

THE FUTURE VISUALIZED: Chinese Propaganda Art in the Modernization Era

STEFAN R. LANDSBERGER*

The use of visual, largely non-verbal propaganda for developmental purposes can be of great importance for influencing behavior and attitudes in countries with a high percentage of illiteracy such as China. For example, visual propaganda can be employed to disseminate knowledge of new farming techniques and implements, developments in hygiene, low-level technologies, etc., and to stimulate their use.

Visual propaganda can also be used for political ends: it can serve as an important vehicle for translating abstract ideology and policy into stimuli for behavior and attitudes that are easily understood and imitated by the recipients, both literate and illiterate. Already in 1894, Friedrich Engels argued that political posters containing visual propaganda were "the main means of influencing the proletariat".¹ His reasoning was obviously influenced by the role that the political poster had played in the process of the political emancipation of the bourgeoisie in Europe in the 17th and 18th centuries.²

Socialist Realism

One of the requirements which propaganda art in general must fulfill is that it must inspire the recipients to display behavior which is in line with the demands of those sponsoring the art. Chinese propaganda art has made extensive use of the non-Chinese mode of expression of Socialist Realism, not only to show "life as it really is", but also "life as it ought to be", thereby instructing the viewers in the revolutionary development which takes place "in the spirit of Socialism".³ On this basis, one can say that propaganda art is in essence a type of "faction", i.e., a hybrid of "fact" and "fiction".

Since the founding of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) in 1920, and especially since the founding of the People's Republic of China (PRC) in 1949, the CCP leadership has sought inspiration in the Soviet Union for the development of its visual propaganda. Already in the 1930s, Socialist Realism had been adopted there as the only revolutionary art form. According to proponents of the style, writers and artists should be like "engineers of the human soul" who produced "proudly tendentious" works of art. They were to depict "life" truthfully and in its "revolutionary development", not merely as an "objective reality".

Writers and artists were made responsible for political manipulation; their works had to combine "truthfulness and historical concreteness ... with the ideological remolding and education of the toiling people in the spirit of socialism". This was because art had to have "Party-mindedness" and be close to the masses, in order to lead to the creation of the "new socialist man".⁴ In order

* Dr. Stefan Landsberger is attached to the Sinological Institute, Leiden University, and an editor of *China Information*.

¹ Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, *Sochineniya*. Moscow: Gospolitizdat 1957, 2nd ed., Vol. 6. p. 478, quoted in Stephen White, *The Bolshevik Poster*. New Haven and London: Yale University Press 1988, p. 111.

² Robert Philippe traces the development and use of visual propaganda for political purposes in *Political Graphics - Art as a Weapon*. Oxford: Phaidon 1982.

³ Howard L. Boorman, "The Literary World of Mao Zedong", *The China Quarterly*, No. 13 (January-March 1963), p. 18.

⁴ Margaret A. Rose, *Marx's Lost Aesthetic; Karl Marx and the Visual Arts*. Cambridge MA. etc.: Cambridge University Press 1989, 2nd ed., p. 145; Elisabeth K. Valkenier, *Russian Realist Art: The State and Society: The Peredvizhniki and Their Tradition*. New York/Guildford, Surrey: Columbia University Press 1989, 2nd ed., p. 173.

to remold the workers, Socialist Realism was to present them with a heroic, idealized self-image. By striving for a unity of form and content, the spectators were encouraged to perceive directly the message that was expressed by this "heroic art".⁵ The prototype for such positive Socialist Realism was found in the critical social realist tradition of the *Peredvizhniki*, a group of painters whose name is commonly translated as the "Wanderers" or "Ambulants".⁶

A Socialist Realist image is often structured as a narrative, something which has to be "read" in order to be understood. It is made in accordance with certain codes, in order to draw all attention to the main subject. First of all, the main subject is located in or near the center, and usually illuminated by a natural or artificial light source, so that the secondary subject(s) is shrouded in shadows. The main subject is represented in great detail and lively colors, and placed at the top of an imaginary, triangular ground plan, with the secondary subject along the diagonal sides. This spatial device also serves as a visual wedge leading the eye from the foreground into the center area, adding depth to the painting.⁷

