and to the point. Below the image is the following exhortation: ‘Xiang Renmin Yingxiong Xuexi’ (向人民英雄学习) - ‘learn from the people’s hero.’ The book being held by the young girl provides further contextual information. An examination of the characters imprinted on the book reveal the hero who was meant to be studied. The text reads: ‘Liu Hulan Zhuan’ (刘胡兰传) - ‘Biography of Liu Hulan.’ This kind of book would not have been compulsory reading at this stage, although articles detailing the life of Liu Hulan were part of text books of this era. Consequently, the viewer would have been fully aware of Liu Hulan and her life. Although not part of the ‘Young Heroes scrolls’ series, the target audience of the poster was conceivably older school children as the design choice would appear to be intended to resonate most strongly with those who were in the secondary level of education. However, as with much Chinese propaganda, this poster would also have been intelligible to a broad swathe of society. Children may have taken the message to learn from Liu Hulan, but the broader masses would also have been impressed by the material change that school children had enjoyed since liberation.

Interpretation.

Sun Yu’s interpretation of the Liu Hulan story focussed to a great extent on the importance of Chinese nationalism. However, poster depictions were slightly less

forceful This image of the defiant Liu can only be interpreted in a nationalist context if her biography is fully understood. The enemy that she is defying is unseen and could be the forces of Japan or Guomindang lackeys. The images of the children do, however, promote nationalism to some extent. The children are strong and well fed. The boy's stance is that of a soldier standing to attention. They both wear the symbol of the 'New China,' the scarf of the Communist Party. As a nationalist image, the scarf is a powerful reminder of the Party's propaganda message that persists to this day; the Party, the government and the country are the same thing, without one the others cannot exist. The scarf functions as a recognisable object of national unity.

Elements of social reform are stronger as the image as a whole was designed to promote key aspects of the campaign. Three of the elements of social reform identified in Chapter 1 are present in the image, these being empathy, community spirit and a desire to fight.⁵⁹⁹ Through the use of contrasts, the viewer is encouraged to feel empathy for Liu as she is presented in monotone colours, standing alone against an unseen enemy. She is contrasted with post-liberation children of a similar age who have benefitted from her sacrifice. The intention was to remind the viewer, on a personal level, that individuals like Liu were 'real people' and deserved not just respect, but to be remembered. The children, through their interest, are engaged in the same action as the viewer, but additionally observing and reading about Liu and trying to understand her life and actions. The story of Liu was designed to elicit feelings of community spirit, although this aspect is slightly less apparent in this poster than in later depictions. In this 1954 portrayal the issue of community spirit is conceivably illustrated by a 'childhood community' as Liu is united with her peers across time. The community of 'New China' in which the modern children live, was possible because of Liu's strong

⁵⁹⁹ Chapter 1, p.12.

commitment to improving her own community by fighting the Japanese occupation and cruelty of the Guomindang. Above all else the 'desire to fight' is present in this poster. It exhorts the viewer to 'learn from the people's hero.' In the foreground the boy is doing just that as he emulates her defiant pose.

The benefits of socialism are also evident in the poster. Once again, the background and foreground contrast was designed to make it clear that China had emerged from the darkness of the days of serfdom to a brighter future, as represented by the children's immaculate clothing and access to knowledge through study. Moreover, it is the girl who is teaching the boy about Liu, perhaps indicating the extent to which Chinese society had evolved. This prefigured the later message of 'Learn from Lei Feng.'⁶⁰⁰ In Sun Yu's film version of Liu Hulan, one of the characters describes the birth of a girl as 'always being a loss,' but in this poster the viewer can see that the status of girls and women has been significantly elevated by the implementation of socialism.⁶⁰¹

The most prominent ideas presented by the image are clearly those of heroism, defiance in the face of the enemy, community spirit and the leap achieved in material circumstances following liberation and the adoption of socialism. The use of the darker foreground and lighter background contrasts what has been achieved since the adoption of socialism as the country emerged from the feudal darkness of the past to the shining present and indeed, future. The background shows the model in a defiant pose, her actions an inspiration to those in the present who populate the foreground. As with Dong Cunrui, Liu Hulan may have died, but her spirit is immortalised in the memory of those who have followed and benefitted from her example. The propaganda message is clear, woman such as Liu, led China out of the darkness, they cannot be forgotten and

⁶⁰⁰ Chapter 3, p.144.

⁶⁰¹ Liu Hulan, 1950, *Film, Directed by Sun Yu, China: Kunlun Film Studio*, 15:40

the values in which they believed must be studied, upheld and above all applied, by the people.



Figure 3.2 - Young Heroes Scrolls – Liu Hulan. (1956).

The earlier 1954 poster was almost certainly designed to appeal to a broad audience, as is evident from its use of simple language and broader message. The second poster is considerably different, in part because of its target audience. It was designed by Xu Jiping, and published by Shanghai Renmin Meishu Chubanshe (上海人民美术出版社) - Shanghai, People's Art Publishing. The poster was first produced in 1956, but re-released in 1961 and forms part of the, 'Young Heroes scrolls' series. This series was designed primarily to be displayed in schools and often paired two Model Workers together, side by side. These posters were published by the 'jiao yu bu' (教育部)

‘education ministry’ as part of a set of usually ten pieces each featuring different models, although other sets were also produced in different sizes. The propaganda posters were directly connected with school text book stories. In addition, the Young Heroes Scroll series was inspired by the traditional painting design of the four seasons, with panels dedicated to spring, summer, autumn and winter. The seasons were changed to represent heroes of the new Chinese republic. Each year new posters would be produced until the series was withdrawn in 1966.⁶⁰² The designs used for these posters were not solely employed for the ‘Young Heroes scrolls’ series. When searching for related images, I have found the same representations used for other posters, but with the text removed. This indicates that designs were most probably shared between different propaganda departments, but with minor alterations, to suit the situation. This 1956 version of Liu Hulan takes the standard, ‘Young Heroes scrolls’ approach of dividing the poster into three distinct frames. A comparison with figure 3.1 indicates more elements that need analysis, however the artistic quality of the image is arguably poorer.

Content Analysis.

The artistic style of the ‘Young Heroes scrolls’ series was to change significantly during the period it was in use, however one aspect remained constant; the three frame view. These three frames were always organised according to a consistent format: the model’s head, a recreation of their most heroic act and a written explanation of their revolutionary role. Figure 3.2 is no different and is organised in the standard format. In the first frame Liu is presented in portrait form. By contrast to the stern expression in figure 3.1, the design of Liu in this version has clearly been modified in order to appeal

⁶⁰² Appendix item 3.1, p.396.

to a younger audience. Liu's features are softer, lacking the severity of the earlier 1954 version. She is plump, with red cheeks and bright eyes, perhaps a representation of 'the ideal child.' In addition, her clothing is light in colour, adding to the ethereal quality of the frame.

The lower frame provides an important contrast. Here Liu is standing on a raised platform, surrounded by a diverse group of people comprised of a Guomindang officer, local militia, a landlord and local villagers. The people in the lower frame are presented in a wholly different way to that of Liu; they lack her appearance of serenity. The landlord and Guomindang officer are shrinking away from Liu as she stands resolutely, ready in acceptance of her fate. The villagers stand and watch, some covering their eyes and shielding their faces. In a similar way to presentations of Dong Cunrui,⁶⁰³ the second frame serves to demonstrate the hellish conditions of feudal China, with the upper frame providing an image of the Model Worker as a quasi-saintly figure, symbolically above the conflict below. Symbolically in the lower frame the sky is overcast and the buildings are crumbling. Liu stands in the centre, clearly intended to be a beacon of colourful light surrounded by darkness. As an image of propaganda the poster is effective on three levels. Firstly, the viewer is presented with a relevant aspirational image of childhood in the upper frame. Secondly the enemy are clearly defined and provide a contrast with Liu by appearing cowardly as she stands resolutely in the face of death. Thirdly, the connection is made between the terrible conditions of feudal China in the lower frame and the purity of idealism portrayed in the upper frame. The poster was therefore meant to encourage the people to emulate the ideals of the Model Worker so they could also ascend from the depths of the corrupt and barbaric society represented by the lower frame, to the paradise of the upper frame.

⁶⁰³ Chapter 5, p.297.

Visual Analysis.

The composition of the upper frame is largely flat with little background detail beyond a soft focus 'cloud' designed to avoid detracting from the foreground image of Liu's face. The background and foreground of the lower frame are considerably more complex, but are also designed to draw attention to visual elements emphasised by the artist. The most important visual elements can be found in the foreground, with Liu, the Guomindang officer, landlord and militiamen all being highly detailed. By contrast, those in the background are considerably less detailed, in order to avoid distracting from the focus of the piece. Indeed, the way in which the background of local villagers was depicted in this version was to be corrected in later posters. Here, the people are cowering, afraid and appear to be spectators to Liu's fate, even the Guomindang officer appears to be in awe of her. The artist may have felt that this was a more realistic way to present the villagers, however with regard to propaganda objectives it could be deemed problematic as the people do not appear to be united against their class oppressors.

Colour is used to emphasise the difference between the two frames as the lighter, brighter colours of the upper frame are contrasted with the darker, moodier palette of the lower. Overall however, the use of colour is more muted in this edition with less stark contrasts than in the 1954 version. In the 1956 version, more vivid colours are used to highlight the key people of the piece, clearly defining their allegiances and to highlight the disrepair and decay of the buildings. Furthermore, attention has been given to the uniform of the Guomindang officer which appears to fit rather poorly. The mountains in the background, although dark in texture, serve to emphasise light emanating from behind, perhaps the new dawn of the coming Communist era. Also of note is Liu's clothing, precisely because of how unremarkable it is, being standard

peasant clothing of the era. There is little to distinguish her from the masses in the background. Overall, the design is less sharp and detailed than that heavily influenced by the socialist realism of 1954. The image is far softer with less well defined edges. For example, the Guomindang officer in particular has a more comic style, no doubt in order to appeal more directly to the intended primary audience of younger people.

Contextual Information.

As part of the ‘Young Heroes Scrolls’ series, figure 3.2 contains a sizeable amount of written contextual information. In the lower frame, the story of Liu Hulan is relayed to the viewer. The text reads:

Liu hulan, an excellent CCP member, was from Yunzhouxi village Wenshui County of Shanxi province. She served as a secretary to the Women’s Salvation Council in the village. She actively encouraged the masses to support the war of liberation. In January 1947, Yunzhouxi village was attacked by the enemy. Because she didn’t have enough time to evacuate, Liu was captured. She showed her unbending spirit and noble quality as a CCP member when confronting the enemy and sacrificed her life. Chairman Mao personally wrote the inscription “A great life, a glorious death” to commemorate her life.

Posters in the Young Heroes Scroll series usually followed this format. Firstly, some background information regarding the location of the Model, then some details about their part in the Revolution and finally a brief description of their sacrifice. This text is significant because it does not mention by name the enemy that Liu was fighting. She was executed at the age of 14 by the Guomindang and Mao’s inscription ‘A great life, a glorious death’ symbolised the *raison d’être* of the Model Worker.

Interpretation.

Nationalist interpretations of the image are rather difficult to assess as the theme is only tangentially related through the use of the Guomindang officer and the landlord.

Consequently, a nationalist interpretation of the image can only be understood by analysing these characters and their relation to the scene. Liu's execution takes place on a raised platform. This is occupied only by the accused (Liu) and her accusers (the landlord and Guomindang officer), they are standing above the people. However, Liu alone provides a symbol of leadership for those below, as the others although figures of authority, cower behind her. This is consistent with the overall propaganda message related to both class enemies and the Guomindang, that they had no part in the nation. Here, Liu's leadership of the people, which was later endorsed by her membership of the Communist Party, most probably represents the intended national image of China.

As with the 1954 version of Liu, social reform elements are far stronger in this image. Once again, empathy, community spirit and the desire to fight are the primary aspects represented. The people surrounding Liu are not simply bystanders. They are actively involved, their feelings for Liu are clear in the way in which they cannot bear to watch as she faces her execution. The means of execution would have been beheading, a horrific and terrifying example for the other members of Liu's village. Liu stands firm, but the others cower behind her; the importance of this aspect cannot be overstated.

The Chinese writer, Lu Xun (Figure 3.3), wrote extensively about what he perceived to be the problems in Chinese society.⁶⁰⁴ These ideas were seized upon by propagandists. Indeed, the text for Figure 3.3 was a quotation by Mao who stated, 'The direction of Lu Xun is the new cultural direction of the Chinese people.' One of the key issues

⁶⁰⁴ Chapter 1, p.9.

identified by Lu Xun was what he perceived to be a lack of empathy for fellow citizens amongst the population. He stated that he was inspired to become a writer after watching a newsreel of a Chinese spy being executed by Japanese forces while the man's contemporaries watched with indifference.⁶⁰⁵ Lu Xun's mission, to 'change the spirit' of the Chinese people can be seen, exemplified by Liu in this scene. The villagers are far from indifferent, they can barely bear to watch as one of their own is executed. In addition, the structure of the community is represented once again by the platform. The villagers, rich in empathy, are separated from their masters, who cower on top of the platform fearful of Liu's defiance, her willingness and her commitment to the community she serves.

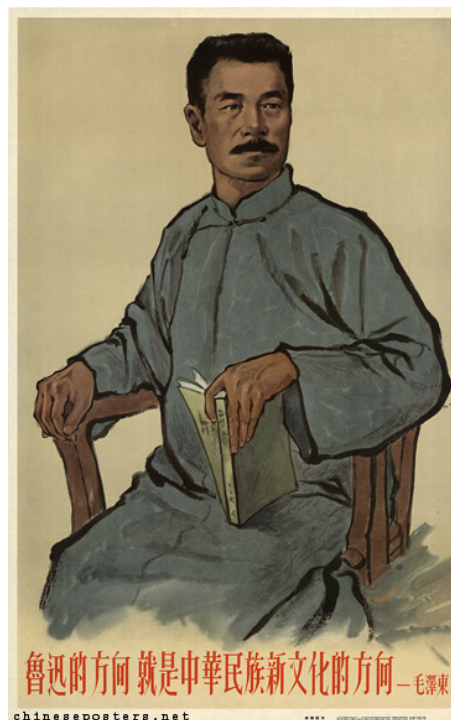


Figure 3.3 - 'The direction of Lu Xun is the new cultural direction of the Chinese people.' (1956).

However, in comparison to the 1954 image, this later design offers far less that could be described as a promotion of the development of socialism. There is no indication that

⁶⁰⁵ P. Ebrey & A. Walhall, *East Asia: A Cultural, Social, and Political History, Volume II: From 1600*, (Cengage Learning, 2013), p.422

Liu is a member of the Communist Party, with perhaps the only link being the promotion of a more Maoist egalitarian society where women held the same status as men and were a critical part of the revolutionary struggle. Consequently, the primary ideal promoted by the poster is social reform, specifically a focus on empathy and community spirit, combined with revolutionary heroism. By standing atop the platform, Liu is making a clear statement about the relationship between the individual and the country. She embodies the attributes of a Model Worker and stands front and centre as the pretenders to leadership, the Guomindang, cower behind her.

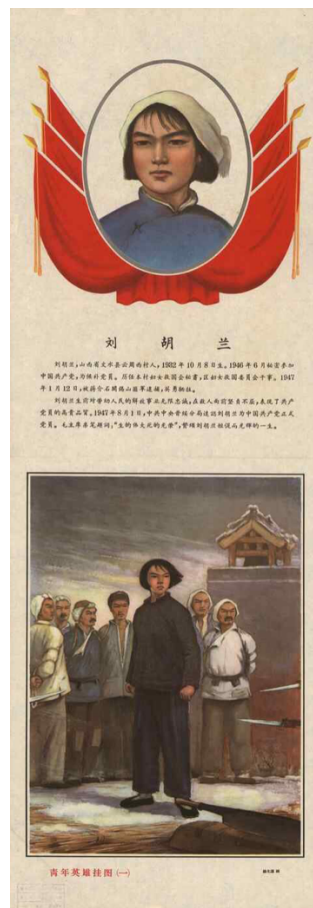


Figure 3.4 - 'Young hero hanging picture.' (1964).

Following the re-issue of the 1956 version of Liu Hulan in 1961, an entirely new version was released in 1964. The poster, figure 3.4, was paired with Dong Cunrui, but

has been separated here as a comparison can be found in the Dong Cunrui section.⁶⁰⁶

The 'Young Heroes scrolls' series would appear to have been judged a successful propaganda format as the layout style was used continuously for over a decade from 1955 to 1966. This depiction of Liu shares a number of similarities with the 1956 edition, particularly regarding the layout. However, there are also a number of differences, not least in the artistic style. As with Dong Cunrui, the youthful, chubby Liu, surrounded by clouds in the 1956 version, has been replaced by an older looking girl, flanked by red flags.

Content Analysis.

Similar to the 1956 image, the poster is divided into three distinct sections, I am including the text as a separate frame. However, there is an immediate difference between the two as the designer has chosen to place the text in the centre, rather than beneath as in the earlier edition. This serves to draw greater attention to the text. In the upper frame, Liu is presented, framed by red flags. This is notably different to the earlier image as she is more clearly allied here with the Communist Party. In addition, Liu's face is considerably more angular, her features more defined than in the soft focus style of the 1956 image. The ethereal style has been replaced by a more realistic representation with the use of the red flag. In the centre, Liu's name is displayed, followed by an explanation of her role in society. In the lower frame there is another representation of the scene of her heroic sacrifice. There are, however, significant differences compared with earlier versions. Liu no longer stands alone. She is flanked by other members of her community, a group of hardy looking men of mixed age. The enemy, this time, is unseen. There are no cowardly Guomindang commanders or

⁶⁰⁶ Chapter 5, p.297.

landlords. They are replaced by two bayonets, wielded by an unseen enemy. In the bottom right of the frame can be seen a chopping block, complete with a hatchet. Liu's fate is made clear by this visual detail.

As a visual image, the poster has a wholly different effect to that of the 1956 version because the designer has chosen to emphasize different propaganda aspects. The focus is now on Liu's membership of the Communist Party and the unity of the peasantry in the face of the enemy. As propaganda, the image is perhaps slightly less effective than the earlier 1956 version because the poster as a whole relies more heavily on the text to detail the story. Elements, such as the way in which Liu's fellow villagers are bound and the hatchet in the bottom right are not initially clear, it requires the viewer to read the account to gain a full understanding.

Visual Analysis.

The upper frame image is rather more two dimensional than the 1956 interpretation. In addition, Liu's expression is rather more distant as her head is slightly tilted, perhaps staring towards China's bright communist future. Liu appears to be less of a child in this edition. The childish rosy cheeks and red lips of the earlier version are absent and as with the 1965 version of Dong Cunrui⁶⁰⁷ there is a certainty in her expression. The lower frame follows artistic conventions established by Jiang Qing. Indeed, Mao's wife, (Jiang), was believed to be one of the primary advocates of the concept of the 'Three Prominences.' The purpose of this concept was to, 'give prominence to positive characters among all characters, give prominence to heroic characters among positive characters, give prominence to the main heroic character among other heroic

⁶⁰⁷ Chapter 5, p.297.

characters.⁶⁰⁸ Liu stands front and centre, slightly raised, she is the focus, surrounded by her fellow peasants. In the background what appears to be a bell-tower dominates. The sky is overcast but, as with the earlier 1956 version, there is the hint of light shining from the horizon. The bayonets and execution block are only partially visible, indicating that they are not intended to be the main focus of the piece.

The most important visual elements are clearly meant to be Liu and her comrades. All other aspects of the lower frame are obscured by partial darkness, with the exception of the bayonets in front of Liu. Her comrades are bound and although this detail is not immediately apparent, it is important as it helps to emphasize the unity that exists amongst the peasantry. They may be standing behind Liu, but they are united with her in circumstance and outlook. The red flags surrounding Liu in the upper frame further serve to associate her with a specific cause, as her allegiance to the Party was less clear in earlier depictions. Colour is significantly more muted in this version, indeed the viewer's eye is immediately drawn to the red flags in the upper part of the poster as the lower panel is dominated by one colour in particular, black. When viewed from a distance, Liu stands out, the deep black of her peasant clothing providing a focal point. This choice of design was made to fulfil the criteria for depictions of Model Workers. The entire focus is on Liu and despite the crowd behind being elevated from a position of empathic mourners in the 1956 image to fellow revolutionaries in this 1965 edition, they are still considered secondary characters who are not to detract from the prime significance of the chief model.

⁶⁰⁸ X. Chen, *Acting the Right Part: Political Theater and Popular Drama in Contemporary China*, (University of Hawaii Press, 2002), p.106.

Contextual Information.

As is to be expected of a ‘Young Heroes scroll,’ the poster contains an accompanying text to explain Liu’s background and the story of her martyrdom. Translation of the text is as follows:

Liu Hulan was born in Yunzhouxi village, in Wenshui county of Shanxi Province on the 8th of October 1932. She secretly joined the Chinese Communist Party as a youth member in June 1946. She served as a secretary of the Women’s Salvation Council in the village and as a member of the Women’s Salvation Council in the district. On the 12th of January 1947, Liu was arrested by the armies of Jiang Jieshi and Yan Xishan and sacrificed her life.

Liu was entirely devoted to the liberation of the people. When confronting the enemy, her firm and unyielding attitude showed her noble quality as a Chinese Communist Party member. On the 1st of August 1947, Liu was posthumously awarded the title of full Chinese Communist Party member by the Chinese Communist Party’s Jinsui Bureau.

Interestingly, by comparison to the text that accompanied fellow Model Worker, Dong Cunrui,⁶⁰⁹ there is very little here that provides additional detail towards an interpretation of the posters. The viewer learns of Liu’s background and the great revolutionary work she has undertaken, but information regarding the reason for her sacrifice or its nature is rather sparse. By contrast to the earlier 1956 poster (figure 3.2), the enemy are explicitly named as the Guomindang. The earlier poster was produced during the period of nation building following the Civil War, it was perhaps felt that it was not wise to draw attention to the conflict that had riven society. By 1964 the political situation had changed considerably as the identification of class enemies became a priority.

⁶⁰⁹ Chapter 5, p.298.

It is this aspect upon which there is a clear focus, specifically that it was not just ‘Gongchandang’ (共产党) - ‘The Communist Party’ but ‘Zhongguo Gongchandang’ (中国共产党) - ‘The Chinese Communist Party.’ This further emphasised the point that the Party is the nation. By contrast, the opposition is referred to as ‘Guomindang’ (国民党) - Nationalist Party and not ‘Zhongguo Guomindang’ (中国国民党) - Chinese Nationalist Party. The written information is thus provided as a ‘factual account’ and is intended to influence the reader by establishing a clear link between a hero of the people, Liu Hulan and the Chinese Communist Party. Although lacking in detail, the text does serve to answer the key questions of ‘where?’ ‘how?’ and ‘why?’ The focus on dates and titles further indicates that the image was intended for school children who were being educated in the history of the struggle of the Chinese Communist Party.

[Interpretation.](#)

As with the 1956 depiction of Liu Hulan, this 1964 edition is similarly light on nationalism, with the exception of the red flags surrounding Liu in the upper frame and representative of the Chinese Communist Party. By contrast, as with earlier representations, the social reform aspect is considerably stronger. The poster contains elements of empathy, community spirit, hard work and the desire to fight. Both empathy and community spirit are symbolised and promoted by the way in which Liu is backed by those around her. The revolutionaries share the same fate because of their devotion to the community. The aspect of determined labour for the Revolution is represented in the text by the way in which the story of Liu details her unswerving commitment to the cause, specifically of woman’s emancipation in her position as secretary of the Women’s Salvation Council. It is however, the final aspect, the desire to fight, that is most pronounced in this image and the one that differs most notably to

the 1956 depiction. The villagers in the earlier representation were empathetic, but powerless. In this 1965 version their spirit has, to paraphrase Lu Xun, been changed even further as they are united against a common enemy. Lu Xun had watched as his compatriots showed indifference to the suffering of their fellow man, but not so the united peasantry supporting Liu Hulan.

