The Chinese Communist Youth Movement, 1949—1966 *

By VICTOR FUNNELL

IN the Cultural Revolution, the task of dismantling and reorganizing the Communist Party has not spared the various youth organizations that operated under the Party's aegis. Mao's injunction to "bombard" the bourgeois central headquarters within the Party has involved a similar bombardment of lesser headquarters in dependent establishments. Just as the Party organization was by-passed in the formation of rebel committees, so Communist youth organizations have been subsumed or swamped in the Red Guard movement. The Youth League in particular, as the Party's "main assistant," has shared its fate.

The turning-point seemed to come, in fact, with the formation of the Red Guards, or more formally, with the Eleventh Plenum of the Eighth Central Committee of the Party in August 1966. After that date, the *Chung-kuo ch'ing-nien pao* (*China Youth Daily*) and *Chung-kuo ch'ing-nien* (*China Youth*) (the fortnightly "house journal" of the League) significantly disappeared. All official mention of the League, except in criticism, abruptly ceased, nor has it been resurrected since. By late in 1966, with the Red Guards already in existence, the League's Central Committee was under heavy fire as "revisionist," and several of its leaders, including the long-standing First Secretary, Hu Yao-pang, members of the secretariat, Hu K'o-shih and Wang Wei, and alternate Secretary, Hu Ch'i-li, were being denounced. The Red Guard tabloid, *Ching kang shan*, described them as a "force" which China's Khrushchev, Liu Shao-ch'i, had planted in the core of leadership.[1]

While the youth movement thus became an additional forum for the power struggle enveloping the Cultural Revolution, the League itself and other youth organizations were not actually buried but rather left in a state of suspended animation. Some Red Guards made the interesting proposal that the League change its name to "Mao Tse-tung Communist Youth League" instead, and that new membership cards be issued.[2] As with the Party, rectification rather than outright abolition appeared to be the watchword for already existing youth organizations.

* This article forms part of a wider study of the Chinese Communist cadres, with special reference to lower-level administration from 1949 to 1966, to be published shortly.

[1] See chapter on youth in *Communist China, 1966* (Hong Kong: Union Research Institute, 1968), Vol. 2.

[2] Reuter, Moscow, 17 September 1966.

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Under suitably Maoist leadership, it may be felt, they could again serve a useful purpose. Some reports have spoken of the continued existence of the League as a paper organization,[3] and with the fall in the fortunes of the Red Guards during 1968 it is not impossible that the more stable and restricted membership of such a body could once more come to play a valued auxiliary role for a reconstituted Party. This now appears to be afoot. The League is mentioned, albeit cursorily, in the new Party Constitution adopted in April 1969, in terms of its need to accept Party leadership. In the post-Ninth Party Congress phase of rebuilding the shattered Party "work on the consolidation of the Youth League should also begin," according to a joint editorial on the occasion of the 48th anniversary of the founding of the Communist Party of China.[4]

The question nevertheless arises as to how the organized Communist youth movement, involving millions upon millions of young people recruited and trained under the watchful eye of the Communist Party, could have come to its present pass, and what in its record or its structure could have so displeased the Maoist faction in the leadership. It can, of course, be supposed that the same bureaucratization and resistance to Maoist policies were found in the established youth organizations as appeared to characterize State and Party organs. Yet the nurture of the nation's "130 million youth" had been for years a principal focus of endeavour, more recently in the campaign begun in 1964 to "cultivate revolutionary successors." Mao himself said some years earlier, "New China must care for her youth and show concern for the growth of the younger generation. Therefore, full attention must be paid both to their work and study and to their recreation, sport and rest."[5] He showed himself just as aware of the great importance of youth in speaking to a group of Chinese students in Moscow in 1957.[6] What, then, went wrong, and when? And how far can Mao (or Lin) now lay the fault at the door of other people, or blame it on an impersonal machine? The answer to these questions can only be discovered, if at all, from a study of the development of the youth movement in the years of power since 1949.

In a totalitarian society, youth work serves the political purpose of indoctrination and organization into movements designed to support and perpetuate the regime. In Communist China, since 1949, the extension of the Party's prerogative of power into every field has been faci-

[3] See *China News Analysis* (Hong Kong), No. 634 (28 October 1966), p. 3.
[4] *Peking Review*, 4 July 1969, p. 9.
[5] Talk at the reception for the Praesidium of the Second National Congress of the Youth League, 30 June 1953, in *Quotations from Chairman Mao Tse-tung* (Peking, 1966).
[6] *Ibid.*

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litated by the functional and social associations linking the Party with the non-Party masses. With regard to youth, these have been grouped together in the All-China Youth Federation, whose principal components were the Communist Youth League, the Young Pioneers and the All-China Students' Federation. Quite the most important, and the nucleus of them all, was the Youth League.[7] Like the equivalent organization in the Soviet Union, Komsomol, the Youth League was the principal adjunct of the Party in leadership and control of every facet of the national life. It has, also, been a major source of Party members and cadres.[8] "Thus, to understand the general conditions and activities of the youth of China it is necessary to understand the League," as an official publication put it.[9]

The Youth League was something more than a vanguard of politically conscious youth, and something less than a mass organization.[10] The revised constitution of the League, adopted in June 1964, described it as "an organization of the masses of advanced youth."[11] In membership it far outnumbered the Party, yet its unique position as a special assistant to the Party was recognized in the Party's 1956 Constitution, where it was the only auxiliary of the Party to receive a mention. The League described itself as "a school for the study of communism, and an assistant to the CCP."[12] These twin duties, which basically comprise propaganda and leadership of various mass activities (particularly in production and the armed forces), were not confined exclusively to work among youth, but were carried out among the population at large. The over-all work of Party members and Party committees has been greatly reinforced by the co-ordinated assistance of League members and League committees, at every level and in every field. The youth of the country could thus be mobilized together with the masses in organized support of the Party's political and economic programmes. This relationship of the League to the masses generally, as well as to youth in particular, under the direction of the Party, gave to the activities of League members as a whole the same "cadre" character as the role of

[7] "The All-China Youth Federation is a joint organization of various youth associations, with the Young Communist League as the nucleus, under the leadership of the Chinese Communist Party" (Article 1, All-China Youth Federation Constitution, adopted 27 January 1965, in New China News Agency (NCNA), 30 January 1965).

[8] The use of the past tense in describing the work of the League should not be taken as implying its complete dismemberment, or even that its past contribution and experience will be considered invalid in the future. The idea conveyed is, rather, the end of a phase in the life of the League as we have known it.

[9] *China's Youth March Forward* (Peking: Foreign Languages Press, 1950), p. 63.

[10] See Hu Yao-pang's speech at the Party's Eighth Congress in 1956, *Eighth National Congress of the Chinese Communist Party* (Peking, 1956), Vol. II.

[11] NCNA, 7 July 1964. The constitution was adopted at the Ninth Congress of the League, on 29 June 1964.

[12] In the General Principles of the 1964 Constitution.