The need for propaganda to have mass appeal led to the extreme vulgarization of Socialist Realist art. A possible reason for this, according to Pierre Bourdieu, was that Socialist Realism

"... shows that there is nothing popular in what is in reality a formalism or even an academicism, based on a highly abstract *allegorical iconography*, "the Worker", etc. ... What is expressed in this formalist and petit-bourgeois art — which, far from expressing the people, involves rather a *negation of the people*, in the form of that naked-torsoed, muscular, sun-tanned, optimistic people turned towards the future, etc. — is the social philosophy and the unconscious ideal of a petite bourgeoisie of party men who betray their real fear of the real people by identifying themselves with an idealized people ..."⁸

Mao Zedong and other Chinese leaders considered Socialist Realism as the best tool to develop new, national forms of art. The bright colors and the happy and prosperous atmosphere so characteristic of Socialist Realism were seen as a continuation of the essential features of traditional popular culture.⁹ The style was employed in pictorial magazines, cartoons and comics, propaganda leaflets, and wall newspapers. New Year prints (*nianhua*) were also appropriated for propaganda purposes. After 1949, the CCP continued to use these and other communication media for similar purposes, with varying degrees of intensity and success in various periods. When Chinese society was increasingly politicized in the 1950s and 1960s, visual propaganda came to be seen as one of the most effective ways to instigate politically desirable behavioral and attitudinal changes among the people.

The Disappearance of a Medium

In order to fulfill the tasks that the CCP leadership ascribed to visual propaganda, and to propaganda posters¹⁰ in particular, they had to be sold widely to a mass audience. Until the mid-

⁵ Rose, *Ibid.*, pp. 163, 146, 155.

⁶ Valkenier, *op. cit.*, pp. xvi, 166.

⁷ Ellen Johnston Laing, *The Winking Owl: Art in the People's Republic of China*. Berkeley etc.: University of California Press 1988, pp. 20-21.

⁸ Pierre Bourdieu, *Language and Symbolic Power*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press 1991, pp. 213-214.

⁹ David L. Holm, "Art and Ideology in the Yenan Period, 1937-1945" (Ph.D. thesis, University of Oxford, 1979), p. 316.

¹⁰ Propaganda posters typically measure 53 x 77 cm. (21 x 30 in.), or, in oblong format, 77 x 53 cm.; large-sized posters typically measure 105 x 77 cm. These measures can include a white margin around the image. Most posters supply the names of the artist(s), the publisher, printer and distributor; information pertaining to the number of print runs and their respective quantities, varying from a few thousand to two to three million; date

1980s, the masses did indeed buy these posters. In theory, they did so because they agreed with the behavioral indications, or with the implicit or explicit political message(s) these posters contained. In reality, they bought them mainly because of their visual appeal.

Visual propaganda was made attractive by the careful insertion of significant symbolic content. Posters penetrated into the lowest form of social organization: they adorned the walls of dwellings and dormitories, propagating their message in an unobtrusive manner. By entering the realm of the family, they contributed to the socialization processes already taking place there.

After the adoption of the "Four Modernizations" in December 1978, propaganda in the 1980s became centered on the modernization and reform of the Chinese economy.¹¹ As a result, little room was left for its original purpose, namely the continuing political socialization of the population.¹² The decreased attention devoted to political subjects "reduced the State's capacity to isolate, encapsulate, atomize, manipulate — and thereby dominate — society".¹³

As the successes of the modernization policies directly started to benefit ever-increasing numbers of the people — if only because living conditions improved significantly — the population, for the first time since the founding of the PRC, were permitted to enjoy "the freedom to have fun".¹⁴ As a result of the policy of "opening up to the outside world", people were given the opportunity to become acquainted with non-Chinese and Overseas Chinese visitors, and their cultures and lifestyles. Radio and television sets became widely available, literally offering a window to the world at large. The latter medium in particular came to be seen as the ultimate symbol of the success of modernization, and its presence in the homes of the people as an indication of personal prosperity in terms of disposable income.¹⁵