The key ideas presented by propagandists are the images of heroism and unity. Consequently, the development of socialism is also a weaker, but still present theme. The Maoist-inspired will-power exemplified by determination in the face of impossible odds, in this case the bayonets of the unseen enemy, is clearly displayed, but with the important addition that the people stand together and not alone. Moreover, the egalitarian nature of the new socialist society is presented to an even greater extent than in the 1956 version, as Liu, a woman, leads a diverse group of men in defiance of the enemy. By contrast to earlier posters Liu does not stand alone, the viewer may find the image rather dark, but the unity of the people was perhaps intended to be the beacon here, united not just by a female model, but by a 'child,' the future of the People's Republic.

Dong Cunrui

When audiences attended the first screenings of Guo Wei's *Dong Cunrui*, there is little doubt that many were anticipating one particular scene. Dong's sacrifice for his comrades and the Revolution when he detonated explosives under the bridge in Longhua County, would have been already extremely familiar to the audience. This was because it had already been immortalised in a number of propaganda posters even prior to the successful conclusion of the Revolution. Dong was said to have held the explosive rounds to the bridge with one hand, his arm raised upwards in a pose of resolute defiance of the enemy. A number of posters were produced following the Party's victory in 1949. They detailed the moment of his sacrifice, however, they differ quite significantly in their portrayal of Dong and his act of personal martyrdom. Through analysis of these posters it is possible to see an evolution in the way in which heroes were to be portrayed to encourage and motivate the people. Design styles evolved considerably over the period studied as artists adapted their work to further specific, but often changing propaganda objectives. Produced in 1954, designed by Gao Hong (高红),⁶¹⁰ figure 4.1 presents Dong Cunrui in his iconic pose. However, from a propaganda perspective it is clear that the image appears rather mixed in the message that it conveys.

⁶¹⁰ chinese posters.net. *Gao Hong (高红)*. [ONLINE] Available at: <http://chinese posters.net/artists/gaohong.php>.

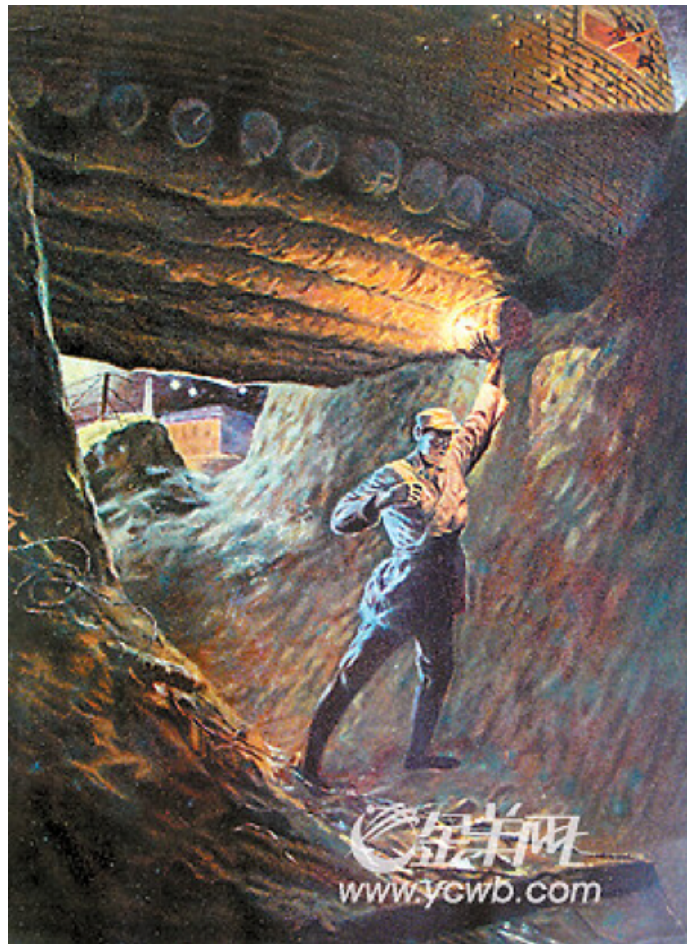


Figure 4.1 – 'Dong Cunrui sacrificed himself to bomb the blockhouse.' (1954).

In this portrayal, Dong is seen holding the explosives to the bridge, but the way in which his right arm is presented does not appear to indicate resolution, but rather hesitation. In addition, Dong's facial features are difficult to discern, but it is clear that his eyes are gazing downwards as if in silent resignation to his fate. The viewer is given the impression that this is a man doing his duty, but that he is fully aware of his own impending demise. Here Dong looks less an immortal hero of the people and more of a complex individual who fully understands the burden of his decision. In addition, because of the use of rather drab (and arguably realistic) colours, Dong rather tends to merge with the walls of the tunnel, the focal point becoming the lit explosive. Thus and perhaps unintentionally, the focus is upon the device about to end life rather than the strength and resolve of a man willing to sacrifice himself for the greater good.

Such a portrayal may have been more realistic, but it was clearly not suitable for the more unsophisticated message that the propaganda department wished the people to understand and embrace. Chang Tai-Hung, in her study of Chinese artists after the Revolution, notes that one of the considerable differences between Chinese and Soviet propaganda posters was the way in which the more difficult issues of sacrifice were presented.⁶¹¹ Chang argues that whilst there was, on occasion, a bleakness about Soviet posters, this was largely absent from their Chinese poster counterparts. The work of some Chinese artists was rejected because it failed to provide a more optimistic portrayal of sacrifice. Indeed, this was certainly true of figure 4.1.

Later attempts at portraying Dong's iconic moment were, it would appear, more successful, at least by the standards of the propaganda department. Whilst there is little evidence to suggest that figure 4.1 was ever in widespread circulation, later images were produced in great numbers.

⁶¹¹ Hung, p.783-814



Figure 4.2 - Young Hero Scroll Number 4. (1956).

Content Analysis.

Following the criticism levelled at the earlier portrayal of Dong Cunrui's heroic moment in the work produced after his death in 1956, this poster, designed by Xu Jiping, presented an entirely different approach. Whilst the earlier poster was clearly intended to have a deeper artistic message, this one, produced in 1956, but re-released in 1961, was far more straightforward (Figure 4.2). The 1954 version was perhaps

intended to serve a dual function of both propaganda and artistic expression. The layout of this one, released in 1956 is completely different and was part of the 'Young Heroes Scrolls' series. The first frame presents Dong in portrait form, the second the moment of his heroic death. The first frame has an ethereal quality, his head is surrounded by what appears to be a cloud, his features are soft and rather angelic. This is juxtaposed with the second frame. In this frame the lighter clouds of the first frame are darkened as Dong stands firm in the foreground underneath the bridge, holding the explosives to its underside; he has a look of steely determination. Compared with the 1954 version, this attempt contains far less background detail. In addition, whereas the 1954 poster had hints of an unseen enemy in the machine gun nest above the bridge, this one contains only one person, Dong himself. This is perhaps significant as propagandists were most probably trying to emphasise the strength of a solitary individual in protecting the motherland. As with most propaganda posters featuring Model Workers, this one details the fundamentals of self-sacrifice for the Party and the People. Dong stands with his fist clenched and arm raised. In contrast to the earlier painting, he does not look down, but to the side, his eyes fixed on some unseen point as he awaits his inevitable death.

As a message, the image is highly effective, as the double frame design demonstrates the Party's propaganda message that ordinary people are capable of doing extraordinary things exceptionally well. The second frame however is a little less clear as the presentation of Dong is slightly ambiguous. It is clear what he is doing, but the way in which he is standing is rather casual, and it is not entirely certain what he is looking at. As a propaganda message the intention is clear. However, there is some ambiguity in the presentation of Dong that renders the image slightly less effective on an emotional level than the earlier 1954 depiction. Whereas the 1954 design could be criticized for

presenting a not wholly positive image of sacrifice, as Dong looks down clearly deep in thought, this later depiction is far less emotionally complex. It is more difficult to relate to this portrayal as the character is displaying neither resignation to his fate nor extreme determination and pride. Consequently, as a visual message the poster succeeds, at the very least by clearly showing the duty of an individual. This is achieved by the juxtaposition of two contrasting pictures. However, its success in demonstrating the iron resolve of an individual fighting for the people and armed with the power of revolutionary ideals is more debatable.

Visual Analysis.

In the first frame, Dong is prominently displayed in the foreground, surrounded by a kind of grey mist. There is clearly an attempt to present him as a heavenly figure. He may have died, but by wearing his Peoples' Army uniform he is immortalised. However, if Dong is in heaven in the first frame, he is undoubtedly in some kind of hell in the second. As detailed above, the clouds have changed colour from wispy grey to a darker red and the background is bleak and harsh, the only light provided is by the explosives that Dong is holding and some from the stars in the background.

The most important visual elements in the piece are clearly Dong himself and the explosive that he is holding. Other elements, particularly the background, although quite well-defined, lack the same level of detail as that lavished on 'the hero.' There is no intention to diminish the presentation of his sacrifice as the viewer's eye is drawn towards his face illuminated by the explosives that he is pressing to the underside of the bridge. The explosives also appear to be providing a spotlight effect, which appears illogical as the fuse is not facing that part of the wall. This was presumably added to give more emphasis to the power of the explosives, but also to provide more

illumination for his face. Moreover, in itself, his face is another important visual element as there is a clear contrast in his expression to that of friendly ‘man of the people’ in frame one, to determined sacrificial hero in frame two. However, even though his gaze is slightly more determined in frame two, the artist has given Dong extremely soft features; his face is round, there are no harsh lines.

The use of colour is far more vivid in this version than the earlier 1948 depiction; however, reds are used sparingly, presumably so that they were more eye catching. In an examination of frame one, the eye is drawn to the red star on Dong's cap, but it is barely visible in frame two, with the focus instead being the bright white of the lit fuse. Again, the first frame is used to demonstrate the differences in situation. His uniform in frame one shines a bright green, akin to the shining white robes of a celestial being, whereas in frame two the colours are far more muted, his uniform darkened by the location. However, of significance is the use of colour on the ammunition belts strapped to Dong's waist. The green used here is brighter than the rest of his uniform, conceivably because the artist wished to draw attention to it. This was perhaps because it was important to remind the observer how well equipped the soldiers of the People's Army were, that Dong was sacrificing himself through personal choice, not simply because he had run out of ammunition. The choice of colour may well have been made to emphasise this. In addition to the use of colour, it is clear that the artist specifically chose this particular stance in order to convey a sense of rising aspiration created by Dong's heroic action.

Contextual Information.

Accompanying the piece is a great deal of contextual information. A border frames the action and in a third frame below the main piece, the viewer is able to read the story of

Dong's sacrifice. The textual information is undoubtedly intended to appear factual, but is essentially the language of propaganda. This is evident even from the title of the series of which this painting is part. Earlier images of Dong did not contain such large amounts of explanatory information. This is probably because this painting was part of the 'Young Heroes Scroll' series. This contextual information provides some clues as to the main purpose of the piece as it clearly informed the design choices. Dong appears to be a very young man in this piece; he is not far from the age of students who would have been attending school. This is in contrast to the image portrayed in the 1954 poster. The hero portrayed there appears older, weary and is clearly battle hardened. The portrayal in the Young Hero Screen, could have been a classmate of the targeted audience, a recently graduated contemporary who had been recruited into the People's Army. The accompanying text (figure 4.2), reads:

'Dong Cunrui, a strong soldier, is from Nan Shan Bao, Hua Lai Town, Hebei Province. In May 1948, during the battle of Long Hua, a blockhouse was used by the enemy to block our way forward. Dong Cunrui bombed the blockhouse by lifting the TNT towards it by his left hand. He cleared the way for his comrades by sacrificing his young life. He was posthumously honoured as a Battle Hero and Model Party Member. His unit was also named after him.'

The accompanying text at the base of the poster provides further contextual information and would seem to indicate that it was indeed intended for a younger audience. The text is extremely direct, it focusses on four key points, conceivably to ensure that the reader would be able to easily understand and accept the explanation for Dong's death. From the text, the reader learns where Dong's sacrifice took place, why it took place and the glorious result. In addition, it can be understood for whom the text was designed by the way in which the language is used. One part of the text is particularly revealing as it states 'sacrificing his young life.' The text clearly matches the image, which suggests that despite dying, his memory will live on as he was, 'honoured as a battle hero and

Model Party member.’ Consequently, this follows the two frame format of the pictures. Firstly, his actions are well-defined and then his reward is ‘presented.’ This may also indicate that the poster was designed for a younger audience. Although he accepted the ultimate sacrifice, this is not without reward. He receives honours and recognition for his martyrdom. Conceivably, this type of message was believed to be more suitable for a younger audience, one not yet exposed to the horrors of war, but who were more likely to be caught up in the romantic excitement and idealism of combat. It is also interesting to note the use of the sentence ‘Qianjin de Daolu’ (前进的道路) - ‘our way forward’ in the text. This was also certainly added to increase the feeling of solidarity with whoever saw the picture and to promote the concept of unity of the Chinese people. The Party’s adversaries are not mentioned by name and are referred to simply as ‘di ren’ (敌人) - ‘the enemy.’

Interpretation.

The cause of Chinese nationalism is well represented in this depiction of Dong. In the early poster his national allegiance is not entirely clear. Although he is standing presented in his iconic pose, he is a far more anonymous figure; there is no indication of the army for which he is fighting. The later 1956 poster is, by contrast, far more successful in its identification of Dong as a Chinese soldier. In the first frame, one of the most prominent elements that the viewer’s eye is drawn to is the red star on his military cap. In addition, he sports an identification badge to make it absolutely clear who he is. Another element of nationalism that is evident in the 1956 image is the way in which Dong is equipped. The Civil War was a costly venture for the Communist Party, however Dong’s uniform is immaculate, he is extremely well equipped, with modern (for the time) ammunition belts strapped to his chest and long leather boots offering added protection. This is perhaps a far cry from the reality, but demonstrates

the extent to which propagandists were intent on presenting to the public an idealised version of the perfect Chinese soldier. The fact that he is so well equipped is in itself symbolic of nationalism. His uniform and resources have been provided by the country and utilised by the Party. The message is clear; despite fighting a civil war, China was capable of equipping its soldiers with the very best.

Whilst the promotion of nationalism may be the motivation of this piece, elements of social reform are also evident in the depiction of Dong. The need to promote empathy is an extremely strong element in this poster. This can be interpreted in two ways. Firstly, the very reason for Dong's actions, his feelings of compassion for those he knows will be killed unless he sacrifices himself. Secondly, there are the positive emotions that the viewer is arguably encouraged to have for Dong. His was the ultimate sacrifice; he gave his life so that others might live. Through this poster, the viewer is expected to empathise with his determination and drive, but also feel his pain. The 1954 portrayal of Dong demonstrated this feeling to a far greater extent than the second, but there are still elements of this in the second poster. Although he appears to be presented here far more resolutely, it is still clear that he knows exactly what he is doing. The person looking at the poster is thus expected to understand and empathise with the fact that although he is sacrificing himself, it is his conscious decision, one that he has arrived at precisely because of his belief that others will gain from his action. This element also feeds into the concept of community spirit. Ultimately, Dong's actions are the embodiment of the idea of service for the greater good, sublimation of personal ego and the desire to fight and overcome the evil of the enemy by violent means.

Maoist socialism is less well represented by the poster, there are very few elements that indicate an aspiration to promote socialist values. The egalitarian nature of Dong's rise to a position of prominence within his own unit is not apparent. However, the lack of an indication of rank on his uniform would seem to indicate a certain degree of egalitarianism. This poster personifies Maoist socialism only in that Dong Cunrui is clearly a member of the CCP. As noted above, this differs slightly from the earlier (1954) poster, wherein his affiliation is less obvious. In addition, stylistically the more liberal use of red in the poster could be symbolic of the blood of the people shed for the Revolution. In addition, Dong represents another aspect of Mao's teaching regarding the development of socialism. Mao stated that 'according to the Marxist theory of the state, the army is the chief component of state power. Whoever wants to seize and retain state power must have a strong army.'⁶¹² Dong epitomises this, in building socialism the power of the state resides in the army and in individuals such as Dong.

The most prominent ideas presented by the image are clearly those of heroism, nationalism and self-sacrifice. The use of the two frames demonstrates what can be achieved through 'model work,' that is working in the 'correct' and resolute way as dictated by the Party. The first frame shows the Model in a saintly pose, his actions on the earth below allowing him to achieve an exalted position in the heavens above. Although he has given his life, the observer is meant to believe that a Model can achieve a form of immortality as his actions are never forgotten by the people. The poster appears to demonstrate that although Dong's actions are extraordinary, they are not unique. He is physically depicted not so much as an exceptional individual, but as an 'everyman,' a person any individual can aspire to become. This consequently makes the propaganda all the more powerful and challenging to the viewer. As suggested

⁶¹² Z. Mao, *Problems of War and Strategy*, (Foreign Language Press Peking, 1960), p.13.

above, it is no coincidence that the Dong represented in this poster is so youthful; the target audience of school students most certainly could have related to him.

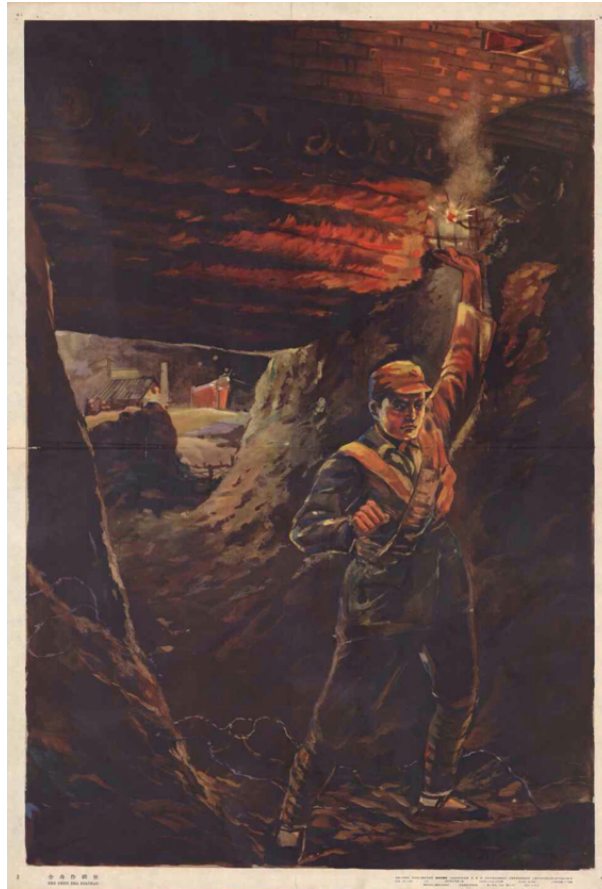


Figure 4.3 - 'Sacrificing oneself while blowing up a pillbox.' (1963).

Content Analysis.

The earlier 1956 poster was clearly designed to appeal to a certain audience, specifically younger people in the school environment. Later artists depicted Dong in a slightly different way, presumably to appeal to different audience expectations. There is no indication that earlier posters were withdrawn when new ones became available, unless they had been criticised for committing some kind of political error. In my interview with the director of the Shanghai Propaganda Art Centre, he confirmed that posters

were not retired when new editions became available.⁶¹³ In 1963, the propaganda department thus expanded its portfolio of posters portraying Dong's sacrifice, but this time for a noticeably different audience. Gone are the bright colours of the 1956 rendition, replaced instead by more muted, dark and sombre tints conceivably designed to appeal to an older audience, perhaps one that had experienced either the anti-Japanese, Civil or Korean War.

Immediately apparent in an analysis of this poster is the similarity in design to the earlier 1954 depiction. In 1954, artists had a far greater degree of freedom to present their subjects. By 1963 the propaganda department had much greater control over the production of art and it is inconceivable that the artist of this poster would have been able to produce it in this style without prior approval, let alone have it published. The question thus arises, 'What makes this poster a success and the earlier design a failure?' Firstly, the similarities. In this poster, designed by Fang Dong (方洞) and Zhao Jian (赵坚), Figure 4.3,⁶¹⁴ Dong is also looking slightly downwards, his gaze is not fixed on a glorious future, but on what he knows will be his death. In addition, his hand is also raised upwards, corresponding to the 1954 poster. In this poster he also blends slightly into the background. By contrast to the 1956 poster, his uniform does not serve as a symbolic beacon of shining light. However, it is on these three points that similarities end. There are a number of crucial differences that distinguish the posters.

Firstly, Dong's face. In the 1954 poster, it is rather difficult to make out his facial expression. The observer can see that he is looking down, but the stylistic features ensure that his expression is, at best, indistinct, at worst rather melancholic. His

⁶¹³ Appendix item 3.1, p.396.

⁶¹⁴ chinese posters.net. Zhao Jian (赵坚). [ONLINE] Available at: <http://chinese posters.net/artists/zhaojian.php>.

expression, as noted above, indicates sad resignation, rather than heroic commitment to the cause. By contrast, the facial expression of the Dong depicted in figure 4.3 is quite different. Although he is also looking down, the artist has rendered his face in far more detail. It is consequently easier to determine the artist's intention. Although Dong is looking down, his facial expression suggests that he is less resigned to his fate than ready to embrace it. There is a steely determination that is absent from the earlier 1954 work. Furthermore, whilst both posters show Dong with his hand raised, in the 1964 version his hand has formed into a fist, a clear demonstration of his strong determination compared with the rather more noncommittal presentation in the 1954 version.

Other aspects of figure 4.3 differ significantly from the 1956 version. The landscape in the earlier poster is far lighter, with the bridge featuring more as a background than a key part of the story which is graphically related by the artist. By contrast, the 1963 poster has greater focus on the bridge, it looms oppressively large over Dong and takes up a considerable amount, at least 1/3, of the poster. Barbed wire surrounds Dong's feet, another feature absent from the 1956 version, but present in the 1954 presentation. In addition, more detail has been given to the fortress on the hill that his unit were attempting to attack. In the 1956 version it is barely featured, the focus instead being solely on Dong himself. It is for this reason that I would suggest that this poster was targeted at an older and perhaps more reflective audience as there are far more elements that are demanding the attention of the viewer. Here can be seen three important elements to which the person looking at the poster has his or her attention drawn. Firstly, there is the oppressive nature of the situation, the bridge and the machine gun nest creating a forceful mood of menace. Secondly, the viewer is made aware of Dong's mission, through the presentation of the fortress on the hill. Thirdly, there is

Dong's sacrifice, as he battles with the first two elements for the sake of his unit. This message is arguably more complex than that of the 1956 poster, as it contains multiple messages. It may borrow significantly from the earliest 1954 poster, indeed I would suggest it is a reproduction with contentious elements removed, but the message although slightly more complex, is more clearly defined for the audience.

Visual Analysis.