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Party members in society at large. The essential definition was well expressed in the phrase, "Young people keep their eyes on the YCL members, who keep their eyes on the cadres." [13]

The League, in turn, kept its eyes on the Party, under whose active direction its activities were carried out. League committees were subordinate to Party committees at corresponding levels, the League's Central Committee to the Central Committee of the Party, and primary branches set up at places of work or residence—"in each factory, mine, people's commune, farm, store, PLA company, government organ, street or other primary unit" [14]—to the Party committees in those units. Similarly, the organizational leadership of the Party ensured that the separate departments of a League committee were under the direction of the corresponding departments of the Party committee, whether concerned with propaganda, organization, education, production or other specialized fields. At the same time, League organization itself embodied the principle of democratic centralism that characterizes the Party, in the relations between higher and lower committees in the League hierarchy, and between members of a committee, as well as between committees and the general membership. Whichever way the directives came, their ultimate source was the Party. In the reverse direction, too, in the gathering of information and the submission of reports, the League was accountable to the Party. In the practice of the mass line and the class line, in conducting investigation and research into local problems, and in uncovering illegalities of various sorts, including "speeches and activities which run counter to socialism," League members acted as the eyes and ears of the Party.[15]

A unique feature of the League that was not shared by the Party and mass organizations was the temporary nature of its membership. Lower and upper age limits of 15 and 25 years produced a constant turnover of members, "just like a pool of flowing water." [16] To some extent, the disruptive effects of this turnover on organization, at least at the higher levels, were offset by the waiving of the over-age disqualification in the case of those working in leading organizations of the League or appointed to specialist posts.[17] This convenient provision of the Constitution in fact safeguarded the position of secretaries of League committees at the county level and above who, under the terms of the previous Constitution in 1957, were required to be full Party

[13] Hu K'o-shih (member of the League's Central Secretariat), "Report on the Revision of the Constitution," in NCNA, 6 June 1964.
[14] Art. 29, 1964 Constitution.
[15] Hu K'o-shih, in NCNA, 6 June 1964.
[16] *Ibid.*
[17] Art. 1, 1964 Constitution.

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members.[18] At the county level they had to have been in the Party for at least a year, at the regional level for two years, and at the provincial level for three.[19] Regardless of age, however, the League Constitution stipulated a period of four years in office for members of the League's Central Committee, two years for provincial committees, one or two years for county and municipal committees, and six months to a year for primary League committees.[20] Not unnaturally, in an organization which so closely resembled the Party, these provisions were purely theoretical. At the highest level of the League, the example was set by the long-standing First Secretary, Hu Yao-pang, an energetic youth in his fifties, and a member of the Party's Central Committee, who, until the Cultural Revolution unseated him, had held his League position since 1952.

In an organization dedicated to youth, age has been a problem. It was a question involving the League's relationship with the Party, as well as with its own members. Since the lower age limit for Party membership is 18, some overlapping between membership of the two organizations was inevitable, and since the Party's role as mentor and exemplar was so explicitly stated, those cadres who combined dual membership found their standing in the League greatly enhanced. This was fully recognized and provided for in the 1957 Constitution. It meant not only that the higher levels of League leadership tended to be filled by Party members, but also that they continued to hold their positions, by virtue of their Party membership or experience, long after their League membership had technically expired. This had important repercussions on the rank-and-file of the League, who may have experienced some irritation at the Party's monopoly of control in their own organization, and who frequently found that the path of promotion to some of the plum jobs was blocked. There was, therefore, a clear conflict between the organizational demand for continuity of leadership, and the League's role as a training ground for future Party members and cadres. In effect, it confined the experience of the majority of League

[18] The Third League Congress, in May 1957, changed the name of the organization from New Democratic Youth League, which it had had since its foundation in 1949, to Young Communist League, in recognition of the transition to a one-class society and the progressive socialization of national life. The saving clause regarding leading cadres also appeared in the 1957 Constitution, and in the earlier (1953) Constitution. The Party membership requirement, however, was not repeated in 1964.

[19] See A. D. Barnett, *Cadres, Bureaucracy and Political Power in Communist China* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1967), pp. 83–84, for the composition of one county League Committee. The three Party members among the 14 members of the Committee included the Secretary, the Deputy-Secretary (also head of the Committee's organization department) and the head of the school's department.

[20] Arts. 17–32, 1964 Constitution.

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cadres to work in the primary organizations, with important age differences between cadres at the higher and lower levels.

These difficulties were occasionally recognized, and presumably accepted, by the League and the Party. A report of the League's Central Committee in 1955 stated that "the problem of over-age NDYL members is a matter of concern."[21] In the countryside, there were more than 600,000 over-age, or about 8 per cent. of the League's rural membership at that time. The report made it clear that these were largely members serving on *hsiang* committees, who should be replaced. At the same time, however, it recognized the value of age and experience in the stipulation that "when the *hsiang* cadres are centrally reshuffled by the Party, one or two backbone elements should be retained in the League branch committees." The League's attitude appeared to be that rejuvenation was desirable but should not be carried to excess. In any case, the retention of some over-age cadres was clearly Party policy, despite the report's insistence that "more attention should be paid to the absorption of young girls and youths below the age of 18 into the League." In fact, the number of over-aged League members holding responsible positions increased. The reference of An Tzu-wen (formerly head of the Organization Department of the Party's Central Secretariat, who has also lost his job in the Cultural Revolution) in 1956 to "over 50 per cent. of the Youth League members in various organizations" who had passed the age limit may well have referred to cadres in leading organs of the League.[22] Six months later a further report stated that "at present, the number of over-age members of the League comes close to 11 per cent. of the aggregate membership."[23] Since the League's membership at that time was 23 million, this meant that 2·5 million were over-age. Some of these, who joined the League in 1949 and 1950, must have been about 30 years old.

The problem of ensuring politically stable and experienced leadership in the Youth League continued to be met by the widespread practice of appointing over-age cadres, as allowed by the League's Constitution. Nevertheless, the League displayed continuing concern at the practice. It may be that this apparently schizophrenic attitude could be explained by some difference in emphasis by the League and the Party, in the League's particular responsibility for youth work, and the Party's desire to exert maximum control over the League. At any rate, a report of a work meeting held by the League's Central Committee in Peking in 1964 stated emphatically that, "First of all,

[21] *Chung-kuo ch'ing-nien pao*, 28 December 1955.
[22] *Ibid.* 16 October 1956.
[23] *Ibid.* 26 April 1957.

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it is essential to change the phenomenon that some local YCL organizations have cadres who are much too old. . . . It is also important to admit more young people and middle school students who are under 20 years of age into the Youth League."[24] Even so, it was not suggested that all the older cadres should be replaced. Leading cadres of the League, very many of whom were themselves above the age-limit, were told in the report that they "must adhere to the policy of boldly selecting new members and cadres, integrating the old with the new, and retaining the main cadres in order to train more new ones." Since the appointment of League cadres, who were no exception in this respect, was handled by the Party, the proportion of over-age cadres in League organization would seem to have been a matter for adjustment at the highest level by the two parallel hierarchies.