As a result of growing economic prosperity, decreased political intrusion by the CCP, and the increasingly heterogeneous character of society in general, the strident primacy of politics of former times was reduced to a seemingly inconsequential noise that accompanied the development of an increasingly lively, freewheeling and entrepreneurial society in the 1980s.¹⁶ For the first time in the history of the PRC, propaganda had to compete with the "'informal penetration' ... of national sovereignty ... by electronic media, through mail flows, popular literature and other media likely to escape official scrutiny".¹⁷

The ideology of the "Four Modernizations" period was aimed at stimulating economic modernization and strongly oriented toward the creation of a "New Age". At the same time, while

of publication; an index number (in more recent samples, an ISBN number); and the price.

¹¹ Liu Jianming, *Deng Xiaoping xuanchuan sixiang yanjiu* (On Deng Xiaoping's Ideas of Propaganda). Shenyang: Liaoning renmin chubanshe 1990, pp. 230, 233.

¹² Stanley Rosen, "The Impact of Reform Policies on Youth Attitudes", in Deborah Davis and Ezra F. Vogel (Eds.), *Chinese Society on the Eve of Tiananmen - The Impact of Reform*. Cambridge MA.: Harvard University Press 1990, p. 290.

¹³ Richard Baum, "Epilogue: Communism, Convergence, and China's Political Convulsion", in Richard Baum (Ed.), *Reform and Reaction in Post-Mao China: The Road through Tiananmen*. New York, London: Routledge 1990, p. 193.

¹⁴ James Lull, *China Turned On: Television, Reform, and Resistance*. London, New York: Routledge 1991, p. 131.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 1, 17; Deborah Davis, "My Mother's House", in Perry Link, Richard Madsen and Paul G. Pickowicz (Eds.), *Unofficial China — Popular Culture and Thought in the People's Republic*. Boulder etc.: Westview Press 1989, p. 92.

¹⁶ Indications of this diversification of society can be found in Zhang Xinxin and Sang Ye, *Chinese Profiles*. Beijing: Panda Books 1987, 2nd ed.; more official accounts are in Liu Bingwen and Xiong Lei (Eds.), *Portraits of Ordinary Chinese*. Beijing: Foreign Languages Press 1990. The regular reports by Orville Schell also provide much information in this field. See, for example, *To Get Rich is Glorious - China in the 80s*. New York etc.: NAL Books 1986, and *Discos and Democracy - China in the Throes of Reform*. New York: Pantheon Books 1988.

¹⁷ Lowell Dittmer, "China's 'Opening to the Outside World': The Cultural Dimension", *Journal of Northeast Asian Studies*, Vol. 6, No. 2 (Summer 1987), pp. 7, 8.

Socialist Realism was no longer seen as the sole principle of creation in Chinese art, serving the people and socialism remained an important function of literary and artistic propaganda.¹⁸ Increased exposure of the population to international mass media made it more knowledgeable than ever before and that necessitated a reappraisal of the methods and contents of propaganda. Or, according to an editorial office, responsible for printed propaganda, it was now necessary to "use real (*shishizhizaidede*) examples" of desired behavior.¹⁹

As the modernization process called for the inculcation of new popular values and attitudes, it became extremely urgent that the channels of communication between leaders and people remain clear.²⁰ The "crisis of faith"²¹ in the CCP that was clearly felt to exist among the population had to be addressed and combated where possible.²² This crisis had not only resulted in apathy towards the policy process and outright scorn towards the CCP and its members, but also in a quest to find solace in other belief systems, such as religion, or in "plain old material acquisition".²³

As soon as alternatives to propaganda posters became available in the mid-1980s to satisfy the popular demand for esthetically pleasing decorations, preferably without any explicit or implicit political contents, the public did not hesitate to switch to these alternatives. The leadership, on their part, turned to other media, in particular the electronic media of radio and television to propagate behavioral norms. These media were no longer employed as tools of class struggle, but as tools in the service of modernization, contributing both symbolically and functionally to the economic and ideological dimensions of reform.²⁴

Proof of the demise of the posters, and the decreased reliance on them by the leadership, can be found in quite unexpected sources. The *Yearbooks of Chinese Publishing*²⁵, for example, invariably used to contain a chapter devoted to the accomplishments in the production of propaganda posters and New Year prints in the preceding year. After 1984, however, this particular section was no longer included.