The layout of the 1963 poster is quite different to the 1956 version. This edition has a far greater sense of depth than the earlier depiction. The reason for this is that the background is far more detailed, with more shading used to indicate the distance between the bridge and the fortress on the hill behind Dong. In the foreground, the eye is drawn towards the explosives being held to the bridge. However, there is far less emphasis put on the explosives than in the 1956 version of the scene, because, as stated above, the artist has chosen a far more muted colour scheme. It still figures prominently and serves to illuminate Dong's face, emphasising his determination. The outside world is far more obscured in this version, as the focus is almost entirely on the foreground and what is happening under the bridge. This is a more intimate depiction than the more ethereal quality of the 1956 version; one's eye is drawn into the scene as Dong appears closer and more immediate. In this version, he is a veteran soldier, his face is darker and his expression more battle-hardened than the boy in the 1956 portrayal. Veterans of China's most recent conflicts may have been able to empathise more easily with this depiction than the fresh faced boy presented in the 'Young Heroes Scrolls.'

The most important visual elements of this poster differ slightly from earlier versions. As previously noted, the bridge plays a far more prominent role in this version, conceivably to ensure that the enemy, although unseen, is perceived to be menacing and

formidable. This emotion is heightened by feelings of claustrophobia, caused by the looming bridge under which Dong stands. Indeed, the bridge plays a particularly prominent role as in this version it is possible to see, if only obscurely, the enemy that Dong is facing. The bridge has been fortified and contains a gun emplacement. Through a small opening it is possible to see a fixed gun, but of most interest is the choice of colour used for this small opening. There is a reddish orange tint to the background of the emplacement, and the smoke that rises from the gun suggests a kind of hellish inferno. As in the 1956 version of the event, the greatest emphasis is on Dong's face, although, as noted above it has been rendered quite differently to earlier versions. His complexion is still illuminated by the light of the lit fuse, although it serves primarily to emphasise his determined expression, rather than the 'halo' effect provided in the earlier version.

The choice of colour palette for this poster displays both similarities and differences to the 1956 poster. The artist still makes significant use of reds, however the shading is significantly darker. Overall, there is a far more muddled use of colour in this later design. Whilst the environment in the earlier 1956 version is reasonably detailed and well lit, this later version relies heavily on darker hues. Indeed, it almost feels as if Dong is emerging from the darkness to place his bomb under the bridge. Thus, colour appears to be used to demonstrate an almost spiritual awakening for Dong as he emerges from the darkness of the old society, ready to destroy it with a lit explosive. Interestingly, in this poster, red is not used in an altogether positive way. In the 1956 version, it is used to highlight Dong's allegiance to the Party (the red star on his cap) and to frame the picture as a whole. In this rendition, the reds used are darker and more oppressive; they are most notably used to highlight the interior of the machine gun nest and the glow of the lit explosive. There is a grim reality to Dong's grave situation in

this depiction which is largely created and maintained by the way in which the artist makes use of colour.

Contextual Information.

The earlier 1956 depiction of Dong Cunrui's sacrifice contained a great deal of contextual information whereas in this version it is far more sparse. The only accompanying text is the artist's name and evidence of its publication. No explanation is given as to the subject matter of the poster, nor is the viewer given any assistance in interpreting the intended message. This is conceivably because, as noted above, the poster was designed for a wholly different audience to the school children targeted by the 1956 version. As the hero presented is both older and clearly a combat veteran, the target audience would conceivably have been the same. Thus, there was arguably no need to provide this audience with any more detailed written information for them to decipher. Indeed, this poster perhaps works on a different level, that of reinforcement. Soldiers who fought in the Civil War knew what was expected of them ideologically. For example, study sessions regarding political theory and the mission of the Party were frequently undertaken. Thus, this poster would serve to demonstrate how a soldier would be able to perfectly fulfil the requirements of both the Party and the new society that he was involved in constructing. Consequently, there was no need for further contextual information as this had already been provided by the intended viewer's political education whilst serving in the People's Army.

Interpretation.

Whilst each of the posters studied are testament to China's strength as a military force and are thus highly nationalist in nature, this version presents a slightly different

approach. Dong Cunrui, as represented in this 1963 poster, has neither rank insignia nor any indication of which political party or faction he belongs. He is simply presented as a slightly austere looking veteran of combat. Again, the enemy is not apparent to the viewer and is only fleetingly observable in the machine gun nest. This was arguably because censors most certainly did not want to dwell on the disunity inherent in a Civil War. Consequently, the enemy remains safely anonymous. Indeed, the inferno like quality of the machine gun nest indicates an almost otherworldly foe against which the nation is in mortal combat. Dong's stance indicates that there will be only one possible victor; the people of China. In addition, as outlined above, Dong is well equipped; the nation is more than able to provide for its people.

One significant element in this poster indicates that social reform was a key consideration for the artist. As with the earlier 1956 version, self-sacrifice is the main aspect of social reform featured. However, the self-sacrifice in this poster is slightly different to the earlier version. Whereas in the two-frame 1956 version his sacrifice is seemingly rewarded with an ascension to 'heaven' in the first frame, this later poster contains no such guarantee. Dong's grim, but resolute expression would seem to indicate a less cheerful reality. Whereas perhaps the younger viewers of the earlier painting needed to be provided with a more joyful resolution for Dong, this later version appears more concerned with depicting the reality of his sacrifice, but without the need to gloss over it. As noted above, this is almost certainly because of the slightly older target audience who were perhaps believed to be more developed ideologically than the younger more inexperienced viewers of the earlier 1956 version. Dong's example was designed to counter what was believed to be the more selfish instincts of the 'old society' wherein the people were purely concerned with self-preservation. By presenting Dong in this way, without any celebrity gloss, the artist offers the ideal of

more evolved ideological thinking. Dong is sacrificing himself with no possibility of reward, he is simply doing the ‘right thing.’

As in the earlier 1956 version of the poster, there is an obvious lack of rank insignia in this later 1963 version. However, the earlier version did feature some detail regarding that which he was fighting for, as the red star on his cap is clearly visible in the first frame. For the viewer there is arguably no need for his army status to be detailed, he is simply a comrade, one of the masses, similar to the observer. He is the embodiment of the masses, he performs his actions in service of the people. He carries out his act of sacrificial heroism not because he is in some exalted position, but because he is acting in the interests of the people. The lack of insignia or other identifying elements also points to an acknowledgement of the egalitarian nature of Mao’s socialist People’s Liberation Army.

The ideas presented by this poster are largely similar to the 1956 version. However, there are some slight differences, largely brought about by the need to appeal to a different target audience. Heroism and nationalism are clearly the main concepts that the poster attempts to communicate. However, the artist appears to convey these key ideas in a slightly more realistic, or ‘adult’ way. According to this poster, Dong is clearly a hero fighting for the people. However, his sacrifice is arguably on a higher level than the one depicted in the 1956 version, simply because there is no visible sign of reward being offered. Instead, the viewer is presented with an image of a more realistic, grim determination to ‘serve the people.’ This in itself serves the nationalist cause as it demonstrates the strength of the Chinese people who are willing to sacrifice themselves for more noble ideas, no matter the personal cost and with no thought to any opportunity of personal gain. Although there are certainly significant similarities

between each of the posters being studied, there is clearly also some evolution in the construction and conceptualisation of the ‘hero’ specifically related to the target audience and changes in the political and social situation of the country over the time studied. These are factors that will be examined a little later.



Figure 4.4 - 'Young hero hanging picture 2.' (1964).

Content Analysis

Published a year later than the previous propaganda poster, this 1964 version presents Dong Cunrui's sacrifice in a considerably different way to the dark and sombre edition produced in 1963. Whereas the other posters in this study focus solely on a single Model Worker, this piece combines the stories of two, Liu Hulan and Dong Cunrui.

The combination of these two Models is an intriguing choice as although they both sacrificed their lives for the Revolution, they did so under quite different circumstances and in addition, their backgrounds were not entirely similar. However, there exists enough common ground between the two so that combining them appears logical, especially when the intended audience is taken into consideration. As with the earlier 1956 version, it would appear that this poster was primarily designed to appeal to younger people.

The choice of both Dong Cunrui and Liu Hulan thus makes more sense as both of these heroes were young when they died (aged 19 and 15 respectively). The posters are also part of the 'Young Heroes Scrolls' collection. It would seem that this series was deemed successful, as there is a gap in time between the 1956 version of the earlier Hero's Scroll and this later version. Significantly, the text 'Young Heroes Scroll' appears below both Liu Hulan's story and that of Dong Cunrui. This indicates that although they appear together on this poster, it was also possible to present them separately. I will thus focus solely on the part presenting Dong Cunrui, but will conclude with some contrasting observations regarding the inclusion of both posters.

This version of Dong's story is significant as it clearly demonstrates an evolution in presentation. Whereas this poster borrows some design cues from the 1956 version, notably the two-frame presentation of the Model Worker, the latter two-frame version shows a distinct change in artistic direction. In the first frame, the viewer is once again presented with an idealised form of Dong's face. However, there are significant differences in this portrayal. Firstly, it is clear that the artist's years of training in the "socialist realism" style had been effective. This depiction of Dong is far more realistic looking than the version of 1956. The heavenly clouds of the earlier version are gone

and he is instead surrounded by red flags. The ethereal quality of the earlier version has been replaced by the more convincing reality inherent in the socialist realist style. His facial expression is also noticeably different.

The earlier 1956 version represented him almost as a cherub, with a soft round face and red cheeks. By contrast, in this version he has slightly more angular features and most significantly, his head is tilted slightly upwards as he looks to the success of a socialist future, one to which he has contributed, but will never see. Below the first frame, the viewer is given an explanation of Dong's actions. Below this, as in the 1956 version, a second frame details the last few moments of his life. Although he is still standing in his iconic pose, it is clear that there has been a significant evolution in style. This reflects some of the hallmarks of the Cultural Revolution. The use of the frames bears little resemblance to the more elaborate design used in the 1956 version. Gone are the more detailed flourishes of the earlier edition, to be replaced by simple black lines. Indeed, the design is significantly more austere than the earlier versions, the focus, particularly in the second frame, is on one element, the hero himself.

Visual Analysis.

The first frame is exceptionally flat, although Dong's face is more clearly defined than in earlier versions. By comparison, there is a far more photographic quality to the depiction compared with earlier versions. Whereas the first frame of the 1956 version depicted him as a young man, with boyish red cheeks, this Dong appears significantly more remote. He stares into the distance, his head tilted slightly upwards and to the left. There is a certainty to his expression that is largely absent in other versions. He is flanked by red flags, replacing the heavenly clouds of the 1956 edition. Apart from the inevitable use of the iconic pose, the second frame bears little similarity to earlier

depictions. As was in keeping with the conventions of the Cultural Revolution established by Jiang Qing for artistic works, Dong is placed front and centre in the frame. Simply put, he IS the foreground. There is little to no room for any other features apart from him. He stands tall, holding his explosives to the bridge; all other detail is of secondary significance. In the background it is possible to see only clouds of smoke and a barbed wire fence.

In earlier versions of the poster, it was possible to see the fortress that the troop were attempting to capture, the night sky was visible and the bleak nature of the trench was very visible. In this poster, there are little if any superfluous elements that detract attention from the hero. Interestingly, it is possible to see machine gun fire coming from the bridge. Rather bizarrely, it appears to be firing backwards into the stronghold of the enemy. This must be the case as at the point of sacrifice Dong was believed to have shouted to his comrades who were advancing in front of him. The guns should therefore have been facing in the other direction, as in the other earlier depictions. However, it is conceivable that the artist was attempting to simply provide some visual energy to an otherwise rather static scene. The political nature of the art would surely have meant that every single element of the poster was thoroughly checked for detail.

In accordance with the requirements for art of the Cultural Revolution, the most important visual element is the hero himself. Although he was naturally the most significant feature of each propaganda poster, in this edition the focus on him is even greater. He is placed 'centre stage,' dwarfing all other elements. The Cultural Revolution committee had stated that heroes must be at the absolute centre of any work. In addition, they had to be slightly elevated when compared with other secondary characters. In this poster there are no secondary characters, instead background detail

fulfils this role. The hero is most certainly slightly elevated and is the only focus of the poster. This representation also fulfils another requirement of the Cultural Revolution group. Although earlier depictions of Dong showed him to be well equipped, this poster takes this to another level. He carries an automatic weapon, a piece of equipment that the People's Army would only have had access to if they had 'liberated' it from either the Japanese or the Guomindang. The latter had been supplied this weapon by the United States and the People's Army frequently captured and made use of them. This is arguably one of the slight ironies of the poster; Dong's power comes from the barrel of a foreigner's weapon, not from something domestically produced.

Of interest is how the depiction of Dong carrying a gun is so much different to earlier portrayals. According to the story of Dong's sacrifice, the reason he used the explosives to destroy the bridge was because there was no other option available to him. Although he was carrying a gun, it was useless in his final moments. In the film representation of his sacrifice he discards his firearm in order that he can more effectively place and secure the explosives to the bridge. In earlier posters, he carries no weapon, his right hand either resting to his side or, in later versions, clenched in a fist. In this version, he carries a weapon, despite the fact that it is functionally useless to him. This was conceivably because, in accordance with the requirements of the Cultural Revolution Group, an individual dedicated to the Revolution must always be ready to fight, even, at the point of imminent death. Indeed, his looming death is another key feature that distinguishes this Dong from the others. Whereas in earlier versions there is a semblance of either sadness or conviction in his expression, in this version his facial expression is not indicative of a man who is about to die. In fact, he could as easily have been holding up a scaffold as sacrificing himself. Undoubtedly, the intention of the artist was to present a picture of steadfast determination and belief in the

cause of the Revolution. However, there is no hint of vulnerability, no indication that this man realises he is about to die. Art may have been designed during this era to be 'more brilliant,' but the Dong Cunrui presented here lacks a connection with reality or indeed humanity, which in turn perhaps makes him a more difficult figure with which to empathise. Dong is the centre of this image, there is little to no other detail, even the explosives figure less prominently than in earlier illustrations and the colour chosen for them is also troublesome.

The use of colour in this version is considerably more sparse than in earlier editions. The nondescript nature of the background is generally attributable to the lack of colour range used by the artist. The greys and browns that are used serve a singular purpose, they help to highlight the focal point of the poster, Dong himself. It is clear that the requirements of the Cultural Revolution Group were rigidly adhered to. Not only is he, as mentioned above, front and centre, but his uniform appears somewhat iridescent, illuminating the whole piece. In earlier versions the lit explosives had provided light by which the observer could see him more clearly. In this poster, the situation is reversed, the light of his uniform highlights the explosives that he is holding to the underside of the bridge. Red is used far more sparingly in this edition, indeed it only features in the flags draped beside Dong in the first frame. This clearly has the effect of drawing undistracted attention to them. The hero is surrounded and embraced by these flags, perhaps providing a feeling of safety and assurance to the viewer. It is curious as to why the explosives were depicted in white. It is unlikely that they would have been such a colour because it would have made them more easily identifiable by the enemy. This colour choice is thus difficult to understand, unless it was intended to assist in the further illumination of the uniform.

Contextual Information.

As with the 1956 version of the poster, there is some useful contextual information included. Because it was designed to be part of the ‘Young Heroes Scrolls’ series, it features an accompanying text. The text is of similar length to the 1956 version, but is this time placed in between the frames rather than at the foot of the poster. This was conceivably to create a sharper and more immediate focus. The text reads:

1964.

Dong Cunrui, born in 1929, was from Nan Shan Bao, Huai Lai Town, Hebei Province. All of his ancestors were poor peasants. When he was a child, he used to help on his father's farm and look after sheep and cows. In 1940, he joined the children's Anti-Japanese group in his hometown Nan Shan Bao and was elected as the leader of the group. In August 1945 he joined the PLA and served as vice squadron leader and squadron leader. In 1947, he joined the CCP. During all the battles he engaged in, he received outstanding awards three times and minor awards four times. In May 1948, the Battle of Long Hua, Dong Cunrui bombed a blockhouse by holding the TNT and sacrificed himself ensuring the victory in the battle. He was only 19 when he died. He was honoured as a model CCP member and battle hero posthumously by the PLA 11th Committee .

1956.

Dong Cunrui, a strong soldier, is from Nan Shan Bao, Hua Lai Town, Hebei Province. In May 1948, during the battle of Long Hua, a blockhouse was used by the enemy to block our way forward. Dong Cunrui bombed the blockhouse by lifting the TNT towards it by his left hand. He cleared the way for his comrades by sacrificing his young life. He was posthumously honoured as a Battle Hero and Model Party Member. His unit was also named after him.

It is clearly evident that there are some differences between the two texts detailing the hero's final moments. The later dated text is far longer and contains a great deal more detail about Dong's background. Indeed, the guiding hand of the Cultural Revolution Group is clear to see. From the second text the perfect class background of the hero is detailed. He is the son of a poor farmer and crucially it is emphasised that ‘all of his

ancestors were poor peasants.’ This reflects the prevailing concept of the time, that of inherited class, a concept strongly promoted during the Cultural Revolution era. This concept encouraged people to believe that individuals were ‘born red,’ that their class status, whether good or bad was inherited from their ancestors. The reader also learns that Dong was active during the anti-Japanese struggle, despite his young age. The writer has thus highlighted two of the three principles that define a hero according to the values of the Cultural Revolution. He has explained Dong’s perfect class background and his willingness to fight the Japanese. He fulfils the final requirement by explaining how this young hero’s actions have always been perfect. Every battle in which he was involved resulted in victory and in every situation, since childhood, he was a leader. This ideally fits the narrative of the born hero, as promoted by the Cultural Revolution Group.

Language is used in the text in such a way that it confirms who the target audience were. Despite the fact that, particularly during the Cultural Revolution, the use of superlatives such as ‘hen’ (很) - very, ‘feichang’ (非常) - extremely, ‘zuihao’ (最好) - ‘best, first-rate’ dramatically increased, their use does not extend to these posters. This would further indicate that they were intended for a younger audience. However, one of the key language differences between the two versions is its overall simplification. Although the 1956 version of the poster is shorter, the language it employs is more complicated and contains far more adjectives to describe Dong. The second, poster (1964) is simplified and fewer adjectives are used. This is unusual as the use of such adjectives dramatically increased during the Cultural Revolution. However, their use is much more limited in this poster. In a further indication that this was intended for a younger audience, there is an absence of more technical revolutionary language. Rather ironically, considering the time in which it was produced, the later poster makes Dong

appear less heroic than the first, because of the more limited use of adjectives. The 1964 version sacrifices the focus on Dong's more recent actions for a more detailed survey at his class background. This was clearly in keeping with the focus on class and its context during the Cultural Revolution. In this version, the language reveals that Dong is a hero because of his background, he was born a hero, this was clearly as important as the sacrifice that he made in destroying the blockhouse.

[Interpretation.](#)

Both nationalism and social reform are well represented in this edition of the poster. It offers the clearest example yet of the vision for a new, powerful China led by heroes such as Dong Cunrui. As noted above, there was clearly always a conscious effort by artists to portray the modernity of the Chinese soldier. This is taken a step further in this poster as Dong carries weaponry that was not in widespread circulation during the Chinese Civil War; he carries the most up to date weapon of warfare. Whilst the reality may have been that many PLA soldiers had to share rifles that were relics of the First World War, Dong Cunrui is presented as the epitome of the ideal Chinese warrior. He stands upright, undaunted by unseen adversaries. He carries advanced weaponry, his pristine uniform proudly represents his country and he epitomises all that is ideal about the nation. Interestingly, another detail that differs from earlier depictions are his shoes. In earlier editions he wears combat boots, whereas in this portrayal he is wearing more traditional style slippers. Whilst these may have been less suitable for the mud and wire of trench warfare, they compellingly identify Dong as an ordinary soldier.

More than any other depiction of Dong Cunrui, this one presents the values of what was expected of an individual of the 'New China.' As noted above, Dong's pose lacks any sense of fear or anxiety about his fate. He looks to the future, seemingly unconcerned

about the terrible circumstances of his present. His pose demonstrates real, almost unconscious commitment to the cause. His face bears the expression of a man who has truly sublimated himself to the Maoist ideal of the greater good; he performs his actions without any concern for his own safety or fate, he is truly acting collectively. Doubt and other concerns present in earlier posters have evaporated, he acts as part of a collective instinct, born of his study of Mao Zedong Thought. He is resolutely serving the people, he is no longer an individual, but part of a greater Chinese society. He acts almost unconsciously doing whatever he can to protect it. This representation is the ideal expression of the propagandists' dream, the 'new' thoroughly reformed Chinese man.

More than earlier depictions, this Dong stands alone, the focus and the centre of attention. Whereas other, earlier versions, showed elements of his hesitation and concern about his impending demise, this is absent from this edition. One of the central concepts of Mao Zedong Thought is a belief that through sheer strength of will, humankind can overcome the greatest obstacles. Dong Cunrui in this portrayal positively personifies this element of Maoist socialism, indeed he stands almost as if he expects to overcome death. In a sense, his certainty was to be rewarded as the Party blessed him with a form of immortality through their use of his image in propaganda work. It is this point that separates this version from the others and which demonstrates the potency of the concept of the triumph of the will over material reality and adversity.

The key ideas presented by the image differ slightly from earlier versions. Whereas there are clear elements of nationalism and heroism, the elements of social reform and Maoist socialism are intensified. This is achieved by the presentation of an image of sacrifice and Maoist-inspired will power, both combined with revolutionary fervour.

Dong as portrayed here is not simply a national hero, he has emerged from the chrysalis of Mao Zedong Thought, a fully formed new Chinese man, willing to sacrifice himself for the Revolution without question, certain that victory is assured. Propagandists no doubt fully expected that school children who saw this poster would have internalised the message, perhaps re-enacted what they understood and thereby consolidated their grasp of Mao Zedong Thought.

Huang Baomei.

The role of Huang Baomei as a Model Worker, had a more localised impact than others that form part of this study. Whereas Dong Cunrui and particularly Lei Feng were intended to inspire audiences across the country, through the use of extensive propaganda campaigns in all forms of media, the amount of material related to Huang Baomei is rather more limited. However, her position as a Model Worker was still of great significance because she was a member of the social class that was idealised as being at the very heart of a Marxist-Leninist revolution; the proletariat. The extent to which the propaganda phenomenon of Huang Baomei was more localised is logical, considering the state of economic development in China in the late 1950s. Shanghai was one of a limited number of fully industrialised cities in the country. Consequently, for propaganda to be effective it is understandable that the majority of attention given to Huang was in urban Shanghai. Her achievements would have had far less resonance in the countryside as peasant workers were preoccupied with rather different developmental concerns as the shift towards collectivisation continued. For this reason, the Huang Baomei propaganda campaign lacks the multitude of posters that were the hallmark of other Model Workers.

By comparison to the instructional posters of the type produced for the other models, Huang featured on a number of promotional posters produced by the studio. The first of these posters was on the back cover of the *Shangying Huabao* (上影画报)— *Shanghai Film Pictorial*, a magazine designed to promote films made by Shanghai studios. The image was included prior to the release of the film and was thus intended to function as a piece of pre-release propaganda. It is logical that anything related to Huang Baomei be released in this format because the intended audience for the film, the urban workforce, were more likely to be literate. Through its inclusion in a Shanghai based

magazine, a sense of local pride could also be generated. Although the propaganda campaign was largely localised to Shanghai, the range of material demonstrates the extent to which the urban propaganda machine had become well developed by the end of the 1950s. Whereas the CCP's earlier rural propaganda had appropriated traditional forms by copying 'new year prints,'⁶¹⁵ in urban Shanghai, Huang Baomei's image could be found on a wide range of materials. Indeed, a selection of bookmarks were produced bearing her image.⁶¹⁶ This further indicates the extent to which the propaganda machine was becoming more adept at selecting appropriate media for the more educated urban population.