The replacement of older cadres was given fresh impetus following the Ninth Congress of the Youth League in 1964. The work of training "revolutionary successors" clearly demanded a greater accent on youth, in addition to the permanent requirement for promotion of high political and class consciousness. In examples from two areas, given national publicity in the youth newspaper, *Chung-kuo ch'ing-nien pao*, in 1965, the average age of committee members was said to have been significantly reduced by admission of younger cadres.[25] In Chin *hsien* in Liaoning Province, the promotion of four new cadres to the *hsien* committee and 18 new cadres to the commune committee, with an average age of 21, was stated to have reduced the average age of cadres at *hsien* and commune levels from 31 to 22. This was done "in accordance with the instructions of Comrade Sung Jen-ch'iung, First Secretary of the North-east Bureau of the CCP Central Committee." In the other case, of Tung-ch'eng *ch'u* in Peking municipality, 15 of the 18 members of the *ch'u* League committee were said to have been appointed over the two previous years. Comprising cadres with both Party and League membership, the average age of this new group was 23, as compared with an average age of 30 for their predecessors in office. The three remaining members of the committee were "veteran backbone cadres" who were required to help and train the new cadres in their work. There was clearly a need for rejuvenation in this *ch'u*, where 35 per cent. of full-time League cadres were still above the age-limit.

The promotion of new forces in these and other League committees brought its own problems. It was not achieved without difficulty. There was an element of risk, of which the Party and the League

[24] NCNA, 16 March 1964.
[25] 11 December 1965, in *Survey of the China Mainland Press* (*SCMP*) (Hong Kong: U.S. Consulate General), No. 3607, on which the following discussion is based.

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were fully aware, in giving organizational responsibility to untried personnel. It was a calculated risk, and it put a premium on selection and training procedures. The hope was that the rapid acquisition of practical experience, under close supervision, would strengthen organization and the revolutionary cause simultaneously. Meanwhile, it appeared to involve considerable friction and resentment between the older and younger cadres. In making the promotions, considerations of seniority and grade were set aside. "Many of these cadres have skipped a grade in their promotion."[26] Charges by the older hands of "unfairness," and of the "incompetence" of the new appointees, were sufficiently serious to need an official answer in the paper. It was evident that political zeal was a major qualification for promotion. The age factor was second in importance. The young cadres, now in their twenties, had been "nursed in the thought of Mao Tse-tung since their childhood." While their work performance was "slightly inferior" in some respects, this was remediable. After a final appeal to the thought of Mao on bringing up successors to the revolution, the paper concluded: "It is first necessary to depend on politics, and secondly, there really exists a problem concerning the age of cadres."[27] The relevance of the first to a solution of the second was not entirely clear. The evidence tended to show that one exacerbated the other. The real problem of the League, however, was in maintaining organizational cohesion in a shifting membership, and in deciding its priorities as between cohesion and revolutionary elan.

The League's role as a "school for communism" involved not merely the propagation of the Maoist gospel, but also active organizational work in recruiting new members and establishing new branches. Organization and propaganda, as always in Chinese practice, were closely linked. At the Ninth League Congress the two important questions in the task of construction were stated as being "to strengthen the building of primary organizations and to cultivate and promote young functionaries."[28] The past importance of the League as a school for grooming future cadres, particularly in the political sphere, cannot be overstressed. The League work meeting in 1964 asserted that, "To help the Party control the YCL cadres, to look for, train and promote young cadres, and to supply cadres to the Party in a planned manner are important responsibilities of all YCL organizations."[29] This the League had done successfully since its foundation in 1949. Already, of course, the Party had acquired considerable experience in organizing and mobilizing youth in the revolutionary struggle, since the earliest days and under various names. The Communist Youth League from

[26] *Ibid.*
[27] *Ibid.*
[28] Hu K'o-shih, in NCNA, 6 June 1964.
[29] NCNA, 16 March 1964.

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1925–37, the National Salvation Youth Association and the Anti-Japanese Youth Vanguards in the wartime period of 1937–45, and the League of Democratic Youth and the New Democratic Youth Alliance in the years 1946–49 provided a broad front for the enlistment of youth in the Party's cause, with their names reflecting the changes in Party tactics at different periods of its history.[30]

The New Democratic Youth League was established at the first All-China Youth Congress in April 1949, following a decision of the Central Committee of the Party the previous January. A year later it claimed three million members.[31] The number of cadres in the League's own bureaucratic structure at that time was approximately 16,000, a ratio of one cadre to 188 members.[32] This was a beginning. By the end of its nine-month first term in September 1949, the central League training school had already graduated 500 cadres who proved their ability "by joining in the work of taking over Peking and Tientsin immediately after the People's Liberation Army entered the cities."[33]

The work of the League gained in strength and scope with the consolidation of Communist rule in the years that followed. Indeed, it made its own important contribution to that consolidation. By the time of the League's second Congress in 1953, when total membership was 9 million, nearly 30,000 members had become technical or executive cadres, and 100,000 were model workers. More than a million League members were acting as cadres at the basic level, and 40,000 at *ch'u* level and above. League strength was naturally greatest in institutions composed mainly of young people. Over 60 per cent. of the armed forces personnel were members of the Youth League, as were 56 per cent. of students at Tsinghua University. They also formed the nucleus of the militia. There were a further 1·3 million members in schools, where they acted as a "core" for uniting the masses of students.[34] The League had certainly "supplied cadres to the Party in a planned manner." By 1955, 31 cadre schools run by the League were reported to be training 2·5 million cadres a year—presumably in short-term classes on a rotation basis, though even this would represent a heavy load for each school.[35]

[30] *China's Youth March Forward*, p. 63. For a study in depth of pre-1949 youth work, see K. Pringsheim, "The Functions of the Chinese Communist Youth Leagues (1920–1949)," *The China Quarterly*, No. 12 (October–December 1962), p. 75.

[31] *China's Youth March Forward*, p. 63.

[32] Derived from the figures given by Hu Yao-pang in 1956 (*Eighth National Congress of the CCP*, Vol. II), when he said 80 per cent. of the then 80,000 cadres were new since 1949.

[33] *China's Youth March Forward*, p. 69.

[34] Hu Yao-pang, NCNA, 6 July 1953.

[35] Chung Shan-fan, *Chung-kung sheng-ch'uan, ti-wu-nien* (*Chinese Communist Party Statements, 5th year*) (Hong Kong, 1955), p. 192. The report may well be an exaggeration. Training at this rate would involve each school in training some 1,500 cadres a week!