¹⁸ Lū Cheng, Zhang Zhuru, Zhong Bihui, Su Xisheng and He Jinqing (Eds.), *Dangde jianshe qishinian jishi 1919-1991* (Chronicle of 70 years of Party Construction). Beijing: Zhonggong dangshi chubanshe 1991, p. 527.

¹⁹ Guangming ribao zongbianshi, "Gaijin renwu baodao, tuchu zhishi fenzide xuanchuan" (Improve the Coverage of Personages, Highlight Propaganda towards Intellectuals), *Zhongguo xinwen nianjian 1983*, p. 151.

²⁰ Alan P.L. Liu, "Problems in Communications in China's Modernization," *Asian Survey*, Vol. XXII, No. 5 (May 1982), p. 482. For attitudes towards the commodity economy, see also Man Yuanlai, "Xinwen xuanchuan yu shangpin jingji" (News Propaganda and the Commodity Economy), in *Zhongguo xinwen xuelun lianhehui, Zhongguo shehui kexue xinwen yanjiusuo* (Eds.), *Zhongguo xinwen nianjian 1988* (Yearbook of Chinese News 1988). Beijing: Zhongguo shehui kexue chubanshe 1988, pp. 69-70.

²¹ Peter R. Moody, Jr., "Spiritual Crisis in Contemporary China: Some Preliminary Explorations", *Issues & Studies*, June 1987, p. 55.

²² Victor C. Falkenheim, "Popular Values and Political Reform: The 'Crisis of Faith' in Contemporary China", in Sidney L. Greenblatt, Richard W. Wilson and Amy Auerbacher Wilson (Eds.), *Social Interaction in Chinese Society*. New York: Praeger Publishers 1982, pp. 237-251; Alan P.L. Liu, "Political Decay on Mainland China: On Crises of Faith, Confidence and Trust", *Issues & Studies*, August 1982, pp. 24-38; Moody, *op. cit.*, pp. 34-66.

²³ Moody, *op. cit.*, p. 59.

²⁴ Lull, *op. cit.*, pp. 4-5.

²⁵ *Zhongguo chuban nianjian* (Yearbook of Chinese Publishing) is published yearly in Beijing by Shangwu yinshuguan.

Analysis of Symbolism and Imagery

"[P]aintings are meant to be viewed as symbols, and their characteristic themes ... betoken not only themselves, but also something beyond themselves: they *mean* something".²⁶

By extending this quote to include all visual representations, a number of the posters produced in the 1980s will be subjected to a closer analysis. This analysis aims to throw light on the "symbolic language", the symbolism and imagery that were applied in visual propaganda with the intention of preparing the people for the new role the CCP had designed for itself in the modernization decade; the scope of the modernization policies; the CCP's definition of the "New Man" living in the age of modernization; and the changes that would take place in society as a result of all this. A detailed discussion of the composition of a number of posters from the 1980s will be undertaken, and it will be argued that the changes in the visual syntax of the propaganda poster may have contributed to its becoming obsolete.

Posters were employed largely in the 1980s to show the bounties of development attained, and to depict a satisfied people at leisure. The posters had a dual function: on the one hand, they showed the concrete benefits of modernization for the population as a whole; and on the other hand, they depicted the effect of the people's efforts and support for the CCP's policies.

The posters provide glimpses of "living in a material world". Not, however as the main theme, as this might inspire people to engage in blind consumerism; rather, they serve as a backdrop to the main action or activities portrayed, as a forceful reminder of the tangible results that lie in store for everybody who actively supports modernization. Specific examples are the poster "Youthful Dancesteps", which depicts a young couple dressed in jeans and colorful clothes, disco dancing in front of an orchestra in what seems to be a discotheque (see Illustration 7:2, p. 31), and "Scattering Fragrance among the People", which depicts a woman in a dress astride a red motorcycle, apparently delivering potted plants.²⁷

Personal Appearance and Clothing

The first hint of the actual improvement in living conditions is the development in material, design, cut and color, of the clothes that are worn by the models in the posters, particularly the women. Gone are the blue, grey or black unisex "Mao suits" that demonstrated the people's proletarian outlook in the past, making way for windbreakers, tracksuits, even turtleneck sweaters for men, and more feminine dresses and skirts for women. Gone are the chopped hairdos and ponytails of earlier posters. In their place are trendy hairstyles — permed or styled in other fanciful ways.