Figure 5.1 - 'Shanghai Film Pictorial' (1958).

Prior to and following the release of the film *Huang Baomei*, a large number of publicity posters, postcards and other materials were released to promote the film.⁶¹⁷

⁶¹⁵ Chapter 5, p.243.

⁶¹⁶ Chapter 4, p.208.

⁶¹⁷ Appendix items 2.3, 2.4, 2.5 and 2.6.

Most of the promotional material features still images taken from the film. Figure 5.1, (designer unknown), is therefore significant as although the image has clearly been designed to offer an accurate representation of Huang Baomei, it has been painted by an artist. Although it is not possible to verify the exact photograph that the artist has used as inspiration for the piece, it does bear a striking similarity to Figure 5.2. Once again, the exact source of this image is unknown, but it is likely that it is from a set of photographs taken to promote the film. In my interview with Huang Baomei she mentioned that there were numerous photographs taken for promotional purposes.⁶¹⁸ The promotional poster mirrors the photograph, although some aspects have been emphasised to a greater extent than others. Although the image was designed to promote the film, there are still elements that focus on the core Model Worker values; the promotion of nationalism, social reform and the development of socialism. Indeed, in other more traditional Model Worker propaganda posters, the artist was free to focus on elements deemed to be the most important. However, in figure 5.1 the artist was working within greater limitations. By the time that Models such as Zhao Yiman and Liu Hulan had been immortalised, their story had become essentially unchanged. For Huang Baomei, as with Lei Feng a little later, the propagandists were there from the outset, crafting the story that they wished the public to receive. Promotional posters such as figure 5.1 are thus noteworthy as they provide greater insight into the process of creating a Model.



Figure 5.2 – Promotional photograph.

⁶¹⁸ Appendix item 3.2, p.404.

Content Analysis.

When compared with the poster used to promote the film adaptation of the life of Zhao Yiman,⁶¹⁹ figure 5.1 appears exceptionally sparse. There is little background detail and the image as a whole is far less visually complex. However, it serves the same function as the earlier 'Zhao Yiman' promotional poster. The key plot point is communicated to the viewer, although this is achieved in a rather more unsophisticated way than the earlier, Zhao Yiman, image. This is because, although the films both feature Model Workers and cover similar propaganda themes, they are nonetheless very different, with the earlier, 'Zhao Yiman' focussing to a greater extent on military, guerrilla action than the much more instructional 'Huang Baomei.' Figure 5.1 features the name of the magazine, *Shanghai Film Pictorial* with an image of Huang below, apparently inspecting a thread of cotton. Although the artist has attempted to capture the scene from figure 5.2 there are some key differences, mostly notably the way in which Huang is looking at the thread.

In the photograph she is quite clearly looking down at the cotton, inspecting it for imperfections. In figure 5.1 she appears to be staring into the distance as her eye line does not quite match the angle of the cotton that she is holding. The image was clearly intended to communicate to the viewer one of the main points of the film, that is, how seriously a Model Worker took the issue of quality control. It is thus interesting that the artist decided to change the focus of Huang's expression. This alteration was perhaps made so that there could be a greater focus on Huang's facial expression. She is presented as the quintessential factory worker. Her clothing is immaculate, her smile is broad and her face radiates happiness. Her uniform may be extremely clean, but the

⁶¹⁹ Chapter 5, p.258.

palm of her visible hand is slightly darker, indicating that she has been involved in manual labour. In figure 5.2 Huang is wearing a long sleeved shirt, whereas in figure 5.1 she is wearing short sleeves. This design choice was conceivably made so that an extra detail, of some significance, could be added to the poster. On her exposed wrist, significantly, Huang is wearing a symbol of prosperity, a wrist watch.

The effectiveness of the image as a visual propaganda message is considerably more difficult to determine than other posters. The artist has used an aspect of Huang's work with which the viewer would be most familiar and has given it particular emphasis. The same approach was used with posters featuring Dong Cunrui and Liu Hulan, however their stories were much more well-known than that of Huang. The image of her inspecting the cotton was clearly intended to become iconic as it was used in a number of other propaganda posters. The written text, as I shall examine, provides some context, however Huang's name is not present anywhere on the poster. The image thus relies on the viewer having some familiarity with this particular Model Worker in order to have a full appreciation of the background. It is highly likely that the viewer would have been aware of Huang Baomei as she was frequently featured in Shanghai newspaper reports.⁶²⁰

Visual analysis.

As already noted, visually the image lacks ideological complexity. The background is a simple blue which becomes lighter as it surrounds the Model, giving the impression that light it radiating from her. The foreground is largely dominated by Huang herself, with the name of the publication displayed in the top right of the image. The most important

⁶²⁰ Appendix item 3.2, p.405.

visual elements are the wrist watch, the apron and the shirt that Huang is wearing. These aspects clearly differ from the photograph in figure 5.2. The text on the apron is presented differently to the photograph, however it is not possible to determine whether the message has been modified in the transition to poster form. The apron has certainly been given greater prominence as red piping has been added in the form of a frame in an attempt to draw the eye to the message that the apron carries. The watch is also clearly of significance as it is absent from the photograph, but is a prominent part of this poster. In addition, Huang's clothing was meant to be noticed as the design is colourful, a far cry from the more drab and nondescript clothing that would normally be associated with a factory worker. Indeed, the colour is used to illuminate Huang's radiant face, providing a contrast with the dark blue background. Presentation of her hairnet is also rather different to the photograph (figure 5.2). The net has been pulled back further so that although it is clear that Huang is an industrial worker, she is also clearly a woman as more of her hair is displayed than in the original image; its colour and volume emphasising her youth and vitality. Because of the source material, the designer has chosen to depict Huang using a realistic styling. The reason for this is logical given that the image would have been used in conjunction with other forms of photographic media. Furthermore, one of the main 'selling points' of the film was the way in which it was presented as a 'documentary-drama.' Consequently, the use of a more abstract or stylised design for the poster would not have made logical sense.

Contextual information

Despite appearing as a magazine poster, figure 5.1 offers useful contextual information that would have given the viewer further insight into the meaning of both the film and the activities of the Model Worker. In the top right is the name of the magazine, 'Shanghai Film Pictorial.' Interestingly the text is presented in both pinyin (Latin

alphabet) and with traditional, rather than simplified Chinese characters. Earlier Model Worker posters did not contain pinyin as the language was developed during the 1950s. It was eventually standardised and adopted at the Fifth Session of the 1st National People's Congress in February, 1958. One of the intentions of the creation of pinyin was to aid in increasing the levels of literacy and also in the standardisation of pronunciation. The use of pinyin on magazine covers would have helped in this. The other section of text of significance is the inscription on Huang's apron. The text states,

'Learn from each other, help each other. Improve together by learning from others' strong points to offset their weaknesses.'

This clearly affects how the image is viewed and understood as it provides a greater degree of context and is consequently of the same degree of importance as the depiction of Huang. It provides insight into one of the key elements of the film, the importance of cooperation and by extension, the superiority of the socialist system over what had preceded it. For the viewer, the message is didactic and is endorsed by one of the most successful members of the new society, a Model Worker.

Interpretation.

An analysis of the image according to the propaganda values of nationalism, social reform and the development of socialism is rather more difficult than other posters that form part of this study. Indeed, when compared with other images, the lack of ideological information presented is rather striking. However, as the poster was intended primarily to serve as pre-release propaganda for the film this is understandable. The goal of the artist would have been to communicate to the viewer the plot of the film and to generate interest and anticipation in its release. Nevertheless, because of the

conceptualisation of the Model Worker there are still elements of nationalism, social reform and the development of socialism present as I shall now examine.

Aspects of nationalism are firmly wedded to the development of socialism in this image. The way in which Huang is presented is intended to promote the benefits of the new socialist society and also generate feelings of pride in the viewer in the tremendous developments that the new system has provided for the citizenry. Elements of social reform are rather more difficult to determine. However, the benefits of the Party's commitment to socialism are apparent. Huang is the image of the modern industrial worker, her clothing, watch and vitality are evidence of the way in which the socialist society has benefited the workers. She is presented as a happy and prosperous female worker in an advanced industrial society and on a par with any contemporaries from other advanced industrialised countries.



Figure 5.3 - 'Huang Baomei.' (1958).

Traditional poster depictions of Huang Baomei, such as those produced to showcase Model Workers like Lei Feng⁶²¹ and Liu Hulan,⁶²² were rather surprisingly, not a significant part of the overall media strategy for her promotion. Indeed, the majority of media material connected with the film takes the form of still pictures or artistic interpretations of these pictures. Figure 5.3 (designer unknown), represents a return to the more traditional form of poster propaganda. Although the image of Huang could have been inspired by any number of still images from the film, the way in which it is rendered is considerably different to the more realistic styling of figure 5.1. In effect, it has more in common with earlier depictions of Model Workers such as Liu Hulan and Dong Cunrui.⁶²³

Content Analysis.

When compared with figure 5.1, figure 5.3 is slightly more ideologically complex. The sparse nature of the first image, although replicated in this second poster, is of a rather different nature. The foreground and background are slightly more detailed and provide more context for the viewer than figure 5.1. In the foreground, Huang stands wearing her factory uniform, her cheeks a healthy red, indicating that she has been engaged in hard work. For promotional purposes, her name, in red, overlays her image, in hand-written style. In the background, two elements are apparent; Huang's factory and the blue skies of the People's Republic. The image, although simple in composition, informs the viewer of three specific things; the identity of the person in question, her position in society and her place of work. Huang is the only person present in the image and although she is clearly the dominant feature, she shares the propaganda space with a symbol of the country's progress, an industrial factory. As a visual message the image

⁶²¹ Chapter 5, p.339.

⁶²² Chapter 5, p.274.

⁶²³ Chapter 5, p.297.

is effective for the promotion of a film as all the key elements that need to be communicated to the viewer are present. Contextual information is provided in the form of details regarding the director and production studio and the name of Huang Baomei as the focus of the film. For the purposes of propaganda, the image is also effective. It presents a clearly understandable message to the viewer; China is an industrial country and Chinese women are a vitally important part of that society, worthy of admiration and emulation.

Visual Information.

As noted above, the background and foreground layers are not particularly visually complex. The foreground simply features Huang and the background is dominated by both the factory and the blue skies. The most important visual elements are therefore more simple to identify than in the more complex compositions such as those depicting Lei Feng.⁶²⁴ Huang is presented rather differently than in figure 5.1. Her clothing is not so decorative and her face has a slightly rougher tone. This, combined with her red cheeks and less styled hair further emphasises her position as a genuine, hard-working member of the proletariat. The factory dominates the background as the smoke, signifying production, surrounds Huang. Another interesting visual element is the fog-like texture applied to the bottom of the image. This is in reference to the 'fairy tale' sequences towards the end of the film wherein the factory workers are transformed into the cotton fairies of ancient stories to symbolise that they are now masters of production.⁶²⁵ Colour is used to emphasise the vitality of Huang through the hue of her cheeks and lips. When compared with figure 5.1, the brush strokes used by the artist in figure 5.3 are significantly more brash, giving the painting a rougher overall appearance

⁶²⁴ Chapter 5, p.339.

⁶²⁵ Chapter 4, p.215.

in keeping with the proletariat background of the subject. The Huang in this poster is feminine, but tough; a worker for a new age.

Contextual information.

Accompanying the image are several lines of text. However, because of the nature of the image, its position as a film promotion poster, the only context provided is related to its production. The largest text, in red, that reads ‘Huang Baomei’ (黄宝妹), simply the name of the Model. The text directly below states: ‘Bianju’ (编剧) - ‘screenwriters:’ Chen Fu(陈夫), Ye Min(叶明), ‘Daoyan’ (导演) - ‘Director:’ Xie Jin (谢晋), ‘Sheying’ (摄影) - Camera: Shen Xilin (沈西林). The text at the bottom of the page provides further production context, stating: ‘Tianma Dianying Zhipianchang Chupin,’ (天马电影制片厂出品) - ‘Produced by Tian Ma Film Studio,’ ‘Shanghai Dianying Zhipian Gongsì Jianzhi’ (上海电影制片公司监制) - ‘Executive produced (supervised) by Shanghai Film Studio,’ ‘Zhongguo Dianying Faxing Fangying Gongsì Faxing’ (中国电影发行放映公司发行) - ‘Distributed by China Film Distribution and Exhibition Corporation.’ The most significant aspect of the written text is the way in which the production details are presented. They are small, rather difficult to read and clearly not the focus of the poster. The real focus is the didactic promotion of Huang Baomei.

Interpretation.

As an image of nationalism, the way in which Huang is presented promotes both the development of China under the guidance of the Communist Party and the strength and the virility of its people. In the background the image of modernisation, the factory, is prominent, and contrasts with the blue skies of the nation. In the foreground Huang is

presented as the ideal female proletariat worker, strong, but still feminine, a representative of the 'new China' that the CCP was endeavouring to construct; she is an individual of which the nation could be proud. Social reform aspects are rather more simplistic as the only elements clearly present are Huang's clear commitment to hard work and her desire to fight for China's development, communicated through her determined facial expression.

The promotion of Maoist socialism is represented in two different ways. It was Zhou Enlai who requested that a Model Worker be found in Shanghai to promote the development of socialism in the cities, it is no coincidence that a woman was chosen to spearhead this campaign.⁶²⁶ Zhao Yiman and Liu Hulan had already demonstrated the extent to which women were presented as being an essential part of the construction of socialist China. They represented the National Bourgeoisie and Peasantry respectively. The inclusion of Huang Baomei continued this approach. It demonstrated to the viewing public the position of women in the continued re-construction of the country, in the vital area of industrialisation. Huang is the beneficiary of socialist policies; she is no longer a second class citizen, but leading the fight to improve the nation. In addition, the promotion of industrialisation through the depiction of the factories of Shanghai, serves as a vital reminder to the viewer of the way in which the city has developed under the socialist guidance of the Party.

⁶²⁶ Appendix item 3.2, p.404.

Lei Feng.

A comparison with other Model Workers that form part of this study highlights the problem of the selection of suitable propaganda posters for analysis. This lies not in their scarcity, but in the sheer volume that were produced and indeed continue to be produced following the start of the 'Learn from Lei Feng' campaign in 1963.⁶²⁷ Lei Feng emerged as a Model Worker following the failure of the Great Leap Forward. Earlier Model Workers had clearly not been entirely satisfactory as they had failed to inspire the people to the degree required to make the Great Leap Forward a success. Propaganda depictions of Zhao Yiman, Liu Hulan and Dong Cunrui had found varying degrees of success, but had also been criticised as they failed to represent perfectly, the ideal Model Worker. For the propagandists, the use of Lei Feng would provide the opportunity to work with what was essentially a composite of the ideal Chinese citizen; misinterpretation would be impossible as there was little to interpret that had not already been created by the propaganda department. In the film version of Lei Feng's life, entitled *Lei Feng*, produced in 1964, the character Lei stated that he wanted to be 'A Revolutionary screw that never rusts.'⁶²⁸ As a propaganda icon of the People's Republic, this aim has most certainly been achieved as aspects of Lei's character continue to be promoted by the current government. However, these aspects are those primarily connected with the social reform aspect of his character, specifically his empathy for others and selfless actions, combined with his love and commitment to China. His dedication to Mao and the development of socialism is, however, currently downplayed considerably.

⁶²⁷ Chapter 3, p.144.

⁶²⁸ *Lei Feng*, 1964, Directed by Dong Zhaoqi, [Film], China: August First Film Studio.

This was most certainly not the case with propaganda posters of the early 1960s as each and every aspect of the Model Worker campaign can be identified within the posters. The posters that I have selected were produced between 1963 and 1964 and represent a small sample of the range of style and thematic content. The production of Lei Feng posters appears to have accelerated during the period of the Cultural Revolution, that is, following 1965. However, because of the rather chaotic state of the Party bureaucracy during that period, it is rather more difficult to determine accurate dates and other publication details. Pre-Cultural Revolution posters are not affected by the same issues and analysis of their content reveals not only the origin of the People's Republic's greatest propaganda icon, but also appears to offer strong hints towards the future direction of the use of Model Workers during the Cultural Revolution. The first two posters I will examine were produced in 1963, the third in 1964. The posters will be analysed in chronological order in accordance with the propaganda values of nationalism, social reform and the development of socialism. The posters will be assessed according to the following criteria; content analysis, visual analysis, contextual information and interpretation. If the propagation of other, earlier Models had failed to prove inspirational enough to drive forward the Great Leap, Lei Feng provided an even more focussed approach based on the core values of the Model Worker.



Figure 6.1 - 'Learn from Lei Feng to be a Proletarian Revolutionary Soldier.' (1963).

The success of the Revolution saw the introduction of the People's Democratic Dictatorship, whereby the four major social classes defined by the CCP, were, in theory, united in their efforts to build a 'New China.' These four groups, the peasants, the proletariat, the national bourgeoisie and the petite-bourgeoisie, naturally held different levels of importance for the CCP. As noted in Chapter 1, the fortunes of these groups changed considerably throughout the decade following liberation. The petite-bourgeoisie, although part of the People's Democratic Dictatorship were not considered models to be emulated and therefore Model Workers were not developed from this class, their position was replaced by the People's Liberation Army. The National Bourgeoisie initially were included, with Models such as Zhao Yiman providing inspiration for members of that social class about how they should engage with the new state. However, following the Hundred Flowers and the closely connected 'Anti-Rightist' campaigns in the late 1950s, the position of intellectuals, particularly as

models of emulation, shrank considerably.⁶²⁹ By the early 1960s only the peasants, the proletariat and most importantly, the People's Liberation Army were regarded as appropriate models. This was because of the 'Learn from the PLA' campaign.⁶³⁰

Lei Feng may have emerged from the PLA campaign, but it is interesting to note the extent to which the original People's Democratic Dictatorship was still in the minds of propagandists. Figure 6.1, designed by Qian Daxin (钱大昕) in 1963 and published by the Shanghai People's Fine Art Publishing House, provides a statement of both the past, present and future of Chinese society.

Content Analysis.

The image is composed on two layers with a simple background/foreground design. In the background, Lei Feng depicted in two colours, red and white, can be seen with an inscription to his right, urging the viewer to 'learn from Lei Feng.' In the foreground there are four people, one from each section of the People's Democratic Dictatorship, with the exception of the petite-bourgeoisie, who has been replaced by a soldier of the People's Liberation Army. Each person carries the tools of their trade, thus indicating their position in society. Superficially, the image is intended to provide the viewer with an instruction to, 'learn from Lei Feng,' no matter their profession or occupation. However, there are other more subtle elements to the poster, as I will examine. The people in the picture are each presented in such a way that even without their implements their background would be clear to the viewer because of colour and clothing choices. In addition, the way in which they have been physically arranged indicates that they are already following the exhortation to 'learn from Lei Feng.' Each

⁶²⁹ Chapter 3, p.75.

⁶³⁰ Chapter 3, p.144.

person's steely gaze follows Lei's, which is naturally looking towards the bright future that they, together, are going to forge. Each individual stands upright, ready to fulfil their part, whilst their inspiration, Lei Feng, has an expression of benevolent certainty. As a visual message the image is effective because it is unlikely that any element of the poster would have been confusing or have caused uncertainty to the viewer. This is created by the exceptionally clear way in which all of the elements were presented. The message is clear, the people of the People's Democratic Dictatorship, the entire citizenry, must follow the example of Lei Feng.

Visual Analysis.

The poster, as noted, is constructed on two layers. However, both the foreground and the background contain depth. In the background, the image of Lei Feng is given a degree of depth by the brush strokes that provide lines surrounding his shoulders. This helps to enhance the image of Lei by making him appear three-dimensional. Depth in the foreground is provided by the layered position of each member of the People's Democratic Dictatorship. The worker from the proletariat is closest to Lei, followed by the peasant, then the intellectual and finally, a comrade from the People's Liberation Army. The most important design elements are Lei himself, the alignment of the citizenry around him and the way in which the implements of their occupations are so clearly presented. Colour is used to further highlight the occupation of each person in the People's Democratic Dictatorship. The use of varying skin tones achieves this. For example, the lighter skin of the intellectual contrasts with the darker skin of the workers engaged in manual activity, with the peasant, the industrial worker and with the soldier. In addition, there is a subtle difference between the industrial worker and his fellow manual working compatriots, as his skin is slightly lighter, indicating his position as a city worker. The peasant and the soldier are strikingly similar, indicating their shared

countryside origin. Bright red is also used to draw attention to the book being held by the intellectual. This matches the red surrounding Lei and the accompanying text, perhaps indicating that the book has been used to ‘Learn from Lei Feng.’ Overall, the design is anything but subtle, bold, thick brush strokes have been used to depict each subject, with shading used to further highlight their clothing.

Contextual Information.

Accompanying the image is the written command ‘Xuexi Lei Feng Zuo Yige Jianqiang de Wuchanjieji Geming Zhanshi’ (学习雷锋，做一个坚强的无产阶级革命战士) – ‘Study from Lei Feng. Be a strong proletarian revolutionary fighter.’ No other written text accompanies the poster, indeed even the designer’s name is absent in this edition. Although Lei Feng, by the mid to late 1960s would have been a very well-known figure, at the start of the campaign it is possible that some viewers may have been unaware of him. The text consequently provides greater context to the image as the viewer is made aware of Lei and his exalted position through the written proclamation. Furthermore, the manner in which the text is presented provides further insight into design choices and propaganda intentions. The first four characters, ‘学习雷锋’ (Study Lei Feng) are larger than the others. Consequently, the eye is drawn to them and although the other parts of the message are important, even a casual viewer would not fail to understand the overall instruction endorsed by the poster. The information is intended, because of the context, to be primarily instructional and designed to influence the way in which the members of the People’s Democratic Dictatorship are presented. Each member may be vitally important to the development of the People’s Republic, however they still require guidance so that they can achieve the status of being a ‘strong proletarian revolutionary fighter.’ Moreover, the text further emphasises the fact that

the poster was designed for the working people of China, as each group are instructed to learn from Lei Feng.

Interpretation.

Following the failure of the Great Leap Forward, the turmoil of the Hundred Flowers, the Anti-rightist Campaign and the propaganda mistakes of the Socialist Education Movement, a clearer message began to emerge with the 'Learn from the PLA Campaign.'⁶³¹ Model Workers of the People's Democratic Dictatorship had, conceivably, failed to inspire the people to the levels of achievement required for the Great Leap. As a propaganda tool, Lei Feng emerged from this era as the new guiding light. Figure 6.1 could thus be interpreted as a visual representation of the former Model Workers of the People's Democratic Dictatorship subordinating themselves to a new hero, the ideal Model, Lei Feng. Consequently, the image is rich in symbolism related to nationalism, social reform and the development of Maoist socialism.

Nationalist elements in the poster are strong, as the well-equipped workers of the People's Republic stand together. There is a strong degree of militarism present in the poster, the viewer's attention is drawn to the bayonet held by the soldier and the scythe held by the peasant worker. Above all, the artwork intends to project an image of unity, strength and determination. The workers are no longer divided, they are united in a common effort to build a glorious, socialist future, led by and underpinned by the power of the People's Liberation Army. Indeed, the badge on Lei Feng's winter hat is not that of the Party, but of the military. Likewise, the helmet of the soldier holding the bayonet features the same insignia. In addition, both Lei and the unnamed soldier hold the rank

⁶³¹ Chapter 3, p.144.

of Private, First Class. The soldier symbolically guards over the other members of society as they are surrounded and protected by the power of the nation's military. In addition, Lei Feng, the perfect role model for the nation's soldiers was, by his very nature, a symbol of national pride and strength.