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The majority of these cadres were probably trained for leadership roles in production, as well as receiving political education. The League's participation in production and other tasks specified by the Party has been extensive. In all the political and economic campaigns of the Party, the value of the League's assistance in mobilizing the masses has been immeasurable. According to Hu Yao-pang in 1953, the League had "mobilized the vast majority of rural youths to take part in the great agrarian reform movement," and many members were the "leading elements" in mutual aid teams and co-operatives.[36] In mid-1954, 6 million League members were estimated to be acting as officials in 290,000 basic-level organizations in the countryside.[37] Likewise, Hu said, "During the great campaign for the suppression of counter-revolutionaries and the three-anti and five-anti campaigns, we mobilized and organized tens of thousands of youths to prosecute numerous counter-revolutionary elements guilty of heinous crimes, and to denounce the criminal acts of corrupt elements and law-breaking capitalists." [38]

The vast and rapid extension of the co-operative movement in 1955 and 1956 greatly increased demands on the League organization. At the Fourth Plenum of the League's Central Committee in December 1955, it was decided to expand the membership, particularly in rural areas.[39] By the time of the Eighth Party Congress in September 1956, the League's numbers had increased to 20 million, representing 17 per cent. of the country's youth. The League's own bureaucracy had also risen to 80,000 full-time cadres, 80 per cent. of whom were new since 1949. This ratio of one staff cadre to 250 members, however, represented a decline since 1950. The numbers of part-time and Party cadres in the organization most probably increased. The number of League branches in villages, factories, schools, State organs and the armed forces reached 700,000. Moreover, in the eight years since its foundation, over 2 million League members had joined the Party.[40]

The change in the League's position that this growth entailed, and its increased responsibilities amongst the population, were recognized by its change of name to "Communist Youth League" from New Democratic Youth League and the incorporation of its new status in the Party Constitution. It was now more closely tied than ever to the Party's apron-strings. Two lessons had been learned from the pre-1949 experience: that too much stress on the League's elitist character

[36] NCNA, 6 July 1953.
[37] Chung Shan-fan, *Chung-kung sheng-ch'uan.*
[38] NCNA, 6 July 1953.
[39] *Chung-kuo ch'ing-nien pao*, 28 December 1955.
[40] Hu Yao-pang, *Eighth National Congress of the CCP*, Vol. II.

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tended to make it a "second Party," while concentration on mass youth work alone, without an advanced nucleus of leadership such as the League, led to loose and ineffective control over the movement.[41]

Constant expansion was therefore the order of the day, to keep pace with the growing numbers of young people and in order to facilitate the Party's tasks. An example may illustrate the task of recruitment that faced the League. In 1956, when membership was 20 million, the number of young people totalled some 118 million.[42] By 1962, when League membership was described as "more than 20 million," there were 130 million young people.[43] The proportion of League members among the country's youth may, therefore, have declined from 17 per cent. in 1956 to 15 per cent. in 1962. If the League was to maintain its position as an "organization of the masses of advanced youth," it had constantly to look for new members. It had to run in order to stand still, let alone to increase its share of the youth total. Not this alone, but also the Party's political and economic campaigns, calling upon its youth auxiliary, required a greater intake. During the eight months from the Eighth Party Congress to the Third Congress of the League in May 1957, intensive construction work accounted for the establishment of 220,000 new branches, and 3 million new members.[44] Two years later, in the wake of the communes and the Great Leap Forward, the total number of branches reached one million, and membership 25 million.[45]

By the time of the Ninth League Congress in 1964, there were 1·3 million branches.[46] The size of membership, however, was not stated, nor are there any other reliable figures which would indicate subsequent growth. If the 2,396 delegates who attended the Congress each represented the same number of members as the delegates to the previous Congress in 1957, this would seem to show a gain of nearly 14 million members in seven years. On the other hand, if the ratio of basic League branches to members were the same, the increase in membership would be closer to 10 million.[47] The difference is

[41] *Ibid.*

[42] Derived from Hu's figures, where he claimed that League membership was 17 per cent. of total youth.

[43] *Chung-kuo ch'ing-nien pao*, 1 February 1962. How many more than 20 million it is not possible to say, though one would expect some increase over 1956. On the other hand, there may have been an absolute decline in membership during the crisis years 1959–61.

[44] *Jen-min jih-pao* (*People's Daily*) (Peking), 16 May 1957. This brought the respective totals to 920,000 branches and 23 million members.

[45] NCNA, 3 May 1959.

[46] Hu K'o-shih, in NCNA, 6 June 1964.

[47] In 1957, 1,493 delegates represented 920,000 branches and 23 million members. In 1964, 2,396 delegates represented 1·3 million branches, according to Hu K'o-shih, in NCNA, 6 June 1964.

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between a total membership of 33 million or 37 million in 1964. Neither is impossible, given the rapidity of the League's numerical increase in preceding years. Certainly, there was a very evident need for expansion in 1964, particularly in the countryside. Rural League members were only 13 per cent. of rural youth, while 10 per cent. of the production teams had no League members, and about 30 per cent. had only one or two.[48] If this was an improvement, it was still not good enough, and especially not in terms of the campaign, then under way, to cultivate revolutionary successors.

The League's 1964 Constitution therefore facilitated the work of expansion by relaxing certain requirements. Under the membership heading, an applicant needed a recommendation from only one League member instead of two. In basic-level organization, the number of members in a general branch could be lowered from 50 to 30, where conditions made this necessary. Expansion of League membership was, in fact, at the top of the agenda in 1964. The plans for new recruits that year required that half should be under 20, and that 40 per cent. should be females. The target was to enable 80 per cent. of the production teams in the countryside to set up League groups of one kind or another[49]—in other words, to increase by a third the number of such groups in the production teams. Within a year or so, up to the end of 1965, the League recruited 8·5 million new members.[50] Further, more than 600,000 members joined the Party. By 1966, therefore, League membership may have exceeded 40 million.[51]

This opening of the doors of membership, as a response to increasing Party demands on the League in connexion with the third Five Year Plan (1966–70) and to implementation of the policy guidelines of class struggle, production struggle and scientific experiments, necessitated concentrated attention on the social composition of the League.[52] Like the Party, this attention was "mainly focused upon workers, poor and lower-middle peasants, and revolutionary young intellectuals."[53] New rural members were particularly in demand. A policy of recruitment on this scale naturally stretched the absorption capacity of the organization. It also meant that admission of new

[48] *Chung-kuo ch'ing-nien pao*, 9 October 1965, in *SCMP*, No. 3564.
[49] *Ibid.*
[50] NCNA, 19 February 1966.
[51] See D. Bonavia, "Heirs and Successors," *Far Eastern Economic Review*, Vol. 52, No. 13 (30 June 1966), for a good summary of League development in the years 1964–66.
[52] Increased recruitment in 1965 was *directly related* to the start of the Five Year Plan in 1966, according to NCNA, 19 February 1966. In the "three great revolutionary movements", class education and League recruitment and consolidation went hand in hand. *Cf.* "Place Membership Expansion in the First Position," *Chung-kuo ch'ing-nien pao*, 9 October 1965, in *SCMP*, No. 3564.
[53] NCNA, 16 March 1964.

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members might take place without adequate preparation. In both respects misgivings were expressed within the League.[54] Mass recruitment, in fact, may have altered the character of the League to something less than "an organization of advanced youth." Even youths from landlord, rich peasant and capitalist backgrounds were eligible to join. The recruitment plans handed down to League branches may, therefore, have caused them some embarrassment. Some complained that there were insufficient youths in their locality holding the requisite qualifications. The official answer of the League was not that there were too few eligible youths but that the qualifications demanded were too high. The League mirrored the Party in every respect. In recruitment policy it, too, could lower the political and other requirements where necessary, in the interests of expansion, or where class background seemed to offer an alternative guarantee of political reliability.