The greater care that women devote to their appearance is a second trend. They are still rosy-cheeked, as in the earlier prints, but no longer in the tradition of Beijing Opera make-up. The women of the 1980s use eye liner, lipstick and rouge, and all the other cosmetic items in the vanity case, even those that clearly indicate the urban female's preference for a pale look. This must be seen as a clear reflection of the increased interest in personal grooming in society. According to Stanley Rosen, "most single women [in Harbin] spent at least half their income on clothing, accessories, cosmetics and hair-styling".²⁸ A large number of posters feature an apparent

²⁶ Emil Preetorius, *Catalogue of the Preetorius Collection*. Munich: 1958, quoted in Wolfram Eberhard, *A Dictionary of Chinese Symbols. Hidden Symbols in Chinese Life and Thought*. London, New York: Routledge 1988, p. 9. Italics in original.

²⁷ *Qingchun wubu*, Lingnan meishu chubanshe, April 1986, print no. 8260.1875; and *Fangxiang sa renjian*, Shanghai renmin meishu chubanshe, June 1987, print no. 8081.15157. In this article, the numbering of the illustrations corresponds to the one used in Stefan R. Landsberger, *Visualizing the Future: Chinese Propaganda Posters from the "Four Modernizations" Era, 1978-1988*, unpublished Ph.D. thesis, Sinological Institute, Leiden University 1994.

²⁸ "Value Change Among Post-Mao Youth", in Link *et al.*, (Eds.), *op. cit.*, p. 207.

preference for a more Eurasian look of the female models. This can be interpreted as a reflection of the urban social reality of the 1980s, in which increasing numbers of women underwent cosmetic surgery where part of the upper eyelid was excised and a silicon strip inserted in the nose.

It can also be hypothesized that the "pretty girl" pictures of the 1960s have once more entered the world of the propaganda poster, perhaps in an attempt to make the message more palatable to the population. The poster "Make Our Cities Even More Beautiful" shows a "pretty girl" with flying cranes, skyscrapers and an old temple in the background. Another example are two pretty girls studying butterflies in the poster entitled "Love Science, Explore Diligently".²⁹

This trend clearly began with the depiction of women in demure swimsuits in "Build Up a Good Physique, Steel the Will, to Contribute Strength to the Realization of the Four Modernizations" (see Illustration 7:6, p. 32).³⁰ It is also seen in the cheap, single-sheet calendars published in a poster format in the 1980s. Political subject matter, still visible in the beginning, was completely replaced by photographs of actresses in the second half of the 1980s. The 1980 calendar "Spring of Science" features the "Peacock Dance" and the atomic symbol; the 1985 calendar, "Young Girl", features a girl from Hong Kong.³¹

Consumer Goods

Previously, poster backgrounds were factory interiors, public reading rooms, class rooms or rural scenes in the open air. In the 1980s, posters portrayed the interiors of dwellings, and did so in a very detailed manner. Coupled with this was the attention given to the modern gadgets that make life more comfortable: sofas and radio-cassette recorders became the standard features depicted in every household. Indeed, the latter became the classic symbol of modernization in the early 1980s. It was the first electronic device to be made widely available to the people from the late 1970s onwards, and became a standard everyday item.

Interestingly, the radio-cassette recorder played the same role that the printed word, whether in the form of books, newspapers or comic strips, had had in the poster art of the "Cultural Revolution". This might be evidence of the shift in the communication strategy of the CCP. Instead of making the people avid readers of official documents, the Party now aims at turning them into consumers of a steady flow of approved information through the broadcasting media. With the disappearance of the printed word, the umbilical cord established in the Yan'an days between visual propaganda and literacy campaigns was cut. While the radio-cassette recorder can be seen as an embodiment of successful modernization, it should be pointed out that the television set, despite its increased use for propaganda purposes, is not shown in the posters.