A citizen with any familiarity of Lei's story would implicitly understand the extent to which he was a model of social reform. Lei's actions, as detailed in his diary, embody the key characteristics of empathy, community spirit, a selflessness, of hard work, self-criticism and a strong desire to fight.⁶³² By presenting Lei with a varied group of workers, specific elements of social reform were highlighted. Most obvious in Figure 6.1 is the way in which community spirit has been emphasized. Each represented worker-group is standing together. Society for them exists beyond their narrow field of expertise, they are presented as a unified social whole. Their stance indicates not only their determination and willingness to fight, but also the extent to which, for each group, hard work is a way of life. The muscular manual workers, represented by the industrial and peasant males, firmly grip the implements required for their work. The intellectual holds a revolutionary text with the same level of commitment. Each worker is ready and able to fight, if necessary; their facial expressions and the way in which they are standing, indicating their resolve.

Lei Feng was also the embodiment of the way in which an individual's life could be transformed by Maoist socialism. Lei's daily actions were carried out in service to the word of Mao, a point repeatedly made in filmic depictions, as noted in Chapter 4.⁶³³ Whereas Lei Feng had walked, sometimes literally, in the shadow of Mao, the workers representing the People's Democratic Dictatorship would in turn be inspired by the

⁶³² Chapter 1, p.12.

⁶³³ Chapter 4, p.226.

socialist values espoused by his life. The exhortation, to ‘Study from Lei Feng, be a strong proletarian revolutionary fighter’ indicates the extent to which each class still had some developmental distance to cover before they could become fully accepted as part of the new socialist society. According to the poster, the socialist society built thus far had brought each of the social groups prosperity, as is evident from the way in which they are well equipped and radiate physical and moral strength. The image draws a clear line between the individual in society and their relationship with the nation. A Model Worker cannot just excel at their occupation, they must also be a ‘revolutionary fighter,’ an individual, like Lei Feng, of ideological purity and commitment to Mao and the socialist cause.



Figure 6.2 - ‘Young hero hanging picture 14.’ (1964).

The effectiveness of the ‘Young Heroes scrolls’ series is difficult to measure. However, the fact that the CCP’s use of them endured for over ten years would seem to indicate

that it was believed that they were an effective propaganda weapon. The series, used primarily in educational institutions, was designed to provide aspirational models for the younger generation to emulate. Lei Feng was unsurprisingly chosen as a model for a, ‘Young Heroes scroll’ produced in 1964. It is interesting to note, that the arrangement for the main section of this poster does not feature children, a staple of Lei Feng poster propaganda. In Figure 6.2 Lei is surrounded by his fellow soldiers. Because posters from ‘The Young Heroes scroll’ series were designed to be placed in schools, the reason for this was understandable. This particular poster served two functions, firstly to educate young people about Lei Feng’s role in the Revolution and secondly to function as a recruitment tool for those who may have been considering joining the People’s Liberation Army. Numerous ‘Young Heroes scroll’ posters had been dedicated to the story of Dong Cunrui and his heroic actions when he prevented the Guomindang from winning a critical victory.⁶³⁴ For the designer, depicting Dong was relatively simple, the moment of his death had become legendary, iconic even. However, Lei Feng’s untimely death, as a result of a tractor accident, did not lend itself to a suitable poster depiction. Indeed, it is worth considering this key dissimilarity between Lei Feng and his fellow soldier, Dong Cunrui to note the difference in emphasis that the propagandists chose. Dong Cunrui and Liu Hulan, were considerably more difficult for the propagandist to work on because they existed at a time when the state monopoly over information was slightly more tenuous than the period of Lei Feng. For this reason, it was considerably safer for designers to emphasize an unambiguous part of their story. The martyrdom of Lei Feng, as is evident in the publication of his diary, was considerably different to Dong Cunrui. It was not only his sacrifice that had made him a hero, but everything about him, hence the proliferation of posters that provide a great deal of detail of his life, but from the propagandists’ perspective.

⁶³⁴ Chapter 5, p.298.

Content Analysis.

The graphic layout of this depiction of Lei Feng follows the standard convention of the ‘Young Heroes scroll,’ as seen in presentations of earlier model workers such as Dong Cunrui.⁶³⁵ The poster is divided into three distinct sections. The upper frame features an idealised image of Lei surrounded by red flags. The middle has text designed to help the viewer understand the importance of the model and the lower frame displays an image of Lei at work, surrounded by his fellow soldiers. Overall, the poster had been designed to provide insight into ‘a model at work.’ Earlier depictions of Model Workers focussed primarily on their sacrifice, whereas this image is designed to demonstrate the happy and inclusive life of a person adhering to Mao’s doctrine. This is evident from the way in which Lei’s face has been presented in the upper frame. His expression is markedly different from earlier models in which faces usually displayed grim determination.

The position of Lei, as a proxy for Mao, is confirmed by this image as he shares a similar facial expression as the Chairman; that of a kind benevolence. The lower frame also bears a striking resemblance to propaganda images of Mao that depicted his life prior to the Revolution, in which he was often surrounded by his comrades.⁶³⁶ In those posters, Mao can be seen discussing strategy, here Lei is emulating him by discussing Mao’s works with his fellow soldiers. Indeed, the soldiers who surround Lei are exceptionally attentive and are either listening to his words or studying the work of Mao. The bag in the foreground has pamphlets on top, indicating many more copies within, that will support Lei Feng’s ‘evangelistic work.’ As a visual message, the

⁶³⁵ Chapter 5, p.297.

⁶³⁶ Appendix items 2.8 and 2.9.

poster effectively presents two aspects of Lei Feng to the viewer. Firstly, the concept of him as Mao Zedong's proxy is apparent in the upper frame and secondly, he is presented as a man of the people in the lower frame. As a visual message the power lies in the presentation of firstly, warm benevolence (upper frame) and secondly in an idealised version of work-place social cohesion (lower frame). The image seeks to reassure the younger viewers, that their future careers are safe in the hands of the Party and to provide inspiration for the way in which they will work together in the future.

Visual Analysis.

Visual detail in the upper frame is rather simple. It is presented in quasi three dimensions through the placement of the red flags surrounding Lei. The most important visual elements in this part of the poster are the rank insignia, indicating Lei's lowly position and his hat, indicating the inclement weather in which he often worked. Colour is used to draw further attention to these elements, specifically with the cap badge, indicating Lei's PLA affiliation. In the presentation of Lei's face, the designer has chosen to use subtle strokes to soften the image of Lei's features. The lower frame is more visually complex. The background is an image of modernity, with military vehicles and an abundant supply of oil drums dominating the skyline. In addition, electricity pylons can be seen, indicating the extent to which the countryside, where Lei Feng was stationed, had been successfully modernised. In the foreground, Lei sits on a box whilst his fellow soldiers surround him, crouched down or sitting on the ground or on vehicle tyres. There can be no doubt as to which visual elements are the most important. Indeed, Mao's work is front and centre, resting on a box. Through the use of colour, primarily white and red, the eye is drawn to other copies of Mao's writing that are being studied by Lei and his comrades. In addition, the soldiers' engagement is highlighted by the blue notepads they are using to write down the ideas that Lei is

discussing with them. The composition of the image is rather soft with an absence of hard edges, this emphasizes the friendly nature of the group.

Contextual Information.

Accompanying the images is a great deal of written information. Below the upper frame are the characters ‘雷锋’ (Lei Feng). In the centre is the following text:

‘Lei Feng was born on the 30th of December 1939 in Hunan Province, Chang Sha County, An Qing Village. He lost his family and become an orphan in the old society. After liberation, the People’s Government sent him to school. In 1951, he joined the Youth Group. After he graduated from primary school, he became a village messenger, county committee civil servant and farm tractor driver. He joined the Communist Youth. In 1958, Lei Feng worked as a bulldozer operator in the Anshan Iron and Steel Group. He was praised several times and was voted an advanced worker in his workshop. In January 1960 he was recruited by the PLA to be a driver and squad leader, meanwhile he was also an after school activity counsellor for the Young Pioneers. During the same year he joined the CCP in August. Lei Feng consistently read Mao’s work. Because of his many meritorious contributions, he was voted a “Five Merits Soldier”, “model communist youth league member” and people’s congress member in his city. On the 15th of August 1962, he was badly wounded when he was on vehicle maintenance duty, he then lost his life gloriously. After his death, the Central Committee of the Communist Youth League subsequently awarded him the title of outstanding counsellor for National Young Pioneers. The Ministry of National Defence awarded his squad an honourable name, “Lei Feng Squad”. In February 1963, Chairman Mao wrote an inscription for him and called on the people to study from Comrade Lei Feng.’

This written contextual information further adds to an understanding of the target audience for this particular poster. As part of the Young Heroes scroll series, this particular depiction of Lei Feng would have been viewed by school children. For this reason, it is important to note that the aspects of Lei’s life upon which there is a focus, are mostly related to his career, rather than his background and ardent love for Mao, who is only given a passing mention. This indicates that the poster was primarily meant to be a recruitment tool for the People’s Liberation Army. The text details the way in

which China has modernized. The reader is made aware of the way in which Lei has, with the aid of the Party, progressed from being an abandoned orphan from the 'old society' to becoming a key part of China's industrialization process. He was honoured in both life and death for his achievements. The message here is clear, if an orphan from the old society can earn respect and honour through hard work and the study of Mao's words, then any student could also achieve the same. The text below the lower picture frame states, 'Young Heroes scroll (14),' indicating its position in the series.

[Interpretation.](#)

Lei Feng's position in the Model Worker pantheon meant that every aspect of his life was suitable for use by the propaganda department. This poster, in particular, focuses on his career and the way in which he served the people and consequently won honour for himself and the nation. The message is simple and because of the specific medium chosen, the 'Young Heroes Scroll' series, it is clear that it was primarily intended to provide inspiration for China's youth. The accompanying written text confirms this interpretation. However, despite the poster's position as a quasi-recruitment tool the key elements of nationalism, social reform and the development of socialism are still present. In the upper frame, Lei is surrounded by red flags. These flags have no insignia, there is no indication as to whether they are Party, army or national flags. This in itself is an important point. By this stage, the Red Flag was no longer associated only with the cause of the Revolution, but now represented the whole nation. The red of the Party's flag was no different to the red of the national flag, the Party was the country and the country was the Party. In the upper frame Lei Feng is therefore surrounded by the flag of his nation. He is a national hero. In addition, the strength of the nation can be seen in the lower frame. Lei sits with his fellow soldiers, they are well equipped, wearing boots rather than the slippers common in the People's Liberation Army. They

are surrounded by, for the time, modern technology, military vehicles, electricity pylons and oil barrels. The message is clear, as a nation, China's military is prosperous and therefore strong.

Elements related to social reform are also present in the poster as empathy, community spirit, selflessness, hard work and the determination to fight are all present. The ways in which Lei promotes empathy and community spirit can be seen in two aspects of the poster. Firstly, in the written text the reader learns of the way in which Lei spent his free time assisting those less fortunate than himself, specifically younger students in his work with the Young Pioneers. This demonstrates the extent to which propagandists wanted to emphasise the way that Lei Feng and by extension Mao Zedong, cared deeply about the future of the country. Furthermore, in the lower frame the viewer observes Lei teaching his fellow soldiers by sharing the good news of Mao Zedong Thought, clearly the actions of an individual with a strong sense of community spirit. This frame provides an insight into the way in which Lei worked for society and not simply to bolster his own ego. He sits in the centre and is clearly offering commentary on Mao's work, but is not above his comrades, he is a man of the people. Finally, the extent to which Lei's life was defined by hard work and a desire to fight, can be found in the accompanying text. His life here is defined by his commitment to the cause. This is created through the reader being made aware of a long list of Lei's achievements. Lei did not die in battle, but his desire to fight to make Chinese society better can be found in the proclamation that he 'lost his life gloriously.'

In a consideration of the development of Maoist socialism, the viewer need look no further than the lower frame which presents an idealised version of the military. The benefits of socialist development and the way in which the countryside has been

improved by industrialisation are apparent, but of more importance is the scene of the soldiers sitting together. Although Lei is teaching the others, he does not outrank them, he is on a par with them. He is, in effect performing the same action with these soldiers as he had with the Young Pioneers noted in the accompanying text, he is facilitating the creation of a socialist and hence better society. Another key aspect of the development of a Maoist socialist society can be found in the accompanying text. Lei is honoured throughout his life for his contributions, but it is in death that he receives the greatest praise. He is awarded the titles of 'outstanding counsellor,' his squad is renamed in remembrance of him and most importantly, Chairman Mao himself wrote an inscription for him and called on the people to 'study from Comrade Lei Feng.' The way in which Maoist socialism promoted aspiration for youth is thus made clear. Great honour would be afforded to the individual who worked hard to realise the new society. Even greater honour would be bestowed upon an individual who sacrifices his or herself in service for the development of Maoist socialism.



Figure 6.3 - 'Study hard to become a proletarian revolutionary successor.' (1964).

An examination of Model Worker poster propaganda reveals that the sheer volume of images that focus on Lei Feng was and indeed is, second only to that of the Chairman himself, Mao Zedong. Indeed, the depiction of Lei Feng became an archetype as can be seen in Appendix item 2.1.⁶³⁷ The title of this image was 'People's Soldier.' The poster was originally based on a photograph taken by Liu Feng that appeared in the People's Daily.⁶³⁸ The image was then taken as the basis for a propaganda poster to promote the soldiers of the PLA. The soldier in this image is not specifically identified as Lei Feng although his appearance bears a striking resemblance. Posters such as these demonstrate the extent to which Lei had begun to be understood as being the 'standard' by which all Models would be judged, no doubt as the propaganda department had

⁶³⁷ Appendix item 2.1.

⁶³⁸ Appendix item 2.2.

intended. Lei Feng stood as a model from whom all could learn and he was frequently depicted in connection with children. This is clearly illustrated in the third poster with a focus on Lei Feng.

Figure 6.3 was designed by Xin Liliang in 1964 and published by 'Zhejiang People's Art Publisher.'⁶³⁹ The poster is particularly interesting because of the way in which it incorporates an earlier design from 1963 entitled, 'Study Lei Feng, be Chairman Mao's good children', that was produced by Shanghai People's Art Publisher. The geographical location of Zhejiang province would have meant that it was highly likely that designers from the province would have also worked in Shanghai, or would have been aware of designs that came from the city. Consequently, the inclusion of the original poster in figure 6.3, a kind of propaganda poster within another propaganda poster, is understandable, although a little distracting. Both posters share similar, but slightly differing messages.

Content Analysis.

The image is composed of a single frame with a distinct foreground and background. In the background a sparse grey wall is decorated by a single propaganda poster, the aforementioned 'Study Lei Feng, be Chairman Mao's good children.' In the foreground, two children are seated at a table studying, with a third child watching over them, offering guidance. The children are studying at home, this is evident because of the way in which they are seated and the type of table they are using which differs greatly to a standard school desk. The children are clearly classmates, but it is not clear whether they have any family connection. In the background the poster on the wall is

⁶³⁹ chinese posters.net. 1963. *Xin Liliang* (忻礼良). [ONLINE] Available at: <http://chinese posters.net/artists/xinliliang.php>.

partially obscured by the seated boy's head. However, the first characters of the poster, '学习雷锋' (Study Lei Feng) are visible as are the children who are standing to attention beneath the image of Lei and the flag of the Young Pioneers of China.⁶⁴⁰

The original poster in the background claims that by studying Lei Feng, an individual could become one of Mao's good children. The foreground of this poster thus presents three individuals who are obeying this propaganda message. The children are well clothed and appear affluent. Indeed, their appearance indicates that they live in an urban rather than rural environment. As a visual message the image is highly effective. This is because it has a single core message, but presented twice from slightly different perspectives. In the background the viewer can see the youth of China united by the writings of Lei Feng and the flag of the Young Pioneers. In the foreground the three young people are following the command of the background poster, they are studying hard so that they can become 'proletariat revolutionary successors.'

Visual Analysis.

By comparison to many of the other posters that form part of this study, figure 6.3 is exceptionally visually dense. The appearance of the older propaganda poster on the wall behind the children is significant because it indicates that the background is of equal importance to the foreground. This is because it provides greater contextual information for the viewer. Symbolically, it suggests that the history of the Party is not something to be forgotten. The foreground contains a simple composition of three

⁶⁴⁰ The Young Pioneers of China were created in 1949 by the CCP, its members were aged six to fourteen. For further information about the education system utilized by the CCP see T. H. Chen, *Chinese Education Since 1949: Academic and Revolutionary Models*, (Elsevier, 2014). The date of the original poster, 'Study Lei Feng, be Chairman Mao's good children,' can be confirmed as being prior to 1966 as during the Cultural Revolution the Young Pioneers group was disbanded, although it was reinstated in 1978.

students studying together in a family home. One of the most important visual elements is shared between the background and the foreground, this being the red scarf of the young pioneers. All of the children present are wearing the scarf, thus linking the message of the background poster with the action of the foreground students who are enthusiastically studying to become Chairman Mao's good children. The Young Pioneer flag in the background is itself of significance. The symbolic meaning of the flag delivers its own propaganda message, a message that is in keeping with the core ideals of the Model Worker. I will explore this message and its relevance to the Model Worker in the 'interpretation' section; consequently, the presence of the flag provides a strong visual message. The image of Lei Feng in the background poster has an ethereal quality, he looms large over the children, serving as an inspiration for both them and the viewer. Another important visual message is the rank badge attached to the boy's shoulder, which indicates that the wearer is a 'class monitor.' This position was reserved and indeed is still reserved in contemporary China (complete with badge) for those students considered to be the best in the class. One stripe would indicate that the child was a 'class group monitor' whereas three stripes would mean that the student was particularly special as he/she would be a 'year group monitor.'

As a class monitor, the boy in the poster would have been responsible for class propaganda, such as newspaper distribution and arranging class meetings. The boy standing in figure 6.3 is fulfilling one of his obligations as class monitor, by assisting his classmates, his expression indicating he is happy with his protégé's performance. Whereas Lei Feng existed as a proxy for Mao Zedong, the boy here is present as a proxy for Lei himself, part teacher, part parent. Also of significance is the metal pencil case and eraser, items that during this period would have been prized possessions for a school child. Colour is used in the image to draw attention to the most important visual

elements; the flag, the scarves and the high quality of the clothing that the students are wearing. The children have clearly benefitted materially from the development of socialism. Although the image as a whole is rather visually dense, the message is direct because of the way in which elements from both posters are linked. The designer has chosen to use the socialist realism style. The central child in the foreground, in particular, bears similarity to the design used for depicting children in ‘nianhua’ or ‘new year’ prints, thus further indicating prosperity and happiness. In addition, the children are grouped in a triangular pattern, emphasising unity and therefore socialist harmony.

Contextual Information.

Additional contextual information is sparse, but to the point. Below the main frame is the title of the poster, ‘study hard to become a proletarian revolutionary successor.’ In the background, the partially obscured poster states, ‘study Lei Feng, be Chairman Mao’s good children.’ The text endeavours to influence the viewer of the poster by providing a more nuanced understanding of the message that the designer was intending to impart. The linking of the message, to ‘learn from Lei Feng’ with the exhortation that this is the way to become a proletarian revolutionary successor is hardly subtle, but it does provide a context of both breadth and some depth by demonstrating the benefits of learning. The class monitor in the foreground has clearly already heeded these instructions and is now in a position of authority, trusted by the Party, well on the way to becoming a proletarian revolutionary successor. The text also provides greater understanding of the intended audience for the poster. This combined with its graphic design, indicates that the audience was younger people. There is one piece of written information part of figure 6.3 that does require additional explanation. In the top right of the image there is the inscription: ‘En Bao, Jing Bao Jiehun Liunian. Guoying Enyi Zen’ (恩宝 晴泮 结婚留念。国英 恩毅赠). This translates to ‘En Bao, Jing Bao,

wedding souvenir. From Guo Ying and En Yi. This poster in particular, was received as a gift, consequently the written text has no bearing on the propaganda value of the image.

Interpretation.

The promotion of the core propaganda goals of nationalism, social reform and the development of socialism are exceptionally strong in this image. In particular, the poster in the background, featuring the flag of the 'Young Pioneers' deserves attention. The Young Pioneer movement was founded on the 13th of October 1949. As an organisation, the Young Pioneers echo almost completely the three core elements of the Model Worker. A brief examination of their flag reveals the extent to which the organisation was intended to function to promote these aims.



Figure 6.4 – Flag of the Young Pioneers of China.

The flag in figure 6.4 contains three specific elements, the red background, the torch and the gold star. As with the national flag, the red background refers to the blood of the people, shed for the Revolution. The torch represents the bright future guaranteed

by the Revolution. Indeed, there are almost certainly parallels here with the concept of a beacon or symbol of light dispelling ignorance through education, another aspect strongly linking the flag to social reform. The design bears similarity to that of the Soviet Union's Young Pioneer organisation.⁶⁴¹ This, in itself, had many elements that were derivative of the international scouting movement in Russia prior to the Bolshevik Revolution.⁶⁴² The star, as with the national flag, represents the Communist Party.

Of greater significance is the pledge given by the members of the Young Pioneers. This reads:

我是中国少年先锋队队员，我在队旗下宣誓：我决心遵守队章，
在共产党和青年团的领导下，做个好队员。好好生活，好好学习
，准备着：为共产主义和祖国的伟大事业，贡献出一切力量！

which translates as,

*I am a member of Young Pioneers of China, I am going to take an oath under the flag: I am determined to comply with the constitution of the Youth Pioneer. Be an excellent member under the leadership of the Communist Party and Communist Youth League. Live well and study well. Prepared to devote all of my strength to the cause of Communism and motherland.*⁶⁴³

There are clear elements of nationalism here as the pledge specifically links three entities together, the Party, the country and the people. Social reform is also present through the exhortation to study and keep physically fit (hard work). Finally, the development of socialism is guaranteed through the pledge to 'devote all my strength to the cause of Communism.' Therefore, an interpretation of figure 6.3 must take into consideration the importance of this flag and its connection with the children who are

⁶⁴¹ Appendix item 2.10.

⁶⁴² P. Kenez, *The Birth of the Propaganda State: Soviet Methods of Mass Mobilization, 1917-1929*, (Cambridge University Press, 1985), p.89.

⁶⁴³ The constitution of the Young Pioneers has changed numerous times since its foundation. This text comes from the original manual produced in 1954. The manual details the way in which the flag must be presented, songs that must be sung and the other functions of the Young Pioneers.

studying. Each of them is wearing the red scarf, the symbol of membership of the Young Pioneers. By wearing the scarf, they have already pledged themselves to the ideals of nationalism, social reform and the development of socialism.

Other elements in figure 6.3 reinforce this message. The children in the background poster are lined up together in a quasi-military formation. The intention here being to demonstrate the strength and vitality of the youth of the country. The image of Lei Feng above them is clearly meant to provide inspiration for the next generation of China's Model Workers. Aspects of social reform are particularly strong in the foreground image. The viewer is exposed to a kind of group empathy, as the children work together to complete their work. There is a strong sense of community spirit as the 'monitor' fulfils his duty by assisting his classmates. Hard work is evident, as they collectively study to become 'revolutionary successors.' In addition, the background poster presents a group who are both united and have a strong desire to fight for the country, the Party and for socialism. The development of Maoist socialism is also strongly present in the image, particularly in the foreground. The quality of the children's clothing, the equipment they possess and their physical fitness, are clear examples of the prosperity that has been achieved because of socialist reforms. Overall, the poster places a strong emphasis on the relationship between the individual and the country. The inclusion of the Young Pioneer elements, reinforces the message that the people, the Party and the country are essentially the same. The next generation are all to be inspired and to follow the example set by the ultimate Model Worker, Lei Feng.