In one *hsien* in 1965, 90 per cent. of the 5,432 new League members came from poor and lower-middle peasant families. Strenuous efforts were also made to obtain suitable recruits from youths with less desirable backgrounds. The work of the League organization in this *hsien* was evidently considered particularly instructive, since the report on its work published in *Chung-kuo ch'ing-nien pao* was prepared by the Organization Department of the League's Central Committee, in collaboration with the Committees for Hunan Province and the local region.[55] The *hsien* certainly had a problem with older League members. In three communes, half the 604 members were over age. Energetic recruitment enabled the replacement of many branch committee members with new people about 20 years old. The organizational problem, however, was well illustrated in the *hsien* League Committee itself. Of its seven members, after the demands of the Socialist Education Campaign and other work had been met, only one cadre remained to carry out League work for the whole *hsien*. The only recourse for this young man, according to the report, was "revolutionary stamina." While he travelled around investigating 22 communes and 29 brigades during the winter months, the office was presumably left unattended. Great reliance had to be placed on Party organizations. Party committees and Party branch secretaries "often stressed that all Party members should do the work of bringing up successors." The report amply illustrated the need for a recruitment drive, as well as the curious fact that the Party's excessive demands on League members might result in the Party having to take on part of the League's own work. Whether deliberate or not, and even if the

[54] This discussion is based on the issue of *Chung-kuo ch'ing-nien pao* cited in note 52.
[55] Shaotung *hsien*, Hunan.

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League's convenience was a secondary consideration for the Party, this would seem to have been a matter requiring closer co-ordination between the two bureaucracies. Finally, the report succeeded in justifying, rather than refuting as intended, the objection of League cadres in the *hsien* that "CYL members as they are at present are not supervised properly and it would be even more difficult to supervise the new Leaguers."

An example from another *hsien* may better illustrate the desirable social composition of League membership. Like all such publicized examples, it was intended as a model for other organizations of the League.[56] In this particular case, 1,468 new members were recruited in the course of 1963—one quarter of the previous total membership. Although membership was already 16·3 per cent. of the youth in the *hsien*, which would seem to be somewhat higher than the national rural average,[57] uneven distribution and over-aging were held to adversely affect the work of the League. A correct class balance was maintained with 81 per cent. of the new members coming from poor and lower-middle peasant backgrounds. Youth was maintained with 83 per cent. under 20. The right sex proportion was maintained with 43 per cent. being young women. Revolutionary young intellectuals represented 37 per cent. of new members, in the shape of junior middle-school graduates taking up agricultural work in the countryside. League branch construction was also served, in that 58 per cent. of the new members came from production teams that had few or no League members before. Thus, 120 production teams were enabled to form League groups, and 11 brigades set up League branches. Outstanding activists evidently formed a fruitful source of recruitment, since 60 per cent. of the new members were cited as models, either for their personal qualities or for their work in the communes. Not long after admission, 120 new members were elected to branch committees, thus ensuring that those of poor or lower-middle peasant origin held a predominant position. All in all, 95 per cent. of the commune and brigade League organizations in the *hsien* fulfilled their recruitment plans during the year. In every respect, the *hsien* seemed to have faithfully adhered to the requirements of official policy. This success story, alas, was untypical. "Is it true that League organizations in all other places have done the same thing as Antzu *hsien*? No." The moral of the tale for readers of the youth journal was said to be that the future development of the League "is at the service of the requirements of class and production struggles."

Something should therefore be said about the political activities

[56] Antzu *hsien*, Hopei. *Chung-kuo ch'ing-nien pao*, 2 April 1964, in *SCMP*, No. 3208.
[57] The average in 1964 was 13 per cent.

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of the League which, together with work in production, were the major thrust of all its efforts. They were, if anything, regarded as the more important of the two. The first duty of League members was "to strive to study Marxism-Leninism and Mao Tse-tung's thinking." The reference to Mao was inserted in 1964, where it had not appeared in the previous League Constitution. (The long overdue Ninth Congress of the Party, too, accorded a prominent place to the "thought of Mao Tse-tung" in the revised Constitution of the Party.) The first task of League branches was also "to carry out ideological-political work among members and young people and to organise them for the study of Marxism-Leninism and Mao Tse-tung's thinking."[58] Application to the Party texts was accompanied by the study of League organization and current Party policies. The temporary nature of its membership gave the League something of the character of a conscript army. League organizations acted as the training and induction centres for the constant flow of new recruits. Primary training was generally brief but intensive. The rapid turnover in League cadres at the basic level necessitated the continuous preparation and holding of training courses. A high proportion of League cadres were, therefore, undergoing training at any one time. In nine counties in Shantung Province in 1961, for example, 2,840 out of 7,603 secretaries of League branches, or 37 per cent., were newly appointed. No fewer than 3,376, or 44 per cent. of the total, were having some form of training.[59]

It is necessary to delineate a little more clearly, if possible, the features of League cadres. It might be thought, for example, that a comparatively recent initiation into the organizational life of the League, and a grounding in Party policies and techniques that in some cases was less than adequate, would have required their attendance at courses of basic training in the League. In a sense this was true, especially at the basic level, but it was not the whole picture. Many League cadres, such as secretaries of League committees, had considerable practical experience. Cadres in commune committees or above were likely to have graduated through the apparatus. Many or most of those at higher levels may already have been Party members in their early thirties. In any case, all new committee members required the stamp of approval from the Party. In one commune in 1961, the newly appointed members of the League committee came from the following backgrounds: 40·5 per cent. had been committee members at lower levels, 30 per cent. had been part-time League cadres holding concurrent posts which they relinquished in order to become full-time cadres, 16 per cent. were League members with a good political record

[58] Arts. 2 and 30, 1964 Constitution.
[59] *Chung-kuo ch'ing-nien pao*, 20 September 1961.

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who came from production brigades and teams, and 13·5 per cent. were cadres sent down to the commune or "young intellectuals" returned to the countryside.[60] Thus, a fairly small proportion of the new members of the commune committee were cadres with but slight experience of the workings of the machine.

As against this, as Hu Yao-pang pointed out in 1964, "although the overwhelming majority of YCL cadres have tremendous drive and enthusiasm, they often suffer from the defect of not being down to earth enough."[61] Apart from the dangers of youthful zeal, which afflict the youth movements of other political parties besides the Chinese Communist Party, there was the added consideration that however typical the composition of a commune League committee might be in the example cited in 1961, League committees at lower levels were almost certainly staffed by cadres of lesser experience. Thus, a large part of League training had necessarily to be devoted to organizational instruction, centring on Party leadership, the nature and tasks of the League, democratic centralism and methods of League branches.

Training could take various forms.[62] The League's general reliance on the Party in the selection and administration of League cadres enabled it to take advantage of the facilities offered by the Party. The local county Party school might run a special class for League cadres, lasting anything up to a month. The Party provided board and lodging, and the instructors. The curriculum was aimed at giving a thorough grounding in the Party's policies. Most training was less formal and shorter in duration, and based on the production unit. In such cases, the League conducted its own programme, prepared by members of the local committee, with the help of a higher committee if necessary. Cadres attended as "day-boys," and it could involve some travelling to get to the commune office or wherever the class was being held, and return home again in the evening. Such courses usually lasted for a period of only a few days. Alternatively, the school might be brought to individual production units, for the greater convenience of those cadres attending, particularly if they already had a heavy workload. Generally conducted by cadres from a higher level committee, this method facilitated the training of League branch secretaries on the spot. A further method was to combine training with one of the numerous conferences called for cadres at various levels by the commune or the county committee. Lessons and discussions were sandwiched in between sessions of the conference. At senior levels of the

[60] *Ibid.* 21 September 1961. [61] In NCNA, 6 July 1964.
[62] *Chung-kuo ch'ing-nien pao*, 20 September 1961. These methods, practised in Shantung, may be considered fairly typical of League practice as a whole.