As an extra detail, the return to the Chinese interior of the potted plant and the flower vase, no longer considered signs of bourgeois living, should be mentioned. Moreover, in those few instances where the interiors of factories and industrial equipment in workshops are shown, they have also been modernized.

Mobility

Under the reforms, there has been an increase in the use of motorbikes and mopeds, and even cars. These means of transport largely replaced the bicycle and the tractor of the earlier posters. Although they are often not privately owned, the portrayal of busy roads clearly gives the

²⁹ *Rang wode chengshi geng meihao*, Changjiang wenyi chubanshe, April 1982, print no. 8107.356; *Ai kexue, qin tansuo*, Kexue puji chubanshe (Guangzhou branch), July 1985, print no. 8051.60413.

³⁰ *Duanlian shenti, duanlian yizhi, wei shixian sigе xiandaihua gongxian liliang*, Renmin tiyu chubanshe, July 1979, print no. 8015.1792.

³¹ *Kexuede chuntian*, Shanghai renmin meishu chubanshe, June 1979, print no. 8081.11452; and *Shao nu*, Zhongguo sheying chubanshe, no date, print no. 8226.020.

impression that motorized personal transport will be within everyone's reach in the near future.

Lastly, there has been a discernible increase in the attention paid by propaganda posters to the promotion of "wholesome" spare-time activities; adolescents are the most obvious targets for this type of propaganda, which is slightly reminiscent of the Boy Scout ethos. Of course, with political study on the decline as a leisure activity, alternatives had to be found. The poster "Let Youthful Beauty Glitter in Behavior", for example, features insets of these and other activities in the background of an adolescent wearing a turtleneck sweater. Such activities can be characterized as various ways of "serving the people", and can include not only cleaning up, helping the elderly, playing music and planting trees, but also the apprehending of criminals.³²

The fact that posters increasingly showed people at leisure, enjoying the fruits of modernization or simply having fun, did not mean that posters no longer showed people engaged in labor. Some role models, often intellectuals, were still depicted as giving more than their best to society. Jiang Zhuying, for example, an intellectual who was so committed to the modernization of his country that he died from exhaustion while propelling the nation forward, is portrayed in "Make Many Contributions to the Four Modernizations in the Same Manner as Jiang Zhuying", hunched over a workbench.³³

On the other hand, the various women who are portrayed as being actively engaged in the tertiary sector, as sales persons, nurses and teachers, on the other hand, do not give the impression of being overly fatigued or harassed by the demands of their work. Indeed, their relaxed posture no doubt implied that they exercised the civilized and courteous behavior that these posters sought to promote in the service sector.

All this is a far cry from the propaganda materials published in the previous period. Although the peasants and workers in "Cultural Revolution" propaganda were also depicted as taking pleasure in their work, they were merely exhorted to give their utmost. The rewards, in the form of bumper harvests and overfulfilled steel quota etc., were generally shown in the same picture, a clear echo of traditional *nianhua*.³⁴ While the stress was on quantity, people were never admonished to improve the *quality* of their work, as became the practice later. In the earlier materials, in those very few instances where people were shown to be resting, they were still engaged in some form of meaningful group activity. These activities could include taking part in socialist competitive sport events, communal newspaper reading, or singing the praise of socialism, as can be seen in the "Cultural Revolution" poster "Socialism is Fine".³⁵ The fact that the countryside practically disappeared as a setting for the posters of the 1980s of course contributed to the decrease in the number of representations of people engaged in labor. I would argue that the "waitresses-nurses" posters in particular, calling for a more customer-friendly attitude, are among the most convincing indications that propaganda art had shifted its attention more toward attitudinal change.

Gender Representation and Male Chauvinism

Women and girls became the most frequently portrayed group of people in the 1980s. This is not to say that the earlier prints showed no females at all — on the contrary. The frequent portrayal of women coincides with attempts to combat male chauvinism and safeguard the rights of women and children. Yet, no examples are provided of non-male chauvinist behavior.