Conclusion.

In conclusion, poster propaganda was a vital part of the multimedia campaign to promote the Model Worker. An examination of the way in which depictions of Model Workers changed throughout this period reveals new insight into the way in which political changes were presented to the people. There are clear parallels between the development of Chinese poster and cinema propaganda. These media worked together to promote the Model Worker concept to the citizens of 'New China.' Both were affected to a considerable extent by political developments. These developments influenced the way in which Models were presented, but also the extent to which other individuals were presented. Model Workers that were part of the favoured soldier-worker-peasant group, such as Liu Hulan and Dong Cunrui remained popular throughout the period 1949-1965. However, Zhao Yiman, a member of the National Bourgeoisie was not so fortunate. Throughout the period depictions of her changed. She was originally an identifiable member of the urban National Bourgeoisie, but by the late 1970s she was depicted as a commander of a national army. The extent to which the 'People's Democratic Dictatorship' shifted and eventually disintegrated can be observed in Zhao Yiman's journey from member of the national bourgeoisie to patriotic soldier.

Zhao was not alone in having representations of herself modified for propaganda purposes. Depictions of Liu Hulan also changed considerably throughout the period as representations of society were progressively modified to demonstrate the extent to which the peasantry was united and unafraid of fighting for its freedom. Similarly, for political reasons, portrayals of Dong Cunrui changed throughout the period. Initially propagandists focussed on Dong's martyrdom, his sacrifice for the people. As the

Cultural Revolution began, the social class of his family was focussed upon by poster designers. They emphasised the appropriateness of his background by highlighting his relevance as a revolutionary hero.

Poster depictions of Huang Baomei, although small in number are significant as they demonstrate the extent to which cinema and poster propaganda was designed to work together. Although Huang was a member of the proletariat, nominally the most important class to the Communist Party, her influence was largely limited to industrialised cities. Following the failure of the Great Leap Forward, the Party refocussed its propaganda machine towards extolling the values of the People's Liberation Army. Consequently, Huang's influence declined. Nevertheless, her image remains an important reminder of the promises and advertised successes of the Great Leap Forward and the place of the urban proletariat in the People's Democratic Dictatorship. The Hundred Flowers campaign precipitated the unofficial fracturing of the 'Democratic Dictatorship' and Lei Feng emerged as a symbol of the new direction of propaganda that would lead to the Cultural Revolution. Techniques for designing posters changed as 'the three prominences' began to be employed.⁶⁴⁴ Lei Feng was the perfect Model Worker, his background was shaped by the propaganda department. Poster propaganda reflected this as techniques that were developed in the previous decade were utilised to depict the personification of the core values of the Model Worker.

Throughout the period 1949-1965, poster designers adapted to new styles and techniques in order that their depictions of Model Workers would become more appropriate to the ideological aims of the Party. Posters were designed to appeal to

⁶⁴⁴ Chapter 5, p.292.

different sections of society, with a particular focus on education through the 'Young Heroes Scrolls' series. Other posters were designed for urban audiences, or for the broader masses. However, despite differences in both target audience and overall message, they all retained common elements. These common elements help to identify them as part of the multimedia campaign to not only promote the development of 'New China,' but also to give the people pride in their fellow citizens. This was achieved through varying, but continuous reference to the core Model Worker values of nationalism, social reform and the development of socialism.

Chapter 6 - Conclusion.

The Model Worker, or rather the power of emulation as a concept, to this day, maintains a powerful influence on the psyche of the Chinese nation. Although Model Workers such as Dong Cunrui and Liu Hulan are largely viewed as objects of curiosity or relics of a bygone era, the legacy of the Model Worker propaganda campaigns continues to permeate society. The government continues to promote Lei Feng, both with the general population and particularly inside the People's Liberation Army, as a model of what a citizen of China should be. Although the efficacy of this promotion is highly questionable, it demonstrates the extent to which the government continues to believe that the people need role models to teach them how to behave in an approved manner. The message may have changed as China is no longer intent on building a socialist system in quite the same way that Mao envisioned, but other aspects, particularly the focus on nationalism, continue to dominate propaganda.

Model Workers such as Lei Feng are perhaps considered out of step with attempts at social reform within modern China. However, the Party, as it attempts to guide the narrative of appropriate behaviour, still recognises the negative effect that unsuitable role models can have on the population. In 2010 a female contestant on the television show *Fei Cheng Wu Rao* (If you are the One) stated, 'I would rather cry in a BMW than smile on a bicycle.' Government censors stepped in and insisted that the content of the programme be changed in order that they 'maintain core Socialist values.'⁶⁴⁵ More recently, a minor Youku celebrity, 'Papa Jiang' who had made a name for herself by critiquing aspects of society, was advised by the authorities to regulate the content she

⁶⁴⁵ Yang, X. (2014) *China curbs 'vulgar' reality TV show*. Available at: http://www.nytimes.com/2010/07/19/world/asia/19chinatv.html?_r=0? (Accessed: 10 June 2016).

was producing online. Perhaps they feared her growing popularity and status as a role model, which may have threatened the government's control of the social reform narrative. Many articles have been written arguing whether or not the current President, Xi Jinping is in the process of creating his own 'cult of personality.'⁶⁴⁶ Although this would be a fascinating question to tackle, it is sadly beyond the remit of this thesis. It is however clear that the Party still believe in the propaganda benefits of the emulation of individuals to continue the 'renewal' of the Chinese nation.

Indeed, as I have argued, this concept of 'renewal' preoccupied scholars long before the founding of the People's Republic.⁶⁴⁷ The idea of promoting specific behaviour for emulation did not start with Mao Zedong. However, the use of Model Workers for the purposes of propaganda by the Communist Party, was far more extensive than any previous attempts within China. Previous initiatives by the Guomindang at creating a model of behaviour for the people in order that society be improved failed. This was because they lacked coherence and failed to adequately address the tribulations the nation was facing. In addition, they also did not acknowledge possible problems with 'traditional' culture that Mao argued had been a contributing factor in the failure of the Chinese state to confront the imperialist ambitions of foreign powers. Although the effectiveness of CCP Model Worker propaganda is debateable, it was clearly designed to resonate with the entire populace by combining the core values of nationalism, social reform and the development of socialism. Mao laid the groundwork for this combination in his pre-1949 work, 'In Memory of Norman Bethune,' 'Serve the People'

⁶⁴⁶ For some examples of this debate see Hall, C. (2016) *Is Xi Jinping cultivating a personality cult? Or just a personality?* Available at: <http://www.forbes.com/sites/caseyhall/2016/04/26/is-xi-jinping-cultivating-a-personality-cult-or-just-a-personality/#376563415a13> (Accessed: 10 June 2016), Wu, Y. and Feng, D. (2016) *Xi Jinping: A cult of personality?* Available at: <https://www.chinafile.com/conversation/xi-jinping-cult-personality> (Accessed: 10 June 2016).

⁶⁴⁷ Chapter 1, p.9.

and ‘The Foolish Old Man Who Removed the Mountains.’⁶⁴⁸ Whilst the method and indeed spirit by which propagandists would undertake this work was elucidated by Mao in his ‘Talks at the Yan’an Forum on Literature and Art,’⁶⁴⁹ the importance of the core values of nationalism, social reform and the development of socialism can be found throughout policy documents that followed the foundation of the People’s Republic of China. Beginning with the interim constitution, the ‘Common Programme’ in 1949⁶⁵⁰ and culminating in the ‘Learn from the PLA’ campaign in 1964,⁶⁵¹ these core values endured and were depicted to varying degrees in Model Worker propaganda throughout the period.

With the establishment of the People’s Republic propagandists were guided by the newly created ‘People’s Democratic Dictatorship.’ This system was designed to not only unite the classes of China under the leadership of the CCP, but also to provide a guide for citizens as they orientated themselves within the social classes of the new society. Model Workers were selected from each of the social classes of the People’s Democratic Dictatorship, with the exception of the petty bourgeoisie, whose position in society would inevitably lose favour once the nation began to follow the ‘socialist road.’ In its place, heroes of the People’s Liberation Army provided models for the people to emulate. Consequently, until the Great Leap Forward and the Hundred Flowers period that followed it, propagandists had four ideological groupings from which they could select models. Although artistic styles shifted considerably throughout the period, the core values remained. In addition, Model Workers of the post-Civil War period served to not only promote a new and bright future, but they also provided a re-evaluation of the people’s role in the imperialist past.

⁶⁴⁸ Chapter 1, p.15.

⁶⁴⁹ Chapter 1, p.18.

⁶⁵⁰ Chapter 2, p.37.

⁶⁵¹ Chapter 3, p.144.

As I have argued in both Chapters four and five, representations of Chinese society prior to the Revolution became less and less complex throughout the 1950s and into the 1960s. Earlier propaganda work such as the film depiction of Zhao Yiman's life displayed a society of complexity, with citizens unsure of their allegiances as they grappled with the strain of Japanese occupation.⁶⁵² The much maligned *The Life of Wu Xun* presented a conflicted hero and a society riven with division at all levels.⁶⁵³ Mao's attack on the film highlights the extent to which it was believed that history should be mastered for practical ends.⁶⁵⁴ Indeed, later film and poster propaganda depicted historical events in an entirely different way, with uncertainty removed and steadfast heroes representing the strength of the people in the face of Imperialist aggression. Historical figures, initially drawn from the social groupings of the People's Democratic Dictatorship, were thus intended to not only build feelings of nationalistic pride, but also serve as a guide for what was expected of citizens at each level of society. Throughout the period 1949-1964, Model Worker propaganda consequently became increasingly didactic as the core values of nationalism, social reform and the development of socialism permeated both poster designs and cinematic releases. As Mao became intent on launching 'The Great Leap Forward' in 1958, Model Workers such as Huang Baomei were deployed to demonstrate what was expected of Chinese citizens during this period.⁶⁵⁵

The failure of the Great Leap Forward had a profound impact on the development of Model Worker propaganda because following the Hundred Flowers campaign Mao stated that 'class struggle was basically over.' Although his definition of class struggle

⁶⁵² *Zhao Yiman*, (1950), Directed by Sha Meng, [Film], China: Changchun Film Studio.

⁶⁵³ *The Life of Wu Xun*, (1950), Directed by Sun Yu, [Film], China: Kunlun Film Studio.

⁶⁵⁴ Chapter 1, p.6.

⁶⁵⁵ Chapter 3, p.104.

was to change, this period did see the fracturing of the People's Democratic Dictatorship as definitions of class became increasingly binary. This was represented in Model Worker propaganda with the creation of the hero 'Lei Feng' and the restyling of earlier Model Workers, such as Zhao Yiman to better fit the now more simplistic social structure. Consequently, one of the lessons learned from the Great Leap Forward was not that Model Worker propaganda was ineffective, but that it was, in its current state, flawed. Earlier Model Workers had their backgrounds and actions shaped to fit the desired propaganda narrative. Although useful they had failed to both sufficiently communicate Mao's mission to the people or inspire them to accept and embrace the Great Leap Forward. Lei Feng was born of a new propaganda era, that of the 'Socialist Education Movement' and the 'Learn from the PLA campaign.'⁶⁵⁶ Lei's back story and actions, whilst he was alive, ideally fit with the core values of nationalism, social reform and the development of socialism. Film and poster propaganda presented him as the ideal Chinese citizen, without flaws, the perfect hero to guide the people during the 'Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution.'

Throughout the 1949-1964 period, propagandists in film and poster media worked to perfect representations of Model Workers. The artistic stylings of each medium evolved considerably. Model Workers were part of a truly multimedia campaign, their exploits detailed in books, film, posters, comic books, bookmarks, newspapers, indeed in most forms of media. The concept, that an individual could be promoted to inspire others, although not unique to the People's Republic of China, was and continues to be, taken to a different level. The Model Workers that form part of this study, with perhaps the exception of Lei Feng, are no longer in quite the hallowed position they once were. The composite nature of Lei Feng's background ensures that he is still useful for

⁶⁵⁶ Chapter 3, p.144.

China's propagandists. As in 1963, Lei can be whatever he is needed to be; a nationalist, a model of social reform, but at this stage, not an adherent to all of the precepts of Mao Zedong Thought. 'Selected' translated entries from Lei Feng's diary have recently been made available online through the website of China Daily.⁶⁵⁷ However, the entries that have been selected focus entirely on the social and personal reform elements of the diary, with no mention of Mao Zedong or the quest to build a socialist China. The Model Workers of the People's Democratic Dictatorship still have a role to play in modern China, however that role, as it was following liberation in 1949, will be determined by the requirements of the state. Mao Zedong's attempt at transforming the Chinese nation and its people through the use of inspirational 'Model Workers' may have largely failed to fulfil his ambition of completely revolutionising society. However significant elements of the campaign, specifically the promotion of nationalism and the need for social reform continue to shape modern China.

⁶⁵⁷ *Selected diary of Lei Feng* - cpcchina.org (1962) Available at: <http://cpcchina.chinadaily.com.cn/special/leifeng/diary.html> (Accessed: 10 June 2016). This source is from the online version of the 'China Daily' a state run news organization that publishes in both Chinese and English. Although not as stridently nationalist as the 'Global Times,' China Daily still largely functions as a mouth piece of the government.

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Appendix.

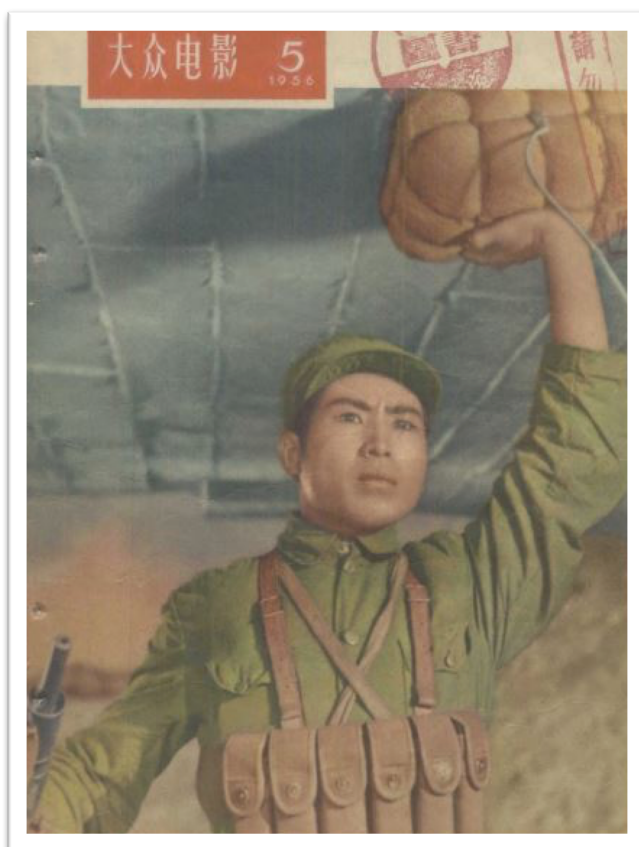
1) Cinema and associated images.



Item 1.1 - Advertisement for 'The Life of Wu Xun,' the top line of text states 'Welcome the peak time of cultural construction.'



Item 1.2 - Liu Hulan on the cover of *Dazhong Dianying* (Popular Cinema) Issue 27 (1951).



Item 1.3 - Dong Cunrui on the cover of *Dazhong Dianying* Issue 5, (1956).



Item 1.4 - Dong Cunrui receives a flag to signify his command of a bombing group, this featured in *Dazhong Dianying* Issue 5 (1956).



Item 1.5 - This section gives a brief synopsis of the plot, this featured in *Dazhong Dianying*, Issue 5 (1956).

为了开辟新天地
唤醒了沉睡的高山
让那河流改变了模样

How flower-like are the young ladies, how big and determined are the hearts of the young men, in order to usher in a new era, They've woken the sleeping mountains, and changed the face of the river.

这是英雄的祖国
是我生长的地方
在这片古老的土地上
到处都有青春的力量

This is the heroic Motherland, this is the place where I grew up, on this stretch of ancient land, there is youthful vigour everywhere.

好山好水好地方
条条大路都宽畅
朋友来了有好酒
若是那豺狼来了
迎接它的有猎枪

Great mountains, great rivers, a great land, every road is broad and wide, if friends come, there is fine wine, but if the wolves come, those who greet them have hunting guns

这是强大的祖国
是我生长的地方
在这片温暖的土地上
到处都有和平的阳光

This is the mighty Motherland, this is the place where I grew up, on this stretch of warm and friendly land, there is peaceful sunshine everywhere



Item 1.8 - Lei Feng reads from Mao's work on the cover of *Dazhong Dianying* Issue 23 (1965).

2) Poster and other relevant images.



Item 2.1 – People's Soldier, 1964, August, Published by Shanghai People's Art Publisher.



Item 2.2 – Lei Feng, photographed by Liu Feng for the People's Daily.



Item 2.3 – Promotional images from the film *Huang Baomei*.



Item 2.4 – Promotional image for the film *Huang Baomei*.



Item 2.5 – Promotional image for the film *Huang Baomei*.



Item 2.6 – Still frame with caption of the film *Huang Baomei*.

'Some female workers were very anxious. Some female workers felt discouraged and said "High technical skills are needed to do this job. Li Sulan from unit 7 eliminated white spots in 7 days, how about us." Huang Baomei was very confident and said "We are going to learn from wherever is advanced.'



Item 2.7 – Chairman Mao's good soldier – Lei Feng, chinese posters.net. 1963.
Chairman Mao's good soldier - Lei Feng. [ONLINE] Available at:
<http://chinese posters.net/posters/e39-791.php>.



Item 2.8 – Mao in Yan'an with Zhou Enlai, Zhang Wentian (张闻天) and Bo Gu (博古).



Item 2.9 – Mao with Bo Gu.



Item 2.10 – Flag of the Young Pioneers of the U.S.S.R.

3) Interviews.

3.1 – Director of the Shanghai Propaganda Art Centre, Yang Peiming, 16th July 2014.

James: Why did you begin this collection?

Yang: This is a question many people ask about. For me it was not purposefully to do this collection by myself, just because by chance and also gradually I discover so much of this kind of stuff, I mean the history of China. I think I eventually realised this importance of this period of history, art, and the politics would be very interesting and important in the future so this is my motive.

James: So you feel this is giving some sort of contribution to history?

Yang: Yes, because for us, when we were young we were all educated should be responsible for the nation, for the country, for the people, so of course not everybody has the opportunity. So then, because China was a collective body in many occasions so individual very difficult to do anything for yourself. So then, I come to now I have my own collection I can join my museum I can keep this alive, I feel really honoured and I am happy.

James: Do you find that many people share your interest?

Yang: Yes, I meet some of the people who say ‘ah Mr Yang we feel so honoured and happy because you did a contribution for the people,’ it is a very big praise for me. Of course not everybody, but some. Yes, I think more and more people realise the importance of this period.

James: So which kind of age range do you usually find come here?

Yang: Of course tourists, all kinds of ages. For Chinese people some are like my age or your father-in-law's age, some may be young people, so not very young, maybe 30 or 40 years old, there is different feedback. Like for my age, I think that at the bottom of their heart they still understand the importance of this period politics and history but they don't know how to express and they have no idea how to express, so that's a problem because this generation has gone through the turmoil and the tortures, tempers, whatever so it's very rich in experience but unfortunately many of them have no results, no achievements, so that's the sad part.

James: Yes, I always find my father-in-law is very interested in talking about this period, it seems very important to him.

Yang: Yes, exactly, because of his age, and at this young age this happened only one time in China maybe 2000 years. So it's a very interesting experience, of course it's whatever bad or good, it's something you cannot easily experience.

James: So, thinking specifically about the posters after 1949, were most of the designers based in Shanghai or in other cities, what was the location, as far as you know?

Yang: You know Shanghai is in a very special position in many things in all kinds of industry, light industry, printing industry, whatever, you know, art or culture, Shanghai if we check Shanghai, 1930, 1920, always the centre, for the, we say the dragon head for the whole of China, because this is the place is a window with the western culture, the western world so this is a giant port place, so you are right, most of the artists in the 30s, 40s are in Shanghai. Maybe a group of traditional Chinese brush painting artists are in Beijing because the royal family of the dynasty, the Qing dynasty have the collection, they appreciate this kind of Chinese traditional art so their artists are over there. But for modern things, modernity things, most in Shanghai. So like a poster is of course is a modernity, it is from the West, it's not the Chinese tradition, yes, you're right.

James: But following the Revolution the art centre was move to Hangzhou though as far as I understand, they opened an art centre in Hangzhou.

Yang: The art centre they opened in Hangzhou, this is talking about the Chinese brush painting, they set up an academy in Hangzhou, you're right, because in Shanghai there was also an artist association, that's different. But it doesn't mean, it doesn't mean that the centre for poster production is moved to Hangzhou, no, it is still in Shanghai.

James: So Shanghai is still important.

Yang: Sure, because Shanghai has the best printing centre as well as the publishing centre, so a poster basically to do with artist, publishing and printing.

James: So most of the printing was done in Shanghai?

Yang: Shanghai, because they the most advanced facilities from Europe and in the beginning from England and the different European publishers.

James: So presumably these were then produced and then distributed around the country?

Yang: Yes, like the Shanghai, we call (insert Chinese), commercial printing press is the biggest in the far east, afterwards it was bombed by the Japanese. So it used to be the centre, Shanghai had a whole street for publishing books.

James: So, for the posters, did they tailor the content of the posters for different regions of China or was it really the same for everywhere?

Yang: After the 50s the system changed, Shanghai is a capitalist word it is not as important as in the 1930s, so then we learn from the Russian experience even in administration so the publishing is being divided, many important ones went to Beijing because it became the capital and centre of the politics. So eventually after the 50s Shanghai and Beijing became the two centres for political leading and poster publishing. At the same time each provincial capital had a publishing house, but they mostly the suit of Beijing and Shanghai. So then of course the story, the contents mostly they follow, but then of course there were some different art pieces.

James: So there was sometimes some regional variations based on different art centres in different regions?

Yang: Yes, but the poster publishing number 1 is the political trend, the campaign, the main message that the central government wanted to carry, so they would be very sensitive to copy from the big cities, but at the same time, like in Tianjin, they had some very interesting styles in 1958 to 1960, very beautiful.

James: So, even though there may have been tiny variation it was still centrally controlled, the message was centrally controlled.

Yang: Usually it is controlled like the publishing poster on three levels. The publishing house in Shanghai they have office level, they have publishing house level, they have city propaganda office level so usually three levels for the publication of posters, identical to the central government, just at the city level. But of course each poster also has a publishing license number. So if you do a book in the 1950s and 1960s in China you need to get an official license, even today you need a license so that means you need to have approval.

James: So all of these (posters) can be traced through these licenses.

Yang: Yes, through each department concerned, the artist, the writers, the personnel.

James: The other question I was wondering, so these posters were meant to influence people, to give them some sort of idea, do you know if they recorded any feedback as to how effective the posters were?

Yang: I don't think so, because everything was rushed so fast. In China they started political campaigns one after another, no time to get any feedback. From the central government, from Mao Zedong, the basic idea was 'I want, you understand, I want you to accept.' They don't care whether you want to accept or not accept, you have to accept. There's no negotiation, no discussion. If there is discussion that means you are the enemy of the campaign. It is different to nowadays, we try to collect the feedback points and how many people, or percentages or whatever, this is not the socialist way, this is not the communist way this is the capitalist way, that's individual expression, this is nothing like that.