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League, cadres attended the central League school in Peking, or one of its subsidiaries in the major centres.

The League's contribution to the curricula of these and lesser institutions was the study of League organization and current tasks, as expressed in the Constitution or in resolutions and directives of the Central Committee and League Congress. The political content of the courses differed little from that for cadres in other fields, being based on the Party classics required for study at any particular time, as well as articles in the League or Party papers. After 1962, if not before, the accent was heavily on the works of Mao, in line with the mass campaign of political education organized by the Party.[63] The famous three, "Serve the people," "In memory of Norman Bethune" and "Yu Kung moves a mountain," naturally figured prominently in the study of League cadres and members alike.[64] League cadres were particularly active in the campaign in organizing youth study groups. In some places, "every basic-level YCL cadre is charged with the work of tutor of a study group."[65]

The role of the League journal, *Chung-kuo ch'ing-nien*, was an important one.[66] With a history as chequered as that of the Youth League, it had been published in the same form since the end of 1948. Authorized by the Party's Central Committee at that time "in order to guide League work throughout the country and organize the broad masses of youth for study,"[67] it was the voice of the League's Central Committee, as prompted by the Party. In 1950, its circulation was 130,000 copies.[68] The journal published reports from its correspondents all over China, including those from League organizations. Its systematic aim was the education of the younger generation in Marxism-Leninism and the thought of Mao Tse-tung. It was also a convenient channel for conveying the League's instructions and policies to branches throughout the country. The journal was claimed to have "played an exemplary role in training youths and turning them into both red and expert successors to the cause of revolution," which is interesting in the light of its fate in the Cultural Revolution.[69] At the

[63] *Chung-kuo ch'ing-nien*, No. 19 (1 October 1963), stated that mass campaigns among youth for the study of Mao's works had been going on since 1958.

[64] *Ibid.*

[65] This claim was made in an article by the Propaganda Department of the League's municipal Committee in Harbin (*Chung-kuo ch'ing-nien pao*, 10 October 1963, in *SCMP*, No. 3096).

[66] Readers should refer to the excellent work by James R. Townsend, *The Revolutionisation of Chinese Youth: A Study of Chung-kuo ch'ing-nien* (Berkeley, Calif.: Chinese Research Monographs, 1967).

[67] Resolution of the Central Committee of the Party on the establishment of the New Democratic Youth League, as quoted in *Chung-kuo ch'ing-nien pao*, 19 October 1963, in *SCMP*, No. 3100.

[68] *China's Youth March Forward*, p. 69.

[69] *Chung-kuo ch'ing-nien pao*, 19 October 1963, in *SCMP*, No. 3100.

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time of its fortieth anniversary in 1963, circulation was nearly 1·5 million copies.[70]

The League's imitation of the Party, and its reliance on the Party organization, presumably extended to the arrangements for remuneration of League cadres. League members holding official positions in other bureaucracies were paid by the State, according to the proper scale. Similarly, League members who played a leadership role in co-operative units of production were paid by those units. It was probably not possible for cadres with official positions in both the League and another organization to receive salaries from two sources at once. Since all salaries come either from the State or the collective economy, this meant in effect that full and part-time League cadres, like Party cadres, were subsidized by the taxes and the toil of ordinary workers and peasants. The system may be illustrated by one commune, where in 1961 League work was strengthened by reducing the amount of time spent in production by League cadres. Following a decision of the commune Party committee, League cadres were allowed a certain number of subsidized workpoints in payment for the work put in on the League, during their absence from production. As much as 20–40 per cent. of the salary of the secretaries of League general branches in production brigades was a straight subsidy from the collective income.[71] The League was obliged to rely extensively on such part-time cadres, who played an invaluable part in manning branch committees. The extent of this reliance was revealed in 1956, when the League had 700,000 branches but only 80,000 full-time cadres. The payment of these cadres, most of whom were in the rural areas, was a continuing liability on the production teams and brigades.

Thus, the League faithfully imitated the Party. The League's policies were the Party's policies. The League's organization was heavily dependent on the Party apparatus, of which it, in fact, formed a part. There was an overlapping membership, with many members owing primary allegiance to the Party.[72] Democratic centralism, the mass line and self-criticism were the framework for its operations, in which League members were steeped, in preparation for their role as cadres in the apparatus or in society at large. Recruitment, training and administration were under the Party's eye. The disciplinary provisions of the League were an exact copy of the Party's Constitution. In these respects, the League was broadly similar to the State administrative machine, or any other of what are, strictly speaking, non-

[70] *Ibid.*

[71] *Chung-kuo ch'ing-nien pao*, 21 September 1961.

[72] This allegiance was symbolized by Art. 39 of the League's 1964 Constitution, which exempted Party members in the League from paying membership fees.

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Party organizations. None of them, however, are "non-Party" in the sense that they are free from Party control or that they contain no Party members. In fact, they are led by Party members. They exist in order to bind their members more closely to the Party chariot, and to ensure a close supervision by the Party over their performance. Where the League may have differed slightly was in the plainly ideological character of its charter, and in its temporary membership. If the League was prominent in schools, the army and production, it was precisely because those are the areas in which young people are mainly to be found.

The importance of the League's work in the army was recognized in its constitution, where it was linked with People's Liberation Army (PLA) political work. League organizations carried out their work under multiple supervision, including the Party committees, as elsewhere, but they also came under the general direction of the PLA General Political Department. More specifically, League activities in the army were the responsibility of the youth section of the Organization Department of the General Political Department.[73] Even in this sphere, the army appeared to be running its own show. Since a large proportion of army recruits are young men under 25, the League membership was correspondingly high. In 1953, members were said to form 60 per cent. of the armed forces, which might indicate a total membership of about 2 million.[74] A forum of army cadres in Peking in 1960 considered that "if the League organisations were to be the Party's able assistants . . . the League must be able to follow quickly, follow closely and follow properly."[75] The development of League membership and League branches since 1960 was the result of the campaign of political indoctrination and Party control in the army initiated by Lin Piao. In response to the call by Lin and the Party's Military Affairs Committee for "the whole army to take up youth work" and to study the thought of Mao, the organization of the League was strengthened in the practice of the "3–8" work style, and the "5-good" movement.[76] The model for League members in the army was a young man of 23 years of age called Wang Chieh. He

[73] See, for example, accounts of meetings called by the Organization Department, in *Chung-kuo ch'ing-nien pao*, 18 August and 22 September 1960, Union Research Service, Vol. 22, No. 20.

[74] Hu Yao-pang, in NCNA, 6 July 1953. This calculation assumes a rough figure of 3 million in China's armed forces.