James: It is quite interesting because I read a lot about how Mao said we need to listen to the masses, listen to the people, but you're saying maybe not.

Yang: Yes, no point, why would they listen to you? Because individual people sometimes communist ideas say okay the masses are the most important people, but then a small group, a handful of people they are not good people, they make troubles, so must be watchful, troublemakers.

James: So, related to that, one of the other questions I had was, these posters, the content of the posters was entirely directed, it didn't really reflect popular feeling so much then, it was more, 'this is our idea you accept this idea.'

Yang: So then, the situation came to the artist, it was hard for them to create design images that would be agreed by the leadership and accepted and popular with the people so this was the challenge for the artist. Why some good artists make very good posters, they make good for both sides.

James: So, how enthusiastic do you think the artists were about doing this?

Yang: Just like you said, your father in law, they believed, they believed all these ideas. So most artists they really believed, they had emotion and also their background they come from Japanese war, from civil war, they don't like this turmoil time and bad life, so they think this is the new China for the future. So I believe they really emotionally wanted to do this work for the propaganda.

James: So there was real enthusiasm?

Yang: Sure, it's not like 'I will force you to do this.'

James: Also, the other question I had was the financial resources that were put towards this, how much do you think it was?

Yang: All this money is from the government, of course the Chinese government is one boss, they have money so this is most important money for them to spend, to spread their ideas to control the people. So at the same time, all the printing factories, the artists, they are very small, they have some profits, very small, but always controlled because the whole system was not to allow anyone to be a capitalist, to be bourgeoisie, so even if there is a little extra money, they couldn't be very rich compared with others. So basically the money was invested by the government and controlled by the government.

James: Was there a large amount of resources put into this?

Yang: Oh sure, paper, papers costs, even the sticking paste, they needed the wheat to stick paper. So it was a big spend. Basically it was a political campaign, a political task, number 1, much more important than your stomach. People were working for spiritual, not gold, not money, not luxuries, it was very spiritual, it was a very strange period. But they had to follow the whole fashion.

James: This was the whole period of basically building 'New China.'

Yang: That's right, China is not only a factory or physical, most important is spiritual, this is what dozens of years Mao worked for, and in certain respects he made it and even today, some leadership can follow this spirit. So we talk about this so-called Chinese socialism, but there are no details, but one of the things is this kind of spirit.

James: So, what would you say this spirit is?

Yang: You know I just told you that people have emotion, whether it's real or true or fake or whatever, it's a collective body. For many years Chinese people are like sand, then at this time they have this collective spirit and at some times they don't know what is it, no definition. But you study these Models, maybe these Models are a sample of this spirit so this kind of spirit is not selfish, care about other people, for kind of a dream, for things that haven't been touched or reached, you want to touch it, people come together.

James: So this is the spirit of collectivism?

Yang: Yes, for nationality speaking, Chinese is not like German or Japanese, they have more easily come together in history. So for China, use this Communism idea it's not a traditional Confucians idea, Confucius is more interested in cultivating your mind, family loyalty. This one is different, forget your family, forget your life, go ahead.

James: Instead, think about society?

Yang: Yes, you don't know what is society, you don't know what the meaning is Communism, don't care. Even today, what is Chinese socialism? Don't care, go forward.

James: So you would say that a lot of this is related to nationalism, this idea of creating a new nation, of China being something special.

Yang: Yes, that's right, of course in modern times maybe they change do it differently but for one time they worked really hard for this. Everything, the propaganda is part of this spirit. It's kind of abstract, you can't really touch the special details.

James: My other question was related to this new year style. In the beginning they copied this new year style, but when did this begin to change? They went from this style to the more Soviet style.

Yang: There has been the New Year style ever since the Ming Dynasty. This is very simple, simple method many simple images, babies or sometimes scary monsters sometimes a garden in front of a door at Chinese New Year time, but this is a traditional thing. But after 1949, Mao Zedong called the people to make a new style New Year poster, that means to change the contents of this kind of baby poster to political stories. So this campaign 1949-1952 or 1953 was basically in the countryside. In the city also the Shanghai lady poster artists turned into society, schools, factories or workers. So the different styles came, the so-called new style new year poster.

James: So, in the countryside when they did this, this was partly because they wanted people to feel comfortable, to see a style they were already familiar with, maybe with slightly different contents.

Yang: You're right, especially for the farmers, as the majority of population in China was farmers, so you're right they were familiar with this style but now they can read some communist stories, like support the Korean War, that kind of things, this was the earliest period. The Russian influence came 1954-1956.

James: I remember reading that the new year style was not particularly popular in Shanghai, in the industrial areas, that people were not so keen on that style, maybe because it was not so connected with their lives?

Yang: You're right, but for a city like Shanghai, they had the Shanghai lady poster artists so these people they changed very fast, the artists did in 1951 was based on the lady poster. They changed very fast and it was successful.

James: So it was around 1954 that the style began to change to the Soviet style?

Yang: Soviet Russian, but this continued until 1956, even after Cultural Revolution again, Shanghai style continued again. It's a very important part of the so-called new year posters, they were put in the new year catalogue, poster catalogue. So the Russian one influenced, because they were professional artists, influenced by the European social realism headed by Xu Beihong (徐悲鸿) so most of the Chinese oil painters after the 50s are influenced by Xu Beihong he was the chairman of the Beijing Art Academy (中央美术学院), Zhongyang Meishu Xueyuan, so they in Shanghai, a group of artists they were influenced by Russians. And some professional artists like Ha Qiongwen (哈琼文) who was also one of the students of Xu Beihong, so afterwards the main Chinese poster artists were trained on the basis of social realism.

James: I remember reading that many artists were excited about the idea of doing oil painting because prior to this time there wasn't a lot of oil painting in China, before this time.

Yang: Because oil painting came to China later, like violin, like music, after 1930s, because they went to Europe to study first, these artists, then they came back to China not a big market because Chinese people collect Chinese paintings. No market. This kind of thing was a bourgeoisie hobby for the rich family's children went to Europe to enjoy. There were two groups, French realism, the other was impressionism. This impressionism also came back; you remember my collection of this cartoon magazine with modern art is also from this impressionism artist. So then after liberation, this group is not popular, no job, no work not a lot of painting published. So then the social realism was going on, which was still a small group of artists, but what they can do is mostly in the poster art.

James: So, why do you think that they chose to adopt the oil painting and not follow a more traditional Chinese artist style, following the revolution?

Yang: Because the poster is a western thing, they want to depict the real life. It is not easy to use the Chinese style brush painting and rice paper, it's more difficult. So this is more practically used for, because it is based on oil painting.

James: So it is more politically expedient?

Yang: Yes, yes, so this style because the poster style they decide it needs this kind of art, it cannot be replaced by Chinese art. Some artists they tried fake paintings very successfully.

James: There is also the woodblock paintings.

Yang: Woodblock is another style, that's from the European influenced communist movement, the woodblock, this is another style and even the Japanese water style into the 1950s still continued. Woodblock symbolised like revolutionary art in China. So, then come to Cultural Revolution, all the woodcuts suddenly disappeared.

James: One of the other styles I have come across is the young heroes scrolls, this series. So, as I understand it, these were mostly used in schools, they were placed in schools because they have part of the story, was this really the case or were they used in other locations as well?

Yang: Because the propaganda posters, there was a special group, called education, published by the educational ministry (教育), Jiao Yu, so especially for education in the classroom. So usually they have a series or set, ten pieces, ten models, or 8 pieces, 6 pieces, they have a set. And these were connected with the school text books stories. So there was a school text book connected with the posters. So then these four scrolls of the Models, soldiers, workers, the style, in the form the style is learned from the Chinese painting. The Chinese painting with the spring, summer, autumn, winter, called the four scrolls, (春夏秋冬), Chun, Xia, Qiu, Dong, sometimes they have scenery filled with some mountains. So this style is a form but of course they changed for heroes.

James: So these were placed solely in schools?

Yang: Yes, mostly for the education in school, for the class room. You're right. So the schools would buy these things, every year, every term, they would put them in the class and change them. Because education is very important for the young people, I'm talking about the spirit. So we try to put this kind of spirit into the hearts of the young people as early as possible.

James: Also one of the other things I found that with these scrolls, with some of the models, like for example Dong Cunrui they had one that was produced in 1956 and then a later one in 1963.

Yang: They continued every period of time they continued.

James: So when they produced a new version, did they retire the old version or would it still be kept in schools?

Yang: It's no problem, the new version doesn't mean the old version is out of date. Of course it's not available, its sold out, its finished so they put a new version. Sometimes of course, they have some new ideas to come across so then they put new ideas across. Every new year there would be new ones, for propaganda purpose of course new ones were more exact. But the styles of the older ones is good.

James: Because the content of the text changes over time.

Yang: Of course, sure, because a model is a model, models are not alive, they are dead. So you can make different explanations and make them alive again.

James: So they would change this related to the political reality of the time?

Yang: Sure, yes, so sometimes it's not only a model in history, it can be re-written for the purpose of your propaganda.

James: I particularly found this with the Dong Cunrui one. In the earlier version they don't talk very much about his political background, but in the Cultural Revolution era one they talk a lot about where he comes from, his family, his good class background. So this is also another way to date these posters?

Yang: Yes, yes.

James: How long did they use this series for, do you know? A decade, two decades, how long did it continue?

Yang: Ever since 1949, until 1966 Cultural Revolution started, so many definitions they wanted to check again. So some are no longer heroes, some are heroes. I remember some Model Workers after cultural revolution became the target, they were fake no longer model workers like (刘三姐), Liu Sanjie, because she was connected with Liu Shaoqi and because some leaders became capitalist roaders, and they were promoted by these capitalist roaders, so they were no longer models. So until the end of the Cultural Revolution, some were regained but still different. I would say until 1966.

James: So then like you said they would produce the scrolls and also the text books that were connected.

Yang: Yes, the scrolls were painted from the text book stories. Lei Feng is exceptional because he started from 60s down until nowadays. Of course up and down but still we continued during the cultural revolution, so this is exceptional.

James: One of the artists I am particularly interested in is Xu Jiping.

Yang: She is a lady poster artist.

James: So, do you have any knowledge about her?

Yang: Not exactly, because lady poster artists were not so much the important ones, but I remember she did many propaganda posters after 1950s, very active in this field.

James: So from these people, is there anyone here who is particularly important (shows name list).

Yang: These are not so important, Qian Daxin, is very important, he was one of the most important Shanghai propaganda poster artists, I met him before he died. Ha Qiongwen, is important for early 50s, Xin Liliang he came here before, (马乐群), Ma Lequn, all of these were lady poster artists before. So afterwards they do. In Shanghai publishing circles, Shanghai People's Art Publishing House and also Shanghai Picture Art Publishing House in the beginning. So all these artists, Shanghai lady poster artists they come together, called the Shanghai Picture Publishing House afterwards they combined together, two or three years later Shanghai Art Publishers. So these are mostly (looks at paper), I think maybe because you get them from the scrolls, so maybe

some are not important, but the later few in the lady poster artist style are important. Qian Daxin is different, he is like self-learned artist worked in the printing factory, so then he did social realism.

James: So he was from Shanghai?

Yang: Yes, from Shanghai, many from Shanghai.

James: So are any still alive?

Yang: No, not many, Ma Lequn is still alive, he came a few years ago, I didn't keep in touch with him, but he came last time.

James: So, the Model Worker propaganda campaign that they had running, obviously they had running for a very long time, this is from 1950s, 1960s, until today for some of these. Were these intended to be cross-media, as in they were intended to be, poster, film, all of these things were intended to work together?

Yang: Yes, because this kind of movie, this kind of hero like Huang Jiguang, Dong Cunrui or Lei Feng there were different documentaries or some stories and movies. So these movies of course publication, magazines, newspapers, and different stories and art and posters. Yes, you're right, because when the young kids, you've got a classroom with all these posters, school text books, you leave your classroom, you go to movie house, you see them again, pick up a newspaper, children's magazine, so once in a while they have after school activities, like young pioneer meetings or sometimes they have different competitions. Let you feel, twenty-four hours, everything is around you. So a new spirit, in your mind. It is very careful work, very carefully done.

James: So, the people who were involved in promoting these Models, did they collaborate with each other across different media?

Yang: Sure, yes of course they cooperated so there was no argument, nobody could say 'this here is fake.' No argument. When talking about the spirit, the spirit is very abject (sic), so then at least a person has a name, some deeds, and they can imitate. Early in the morning I come in the classroom, I cleaned the classroom, I cleaned the desk and the chairs for other people, learning from Lei Feng. So it's a very interesting design. So Mao is a great creative designer, and of course he controls the spirit and many other people would design for him.

James: So who managed this?

Yang: As I told you, in China, the Communist government next to the defence ministry is the propaganda ministry. So it's part of what we call Party work, what is Party? Party is to do spiritual work, Party has no guns, not like army, Party is the Party workers. What is Party workers? Do spiritual work? So they always discuss, every week they would meet at different levels, discuss many things, discuss all the social things happening, whatever, so they discuss these models, so this is the Party's work. You can imagine I am talking about the spirit, the party and all these workers, cadres, they are connected.

James: So you think maybe inside the propaganda department there would have been an office dedicated just to certain models, that would have said ‘we are managing this model’?

Yang: Not particularly for a Model, but learning from model is the campaign always, different models, sometimes in the classroom, sometimes in the school has one model, we call ‘advanced workers,’ advanced workers, so in the factory every time we compete for advanced workers if we have the metal, if we have a big red flower, nowadays we still sometimes do it. Of course the working class has changed, but at that time, working class was the leading class, everything from 50 to the cultural revolution, until the cultural revolution. These models, every place, every unit, so this is a main work for every annually, the work is not only for output or profit, that is number 2. Number 1 is how many model workers you have and how many political achievements you have made; how much party work has been successful so all this spirit work. More important than the output of the products.

James: So this is the political education is more important.

Yang: Yes, yes, so this is why this is to make the society solid.

3.2 – Model Worker, Huang Baomei, 8th January 2016.

Q Hello, may I speak to Teacher Huang?

A It is me. Who is that?

Q I’m a friend of Liu Yajuan from Fu Dan University. Can I ask you some questions today? My husband is British and he studies Chinese modern history, specialising in model workers. We just watched your film and our friend Liu Yajuan mentioned that she had your contact number. So we thought it would be great if we could interview you.

A Where are you now? UK?

Q Yes, my husband and I are both in the UK.

A It must be very expensive for you to call me today.

Q That’s ok. We are using Skype. How is your health?

A Not bad not bad.

Q How old are you now?

A 85 years old

Q You really don’t sound like 85, your voice sounds really young.

A (laughter).

Q Was it Director Xie Jin or someone else came to see you before the film?

A When Zhou Enlai came to Shanghai, he mentioned a Shanghai Model Worker’s film should be made, then the Shanghai Municipal Party Committee decided to write about me. The Shanghai Film Studios received this task and the studio director told Xie Jin that he should let me perform as myself. The Studio director knew me quite well because we went to some meetings together before. So he told Xie Jin that I was very active and good looking, good at singing and dancing. But Xie Jin was not very sure about the idea of workers performing in the film. Well, Xie Jin mentioned it last time

when he was in an interview from CCTV. If he didn't mention that, I would have no idea about his concerns at that time. I knew that the Shanghai Municipal Party Committee wanted to film a story about me, but I didn't know that they wanted me to perform as myself in the film. Xin Jin wasn't sure whether it would be ok for workers to perform in the film. Then he came to my home, accompanied by the propaganda department from my factory. It was my night shift that day so I was at home in the day time. He came to my house and chatted with me for half an hour. I didn't know what was going on, I only knew that Xie Jin was a film director and just came to see me. We chatted for half an hour and then he went back home. Later he told his studio director that it would be fine for me to perform as myself in the film.

Q Did any worker perform in the film before ?

A None. I was the first one. Real people and a real story. This was the first time.

Q All the scripts were written by the studio or discussed with you?

A The scripts were based on my past achievement which were published in the newspaper at that time. There were a lot of reports about my achievements in the newspaper during 50th. I didn't get any financial benefit from it at that time but I gained very high honour. Newspapers often reported about me, almost every week there was something about me. Both newspapers and magazines. At that time there was no TV. So the scripts were edited based on the contents from the newspaper.

Q Did they discuss the scripts with you?

A Yes, we did. They got out all the related newspapers. Then the propaganda department from my factory, the Party committee, film director Xie Jin, writers from the studio and secretary of our factory Party committee joined the discussion. All of those achievements mentioned in the film were discussed and approved by us.

Q Are other characters in the film performed by your colleagues?

A Yes, my colleagues. Many are from my group.

Q Was it difficult for them to memorise their lines?

A It was ok, they were members of amateur Yue Opera group, Hua Opera group and theatrical group in our factory. Some of them who got more lines were from our factories' literature and art group.

Q They must be so nervous before the film was shot.

A Yes very nervous.

Q The film focussed on "eliminating the white spot."

A Well, sometimes we still have white spots, but it was much less than before. But at that point in the film we did eliminate it.

Q In the beginning it said it would take half an month to eliminate the white spot, but it only took you 4 and half hour. Was this true.

A We worked with our utmost and it was the night shift as well. It was a fierce competition, we started a labour emulation campaign.

Q Did it really only take 4 and half hour to eliminate the white spot at that time?

A Yes.

Q That was amazing.

A (laughter) My brain was quite active when I was in work. I invented the concept exam and repair spindle by spindle. It was promoted by the Bureau when they came to the meeting in our factory. We mentioned it in the film.

Q Yes

A It was promoted in the whole Shanghai and whole country.

Q You performed really well in the film, just like a professional, it didn't appear that you had never performed before.

A I was very nervous

Q It is difficult to tell.

A Mao Dun (Shen Yan Bing) who was the minister of Culture at that time asked me to be a professional actress, but I refused.

Q You looked very professional in the film. It was very well done. It was difficult to tell that you had never performed before.

A Really? I think I looked quite nervous in it.

Q I can't tell you were nervous. Your face expression, appearance were all very good.

A I was so nervous at that time. They reshot 8 times for one scene and it took the whole morning. It was my first scene, I was scared to death

Q But the result was very good, and you were very good looking as well.

A The film studio director said I was good looking and active, good at dancing and singing. So after Xie Jin met me, they wanted me to perform. But I didn't want to in the beginning. I was scared to death

Q Did you join any promotions of the film afterwards?

A Zhou Enlai invited me to join the 10 years anniversary of Liberation. This film was a gift for the National Day. Actors from "Five Golden flowers" went there as well. The Minister of Culture wanted me to be a professional actress, but I refused. The film was highly praised. It was highly praised by China Film magazine as well. But I didn't want to be a professional actress. The workers were the most honourable class. Professional actors were not.

Q Yes

A At that time, workers were the most honourable class. I was flattered by the professional actors. I published a book recently and there were a lot of professional actors' photos, I have quite a lot actor friends. All good friends.

Q Did you go to people's congress?

A I was the representative of the Party Congress and the Eighth National People's Congress. I was the representative of the Shanghai People's Congress five times, from the 1st Congress to the 5th, until the Cultural Revolution. I was the representative of Shanghai Party Congress three times until the Cultural Revolution. I had really high honour during that time. I went to the World Festival of Youth and students in Vienna, I joined World Federation of Democratic Youth conference in Prague. I attended World Congress of Women in Beijing. I was the one who represented China in those meetings.

Q We saw quite a lot old photos of you in those magazines.

A I just published a book last year, there are a lot of pictures in it. The Textile Bureau leader wanted me to publish the book. There were more than 130 pictures in it. I met Chairman Mao eight times. One of them was the best. Chairman Mao came to a forum which was held in the Shanghai Sino-Soviet Friendship Building. They invited me to join the forum but my factory wouldn't let me go. They only told us it was a forum but didn't mention Chairman Mao would be there. So my factory said I was too busy to go. Then Federation of Trade Union said I had to go because it was very important meeting. So my factory finally let me go. When I went into the meeting room and they open the door curtain, I saw Chairman Mao. I was stunned. It was like a dream. Then the Shanghai Mayor, Chen Yi stood up as well. Chairman Mao shook my hand. I was so shocked that I didn't even call/address him. Then Chairman Mao asked me to sit down. The vice chairperson of the Woman's Federation put my chair next to Chairman Mao. But it was such a shame that I don't have that photo. It would be wonderful if I can have that photo. Me, Mayor Chen Yi, Chairman Mao, all three of us together. They did take a photo of us, but I didn't get the photo. I do have the photo with Premier Zhou Enlai and Song Qinglin. But I don't have that photo with Chairman Mao. Because it was in 1955 and everything was kept confidential at that time. They had to maintain secrecy when Chairman Mao came to Shanghai. That photo was taken by the journalist from the central authority and he didn't give me a copy. The photo with Premier Zhou was enlarged and given to me by another journalist. It was the same with the one with Song Qinglin. If they didn't give it to me, I wouldn't remember to ask for it. I was very simple minded at that time.

Q Were you in any posters at that time?

A At that time I was very naive and didn't understand anything. During the Eighth National People's Congress the Chairman attended the meeting every day. When it was the break time, he was in the square, all the other leaders were there as well. But we were so stunned every day that we didn't think of asking them to sign for us. I was only 26 when I was in the meeting with them.

Q Do you think the film was accurate?

A Yes, they were all based on the articles published in the newspaper. The film was shown in the whole country. It had really good reviews. People showed high respect to model workers at that time. It was the real people's real story. It was not made up. They were all my real stories. In my book there is a picture which shows the moment when we were discussing the lines. Xie Jin was in it as well. The minister of the propaganda department wrote the stories then Ye Jin who was the screenwriter from the studio modified it, from the fact to the film scripts, that is why it need to be modified. I was so nervous to recite my lines. As soon as I heard "action" I lost my lines, I couldn't even move. I was scared to death when I shot my first scene.

Q Do you still have any contact with other model workers

A Yes, I do. We often contact each other. We have a model worker's home. Sometimes we have a forum or have dinner together.

Q My husband studies Model workers, such as Liu Hulan and Lei Feng, but they had all passed away. We are so happy that we could still interview you.

A Among 25 representatives from Shanghai, I was the only worker representative in the Eighth National People's Congress. Our leader was very nice to me. I was chosen to join both of the International meetings. I went to Soviet Union in 1954. I was in the International Labour's Day Management delegation. There were twelve people representing China and among them two were from Shanghai. It was me and the vice

chairman from the Trade Union federation. It was 1954 and we were told that the Soviet's today is our tomorrow. So when we came back we started to promote how good the Soviet Union was. I started to wear floral dress which was called 'платье' when I came back. This was mentioned in the magazine, 'Shanghai Story.' I took the lead to wear floral dresses. The Youth League called everyone to do so. That was shown in a documentary which was filmed last year. It was shown on TV on the 10th May last year. I was the model worker for the 50s, Yang Huaiyuan (杨怀远) was the model worker for the 60s, other model workers for the 80s and 90s, there were 7 episodes totally. I was in Shanghai Story 4 times. I was always on TV. I never saw it but everyone else all saw it. They always mentioned it to me.

Q You are very famous in Shanghai. Older generations all know you, even young generation, like us know you as well.

A Because I was promoted quite a lot. My book was published last year. So more people know me now. There are a lot of content in the book, but there were quite a lot things I don't remember now, so some of the things in the book are not very detailed.

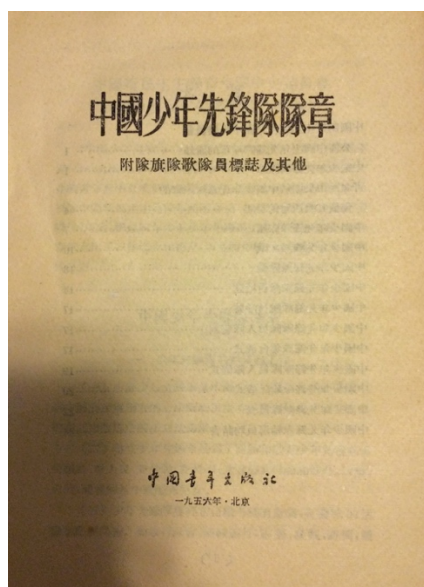
Q But you still have very good memory.

A Because we did a lot of promotions and reports. Now I am the head of Moral Education Group of One Hundred Professional Elders. Our aim is to educate young people. Sometimes we go to the community to promote to the retired CCP members.

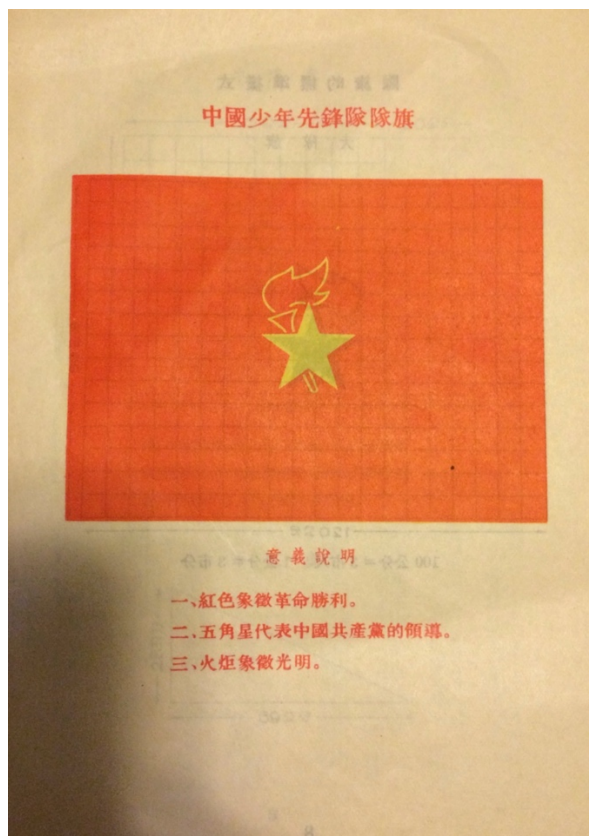
Q Can I record our conversation?

A Yes. these are facts. It's ok.

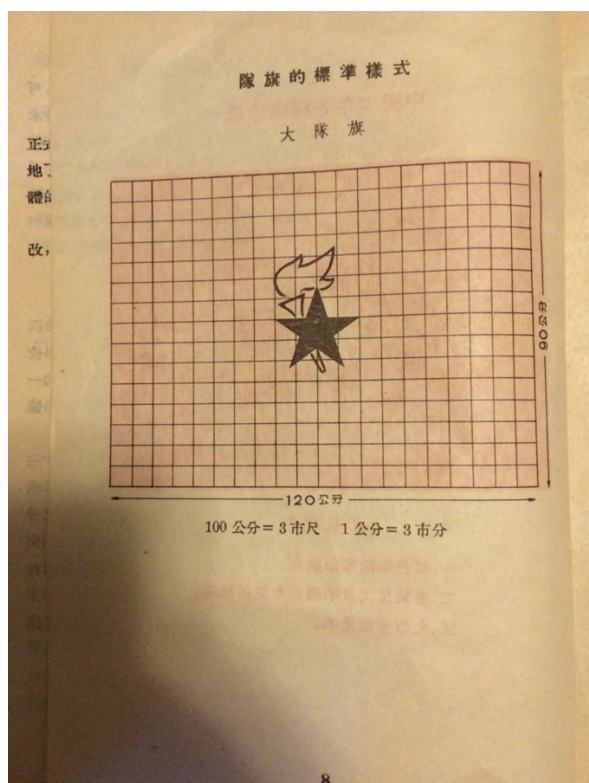
4) 1954 – Young Pioneer's manual, selected excerpts.



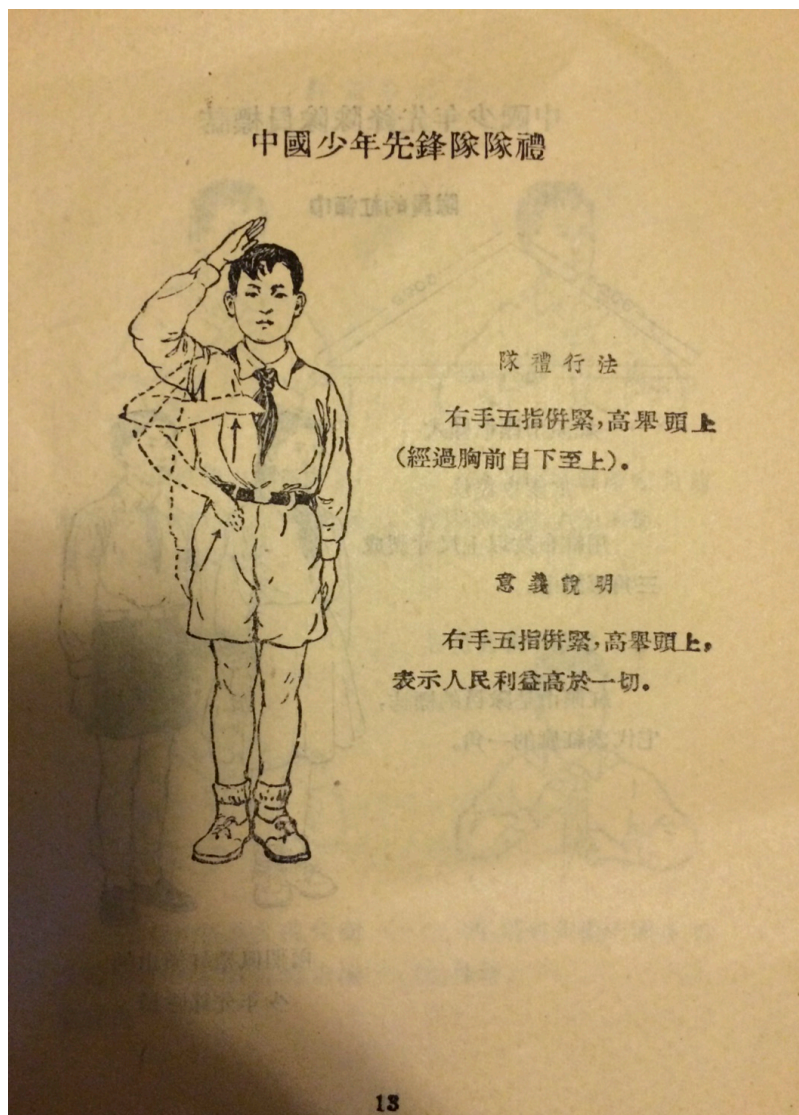
Item 4.1 – Cover page: Constitution of the Chinese Young Pioneers. Including flag, song, emblem and others, China Youth Press 1956 Beijing.



Item 4.2 - The Flag of the Chinese Young Pioneers, 1) Red symbolises the victory of the revolution, 2) Star represents the leadership of Chinese Communist Party, 3) Torch symbolises the light.



Item 4.3 - Standard form of the flag. Large team flag.



Item 4.6 - Salute of the Chinese Young Pioneers: Salute method, Tighten the right hand fingers and lift it over head. (Go through the chest, from the bottom to top)

Tighten the right hand fingers and lift it over head. It represents people's interest is higher than anything.

5) Model Workers in other media – Comic Books.

The following covers are from reproductions of comic books of Model Workers. It is interesting to note that these are still produced in large numbers and are easily accessible. It is still possible to find original copies of these stories, however, acquiring them is not easy as they are often prohibitively expensive. It is, at this stage, unknown whether the content of the stories have been changed, further research would be worthwhile.



Item 5.1 – ‘Zhao Yiman.’ (Reproduction date: 01-04-2009).



Item 5.2 – ‘Liu Hulan.’ (01-06-1972) [Reproduction date not given].



Item 5.3 – ‘Liu Hulan.’ (undated).



Item 5.4 – ‘Dong Cunrui.’ (01-05-1972) [Reproduction date not given].

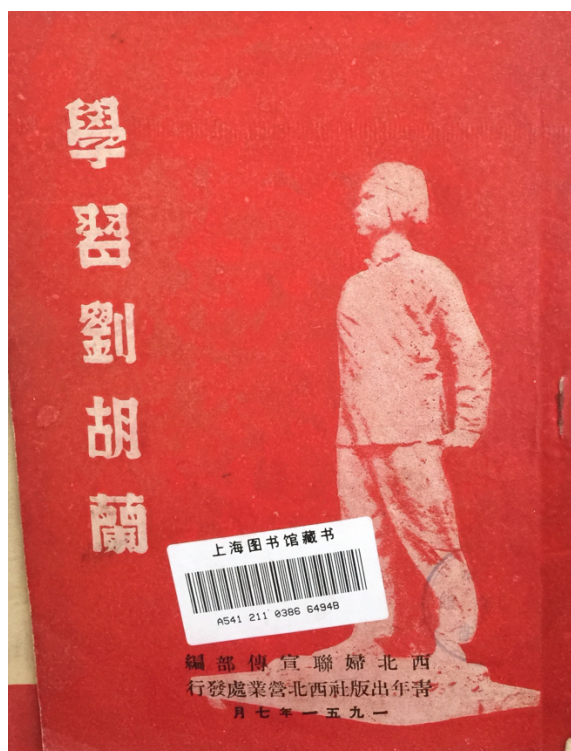


Item 5.5 – ‘Lei Feng.’ (01-04-1973) [Reproduction date not given].

6) Model Worker related books.



Item 6.1 – ‘Anti-Japanese Hero, Zhao Yiman.’ – North East Anti-Japanese Martyr Story.



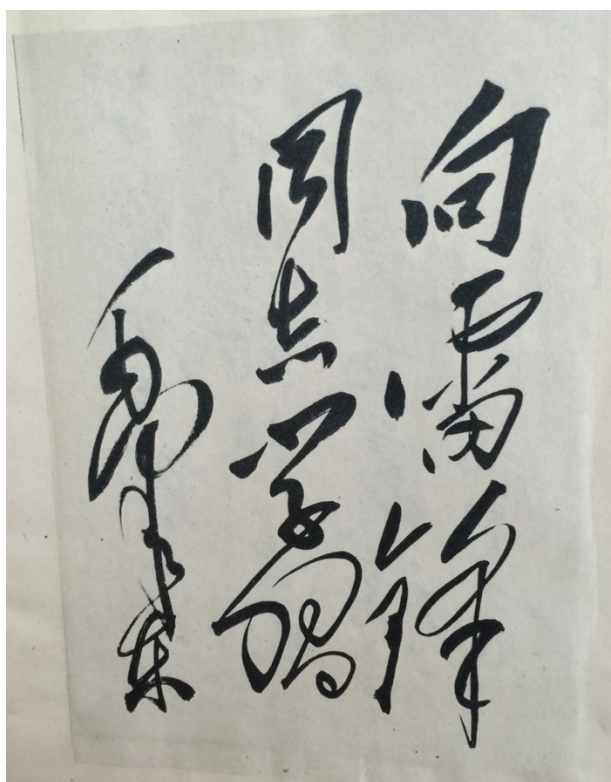
Item 6.2 – ‘Study Liu Hulan.’ (North West Woman’s Federation Propaganda Department, Published by: Youth Press East and West Publishing, July 1951)



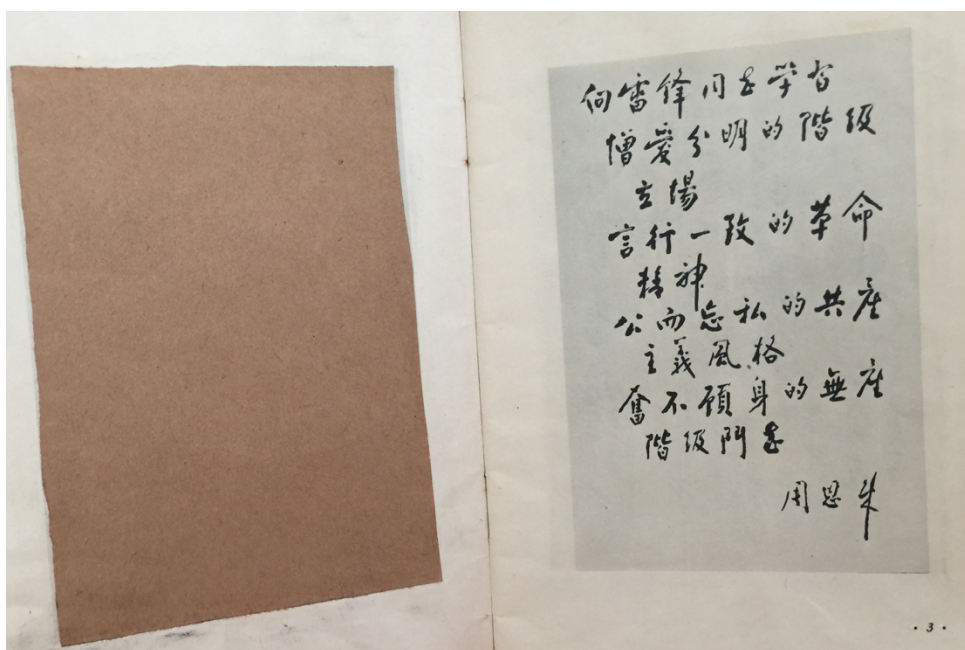
Item 6.3 – ‘Immortal Liu Hulan.’ (written by Teng Min Dao & Feng Lan, Published by Children’s Press).



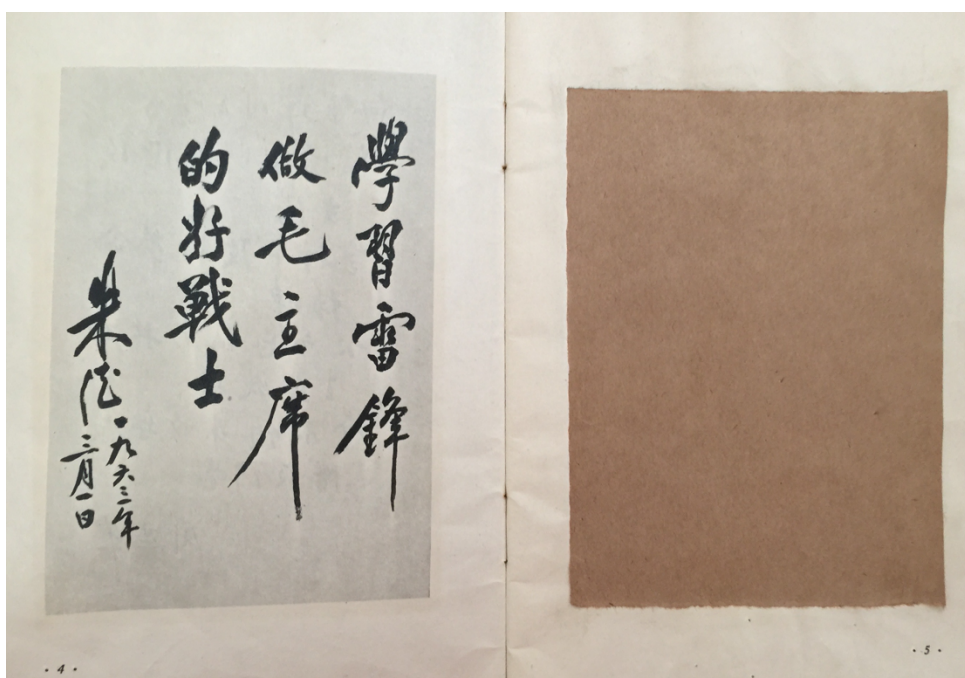
Item 6.4 – ‘Learn from Comrade Lei Feng.’ (Chinese People’s Revolutionary Military Museum, Published by: History Press).



Item 6.5 – Interior inscription by Mao Zedong, ‘Learn from Comrade Lei Feng.’



Item 6.6 – Interior poetic inscription by Zhou Enlai, left page censored, index reveals it was an inscription by Lin Biao.



Item 6.7 – Interior inscription by Zhu De, ‘Study Lei Feng and be Chairman Mao’s good soldier.’ Right page censored, index reveals this was an inscription by Liu Shaoqi.



Item 6.8 – Interior inscription by Deng Xiao Ping, ‘whoever wants to be a real communist they must learn from Lei Feng’s quality and style.’ Right page states, ‘Lei Feng Portrait.’

7) Film material.

Item 7.1 – DVD reproduction of the film *Huang Baomei*.
Huang Baomei, (1958), Directed by Xie Jin, [Film], China: Tianma Film.

8) Translation.

Item 8.1 - Marxist Philosophy, *Selected Essays from Hongqi (Red Flag) 1958-79*, [Online], [Accessed 19 March 2015], Available from:
<http://marxistphilosophy.org/Hongqi/index.htm>

Brand new society, brand new people.

Chen Boda.

Continue to complete the socialist revolution on economic, political and ideological fronts, in the meanwhile, gradually achieve technical and cultural revolution. Give priority to the development of heavy industry, then simultaneously develop industry and agriculture. Under centralised leadership, comprehensive planning, division of labour conditions, central industry and local industry should be developed simultaneously, so should large enterprise and small to medium sized enterprises. These key points are contained in the general line of building socialism in an energetic and productive way. This general line was based on Mao Zedong's suggestions and it was made in the Second Session of the CCP's Eighth National Congress. It demonstrated more and more clearly that to accelerate the development of Chinese socialism, especially in terms of fully motivating local people and encouraging initiative, these key points have very great revolutionary significance.

Since last autumn and winter, the power of local people and their initiative has been demonstrated in the rural water irrigation and manure campaign, now this power has also been shown in the local development of small and medium sized industry.

According to the national statistics, this year all levels of local units and agricultural cooperatives have constructed more than 80,000 small and medium sized mining enterprises. Here are the particular notes (1) Among which, 12680 will complete the construction of small blast furnaces by June next year. This will increase the capacity to twenty million tons of iron ; (2) Among which, more than 200 can finish building small converters by June next year, this will increase the capacity to ten million tons of steel, which triples the AISC's current steelmaking capacity ; (3) Among which, more than 1400 are small and medium sized non-ferrous metal mining enterprises. Once they complete the construction. their copper and aluminium production will exceed national production in 1957 And so on.

It would appear that, within one year's time, the development of small and medium sized industries will catch up and even exceed the national scale set up by the first 5 year plan. The production of some sections formerly planned to be achieved by 1962, the year to complete the second five-year plan, could be reached by this year because of the extensive development of local small and medium sized industries.

In agriculture, we can possibly see that, if there are no major natural disasters, the harvest of some main crops will also reach or near the production planned to be achieved by the final year of the second five-year plan.

All of these were because of the spirit and initiative of the local people, consequently our social productive forces could have the Great Leap Forward.

Of course, the possibility does not equal reality. But just think about the workers and peasants, under the leadership of our party who have created many new miracles, many times greater than the spirit of 'Yu Gong.' If we think about all the enormous local potential, then we will believe that the possibilities will become reality .

Because the General line and the key points it contained, completely solved the high-speed development issue of our national economy, therefore it can continually innovate our society.

There are two articles about Hubei Echeng county published in this issue. One is called 'Xuguang No1 group runs a small factory by traditional approach' and another is 'How does Xuguang No1 group lead and manage the small factory'. These two articles are all about the interesting events that happened in the cooperatives.

The first article describes how the co-operatives set up a series of 'small factories,' thus facilitating the development of agriculture; the second article describes how they unified agricultural management with industrial management. This cooperative's situation is a notable example of highly developed local initiatives and the people's spirit. In fact, it is a microcosm of the general rising of China's socialist economy. As we mentioned in the article 'these small factories run fast, produce fast and produce effectively,' it demonstrates the role that local initiative and people's spirit that played a part in the struggle to rapidly achieve national industrialisation.

Through these two communications, we have seen China in its Great Leap Forward, we have also seen a brand new society and a brand new people. Almost all the people here are like a group of lively and strong willed heroes. They dare to think, dare to talk, dare to do it. When they are working, they are good at listening to everyone's opinions. They are down to the earth, sensible and orderly. In short, they have dreams, but they also have methods.

Just like Comrade Mao Zedong said, they are writing the newest and most beautiful words, and painting the newest and most beautiful pictures on the original blank canvas.

The approaches that the cooperatives have taken are listed below:

1. A cooperative which has been turned into a grassroots organisation that has both agricultural cooperation and industrial cooperation, is actually a combination of agricultural and industrial communes.
2. The purpose of industrialisation is to meet the needs of the entire cooperative and to serve agricultural production, rather than for making money.
3. Make the best of existing facilities. Start with small-sized factories, then gradually expand.
4. Launch the 'universal man' campaign. It means someone can be a worker but also a peasant. Members need to know the full set of farming technics, but also need to know about industrial technology. 'Be a farmer when you get into the fields, be a worker when you get into the factory.'
5. Learning by doing and learning from everywhere. Try to understand some basic scientific and technical knowledge first, and then seek to improve gradually. Technological and cultural revolutions need to be combined.
6. Management staff need to learn how to manage, but also need to learn skills. Staff can be a cadre but also can be a worker.
7. Except some special circumstances, industrial and agricultural work are run by work points. Generally, factory work points cannot be much higher than agriculture, nor less than agriculture. There needs to be some flexibility, depending on the circumstances.
8. Industrial and agricultural working hours are the same. If there is overtime at night, take progressive points as rewards.
9. According to the principle of combining industry and agriculture, small factories have a long term plan, but also have periodical plans.

Can I say that what the cooperatives have achieved, in fact, pointed out that our social productivity can be developed at an unprecedented high-speed? Can I say this showed us that the difference between industry and agriculture, mental labour and physical labour, can be relatively quickly eliminated? Can I also say it has created a smooth and correct road for our country's transition from socialism to communism? I think I definitely can say that.

A hundred years ago, in his book 'Principles of Communism,' Engels believed that after the complete abolition of private ownership, 'Instead of generating misery, overproduction will reach beyond the elementary requirements of society to assure the satisfaction of the needs of all; it will create new needs and, at the same time, the means of satisfying them... Communal control over production by society as a whole, and the resulting new development, will both require an entirely different kind of human material. Industry controlled by society as a whole, and operated according to a plan, presupposes well-rounded human beings, their faculties developed in balanced fashion, able to see the system of production in its entirety.... Education will enable young people quickly to familiarise themselves with the whole system of production and to pass from one branch of production to another in response to the needs of society or their own inclinations.... A corollary of this is that the difference between city and country is destined to disappear. The management of agriculture and industry by the same people rather than by two different classes of people is, if only for purely material reasons, a necessary condition of communist association.'

The ideal Engels proposed was based on the law of social development. Can we say, by the guidance of our Party's general line of building socialism in an energetic, highly thriving and productive way, Xuguang No1 Group is on its way to specifically and gradually achieve the ideal proposed by the founder of scientific communism? I think it is totally possible to say that.

The titles of the two articles are both humbly composed as 'small factories.'

However, such cooperatives' small factories which were combined with agriculture have infinite vitality. It is because they represent a power which is irresistible, new and forward, it is the power of communism.

('Red Flag' Issue 3, 1958).