[75] *Chung-kuo ch'ing-nien pao*, 22 September 1960.

[76] See references in note 73. The "3–8 style," formulated by Mao, refers to 3 phrases and 8 characters. The phrases are: firm and correct politics, hard and simple work, flexible strategy and tactics. The characters are: *t'uan chieh* (unity), *shin chang* (vigilance), *yen su* (seriousness) and *huo p'o* (activity). The "5-good" movement refers to soldiers who are good in political thinking, military training, the 3–8 style, and in physical training and performance.

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joined the army in 1961, and was admitted into the Youth League in 1962. He was rated a "5-good" soldier for three consecutive years. While training militiamen and cadres in Kiangsu in 1965, he saved them from an explosion by sacrificing his own life.[77]

The other major activity of the League lay in its leadership of the Young Pioneers, an organization for children between the ages of 9 and 15. In the vast expansion of the League and the Pioneers that took place after mid-1965, children over the age of 7 were eligible to join.[78] The Pioneers were to the League what the Wolf Cubs are to the Scouts in other countries. Membership of the Pioneers was a preparation for membership of the League. Moreover, it served the same purposes of indoctrination and organization. If the League was a "school for the study of Communism," then the Pioneers were the kindergarten. At an early age, children were introduced to the revolutionary virtues, and learned to "love the fatherland, people, labour, science and public property."[79] Moreover, they acquired some familiarity with the organized life that all must share in Communist China. As one journal expressed it, "Facts show that having joined the Young Pioneers and regularly received organisational education, the teenagers have a notion of organisation."[80]

The Pioneers were, however, a mass organization of children and not, like the League, only for the politically "advanced." In any case, children can hardly be expected to have mature political views, though they are naturally susceptible to the ideas authoritatively presented to them. They can be easily influenced, and the Pioneers provided a forum for corporate activities. Its mass character was reflected in its membership, for which the only qualification was the correct age. (And what qualifications do the Red Guards require?) In the 10 years from 1950 to 1960, the number of members grew from 1·9 million to 50 million, an average annual net increase of nearly 5 million.[81] In an all-out recruitment drive in 1965 and 1966, conducted concurrently with the drive for League expansion, the Pioneers almost doubled its strength, reaching 100 million members by June 1966.[82] The admission procedure involved the instruction of the new applicants in the work and nature of the organization, and an induction ceremony, at which

[77] A circular issued by the League Central Committee exhorted all League members and the nation's youth to emulate Wang Chieh (NCNA, 7 November 1965).
[78] This was a decision of the Second Plenum of the Ninth Central Committee of the League, meeting in March–April 1965.
[79] Art. 36, 1964 League Constitution.
[80] Editorial, *Fu-tao-yuan* (*Instructor*), No. 10 (20 October 1965), in *Survey of China Mainland Magazines* (Hong Kong: U.S. Consulate General), Supplement No. 2 (7 December 1965).
[81] *Chung-kung shih-nien* (*Communist China's Ten Years*) (Hong Kong, 1960), p. 516.
[82] *Jen-min jih-pao*, 1 June 1966.

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the child took an oath and was presented with a red scarf as a badge of membership. The new member was also required to plant a tree or perform some other public service, to mark his acceptance of new responsibilities in the community.[83]

The organization of the Pioneers was confined to the basic level. There was no hierarchy of branches under a central organization, since the Pioneers were an adjunct of the Youth League. There was, nevertheless, a rudimentary framework of organization, based on groups, teams and brigades, set up in primary or middle schools, in streets, or in production brigades in the countryside. "A group is composed of seven to thirteen persons; a team is composed of two to five groups; a brigade is composed of two teams or more. Each group has one head and two deputy heads to be elected by all members of the team. A team shall set up a team committee and a brigade a brigade committee, to be elected respectively by members of the team and the brigade."[84] Thus the little cadres of the Pioneers may be presumed to have learned their first lessons in democratic centralism. The brigades and teams, however, were in the direct charge of League committees.

The League provided the instructors that guided the children's activities. According to its Constitution, "The League organizations dispatch outstanding League members or invite teachers and other people who are progressive in thinking, show a correct work style, and love children, to be instructors of the Young Pioneers and help them incessantly to raise their political and vocational level."[85] In 1964, the number of instructors attached to the Pioneers was 1·2 million.[86] Since they were young themselves, they were given appropriate training by League organizations in class struggle, manual labour, making personal inquiries, and Pioneers' activities. These activities included ideological education in its broadest sense, military training and civic actions.[87]

The work of the Pioneers was closely linked with mass campaigns by the Party, and events in the civil calendar. In the past the Pioneers played their part in collecting "donations" for the Korean war, performing useful labour tasks, and setting up the communes. During the annual *Ch'ing-ming* Festival, the Pioneers revered and tended the tombs of "revolutionary martyrs."[88] Militia activities were increased

[83] *Chung-kuo ch'ing-nien pao*, 15 March 1962, in *Current Background* (Hong Kong: U.S. Consulate General), No. 680.
[84] *Ibid.*
[85] Art. 37.
[86] *Chung-kuo ch'ing-nien pao*, 30 January 1964.
[87] In 1965, the League Central Committee called for a stepping-up of these activities. See D. Bonavia, in *Far Eastern Economic Review*, Vol. 52, No. 13 (30 June 1966).
[88] The closest equivalent in Christian countries might be All-Souls.

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after 1965, and children drilled with wooden guns and grenades. In some places, it was claimed, "every basic militia platoon now has three to five children attached to it. These children will pass on to the others the ability to kill the enemy."[89] Little cadres were also trained to show initiative and working ability. Five rules of conduct required them to study well, work well, love the collective, struggle against bad people and bad deeds, and refrain from beating or scolding.[90]

The essential purpose of all these activities, however, was the inculcation of Communist principles and organizational techniques. This purpose was symbolized in the Pioneers' flag, red in colour, bearing in the centre a red star representing the leadership of the Party. The red scarf of the Pioneers represented a corner of the red flag. The corporate and militant spirit of the Pioneers was expressed in the saluting drill. All meetings of the Pioneers ended with the instructors, or visiting members of the Party or the League, leading members in shouting the call, "Be ready to struggle for the Communist cause." The answer, accompanied by the raising of the right fist, was "Ever ready!"[91] Thus, the Pioneers, under the leadership of the League, and both under the leadership of the Party, harnessed the energies and aspirations of youth to the needs of the apparatus, and did their best to ensure that young people would always be Chairman Mao's "good children."

Conclusion

The undoing of the League, it is clear, was its affinity with the Party. In its growth and development since 1949, there was not, as there was with the trade unions, a history of heresy and error, of independent initiative, or of conflict with the Party. This was guilt by association. The crime of Hu Yao-pang and his colleagues was that they served Liu and Ten Hsiao-p'ing too well. In Hu's case, his 14-year term of office must also have told against him at a time when office-holders were generally suspect. At every stage in the Cultural Revolution, the troubles of the Youth League were attendant on the troubles of the Party. When, for instance, in the early months of 1966, the Peking municipal Party committee (with P'eng Chen at its head) was taken in hand and reorganized, the League's municipal committee underwent a simultaneous transformation. Its First Secretary since 1957, Wang Chao-hua, was replaced by Li Li-kung, a provincial League secretary

[89] Chengchow Radio, 25 May 1965 (*BBC Summary of World Broadcasts, The Far East*/1876).
[90] *Ibid.*
[91] See reference in note 83.

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from Shantung.[92] The Central Committee of the League appears to have watched helplessly as its power bases and its personnel were removed, attempting to cover its tracks and ingratiatingly trimming its sails to every wind that blew from Peking.[93] This did not save it. The coup-de-grace came with the raid on its membership that took place in the formation of the Red Guards. The curious spectacle must then have frequently occurred of League members joining in denunciation of the "revisionism" of the organization to which they had so recently belonged, and whose erstwhile leaders were now revealed as blackguardly followers of the "top Party person in authority taking the capitalist road." This experience can only have been an awakening for some youthful idealists, and a further cynical exercise in skin-saving for others.

Several other observations are possible on the basis of the evidence above. A measure of bureaucratic fossilization, analogous to that in others areas of national life, had occurred in the League, from its Central Committee downwards. The higher one went in the hierarchy, the more marked this became. The age factor in League membership simply accentuated the problem. In practice, most temporary League officials could scarcely expect to rise higher than commune level at best, with something of a "generation gap" between them and their seniors. The Party's close organizational involvement, and dual membership of Party and League, could not have helped either. A greater autonomy for the League might have had some effect in stimulating enthusiasm and opening up avenues of promotion, but this would then have presented a greater problem of control from the Party's point of view. In the event, things were left as they were, with the League continuing to play second fiddle to the Party. If 11 per cent. of the League's membership in 1956 was over the age limit, this had very much to do with bureaucratic job security at the higher levels. It was not then, presumably, considered so disgraceful as to prevent the League being given a new and honoured status in the Party Constitution approved at the Eighth Party Congress. Now, of course, this is simply a further charge in the indictment.

Another aspect of the character of the League was the privileged position accorded it in social life and administration, approaching that of the Party, and second only to the Party.[94] League members shouldered a great part of the burden of implementing Party policies, and not only in the political sphere and in propaganda work, but in

[92] *Jen-min jih-pao*, 16 June 1966.
[93] See *China News Analysis*, No. 634 (28 October 1966), p. 3 and J. R. Townsend, *The Revolutionisation of Chinese Youth*.
[94] This is amply illustrated in, for example, A. D. Barnett, *Cadres, Bureaucracy and Political Power*.

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the economic sphere too. Their role, for instance, in setting up agricultural co-operatives was a vital one. In ideological matters they spoke with the voice and with the authority of the Party. In their own League organization, they came under the same discipline as Party members, and often shared the same training and facilities. The aura of the Party, in fact, rubbed off on them. League cadres, like Party cadres, received subsidized payment from the State according to the proper scale, or from the collective unit according to their workpoint allowance. Doubtless some were in a position to see that the subsidy they received was adequate for their needs. Membership of the organization conferred social prestige, too, as well as material advantages. Both assisted career prospects, including eventual membership of the Party, of which the League could be considered the junior branch.

TABLE I

Young Communist League (1949–1965) (Estimates in brackets)

Year	Members (millions)[a]	As % of total youths	Branches[e]	Average branch membership	Cadres[f]	Cadre–member ratio
1949	0·19					
1950	3·00				16,000	1:188
1951	5·18		242,000	21		
1952	6·00					
1953	9·00		380,000	24		
1954	12·00		520,000	23		
1955	16·00		600,000	27		
1956	20·00	17·0[b]	700,000	28	80,000	1:250
1957	23·00		920,000	25		
1958	23·20					
1959	25·00		1,000,000	25		
1960-1	—					
1962	20·00	15·0[c]				
1963	—					
1964	(33-37)	13·0[d] (rural)	1,300,000	(25-28)		
1965	(40·00 plus)					

Sources:

a Data for *1949-59*, *Chung-kung shih-nien* (Hongkong, 1960), p. 501; *1962*, "more than 20 million" members were claimed in *Chung-kuo ch'ing-nien pao*, 1 February 1962; *1964*, estimate based on number of delegates to Ninth Congress, NCNA, 6 June 1964; *1965*, estimate allowing for 8·5 new members, NCNA, 19 February 1966.

b Hu Yao-pang, *Eighth National Congress*, Vol. 2, p. 319.

c Derived from membership of 20 million out of 130 million total youth, *Chung-kuo ch'ing-nien pao*, 1 February 1962.

d *Ibid.* 2 April 1964.

e Data for *1949-59*, see note a; *1964*, NCNA, 6 June 1964.

f Data for *1956*, Hu Yao-pang, *Eighth National Congress*, Vol. 2, p. 319 from which *1950* figure is derived.

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If the motives for seeking League membership were therefore sometimes less than pure, in so far as they were self-seeking or time-serving, this again could not have been without its effect on the daily life and outworking of the organization, especially at the basic level. In this it also resembled the Party. When the doors of membership were thrown wide open and recruitment intensified, as during 1965, the problem of purity became even more relevant and urgent. Not only were various fine filters dispensed with, but class criteria were also relaxed—both being sanctioned by the revised League Constitution adopted in 1964, which paved the way for expansion. The League was here placed in a cleft stick, confronting the problem of how to maximize its coverage of the "revolutionary successor" programme, while yet maintaining its ideological integrity. The League was in the classic situation that has sometimes faced the Party in the past. If it was ripe for rectification, the Cultural Revolution provided a drastic answer.

TABLE II

Young Pioneers (1949–66)

Year	Members (millions)	Instructors	Instructor-member ratio
1949	0·5		
1950	1·9		
1951	3·0		
1952	5·2		
1953	7·0		
1954	8·0		
1955	10·0		
1956	25·0		
1957	30·0		
1958	35·0		
1959	44·0		
1960	50·0		
1961	—		
1962	50·0		
1963	—		
1964	50·0	1,200,000	1:42
1965	—		
1966	100·0		

Sources:
1949-60 data, see Table I.
1962: *Chung-kuo ch'ing-nien pao*, 13 March 1962.
1964: Peking Radio, 31 May 1964 (*Summary of World Broadcasts FE*/1569); *Chung-kuo ch'ing-nien pao*, 30 January 1964.
1966: *Jen-min jih-pao*, 1 June 1966.

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These are surely sufficient grounds for the Maoist aversion to the League as it stood, and for concern at the general direction of the youth movement, at the hands of men who controlled most of the well-oiled interlocking mechanisms of the apparatus, and one of the bases of whose power was the Youth League. If China were not to change colour and direction within a few generations, then it was important to reawaken the ardour of youth in the revolutionary cause before the mould had set, and particularly before Mao himself had left the helm. It would, surely, have been incongruous to confine the "great helmsman" to the fo'c'sle. It was time for a turn at the wheel.

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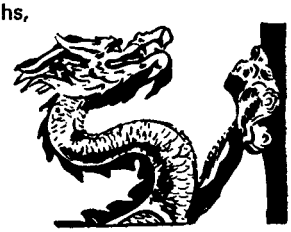

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