"Cultural Revolution" posters tended to show women as peasants, thereby no doubt linking

³² *Rang qingchun mei zai xingwei zhong shan guang*, Shanghai renmin meishu chubanshe, March 1982, print no. 8081.12978.

³³ *Xiang Jiang Zhuying neiyang wei Sibua duozuo gongxian*, Jilin renmin chubanshe, February 1983, print no. 8091.1411.

³⁴ Holm, *op. cit.*, p. 165.

³⁵ *Shehuizhuyi hao*, Shanghai renmin chubanshe, no date, print no. 86-715.

them with fertility³⁶; others showed them at work in textile industries, traditionally seen as places of women's labor. Exceptions are found, of course, in those posters that showed women in labor roles traditionally reserved for men. Persons in positions of authority, whether as rural cadres or as foremen in the factories, were usually men; women were rarely depicted in important positions, whether in politics or in production, despite the calls in the printed media in the 1980s for a more balanced representation of women in leading bodies and functions, and the propagation of such models of female independence as Zhang Haidi.

The frequent use of young girls in posters is rooted in other causes. First and foremost, and in line with the "one-child" campaign, is the attempt to convince the population at large that a female offspring can have the same emotional value as a male offspring. Secondly, I suspect that by using the image of the young girl, the propaganda poster aims to give rise to associations with traditional New Year prints, thus paving the way for the return of the propaganda print to one of its roots.

Symbols of Political Power

Deng Xiaoping's decision to do away with the leader worship of the past posed a problem for the propaganda organizations in terms of the visualization of political power, and therefore of the visualization of the Party itself. This was exacerbated by the fact that the "grass-roots level representative" of the Party, namely the cadre, had also largely disappeared as a symbolization of CCP power. The only exception to Deng's veto on leader portraits seemed to be the countenance of Zhou Enlai.³⁷ This no doubt was in the first place caused by the fact that the Chinese people considered Zhou as their most beloved leader, a situation that continues until this day. Secondly, when Deng rose to power for a third time in the second half of the 1970s, he had clearly styled himself as a co-worker, and therefore the most logical successor of Zhou. Lastly, after the excesses and tragedies of the "Cultural Revolution", Zhou remained widely seen as a representative of a more humane type of socialism than the ideological variant that was proposed and advocated by Mao. This echoes the "good prime minister" syndrome of traditional China. Of course, in selected places the image of Mao, whether in painted or sculpted form, remained in use; Mao's portrait overlooking Tiananmen Square probably being the most well-known example.

Now that Mao Zedong, or his writings and quotations, could no longer function as the embodiment of the CCP and its power, new symbolism had to be adopted. Use was made of the images of the "founding fathers" of socialism or of the PRC, ranging from Marx, Engels, Lenin, Stalin, and Sun Yatsen to Mao, and abstract symbols such as the emblem of the State (Tiananmen); the hammer and sickle; and the symbol of the nation (five yellow stars on a red background). These elements were used in all visual materials that propagated adherence to some durable, political norm, thus clearly establishing a link between the behavior sought and the organization that originated that norm. The substitution of the symbol of the founding father by those of the nation-state can also be seen as a reflection of the propagation of nationalism rather than Communism as the source of regime legitimacy.

Another type of symbol that was employed to demonstrate the continuity between the revolutionary struggles of the past and the current economic struggles, and the decisive role the CCP played in them, was historical in nature. This was not an altogether new practice: already in Yan'an, CCP art workers had used the historical scene, which was in turn based on the *nianhua* opera print, to commemorate revolutionary events.³⁸ Vignettes of historical events since the founding of the CCP, for example in the large-sized format "To Love the Country One Must First

³⁶ Victoria E. Bonnell makes a similar observation on Soviet propaganda art in the 1930s in "The Peasant Woman in Stalinist Political Art of the 1930s", *American Historical Review*, February 1993, p. 79.

³⁷ Only in November 1992, as result of the growing personality cult around Deng, a poster was released bearing his portrait in simple black and white.

³⁸ Holm, *op. cit.*, p. 164.

Know Its History — The Deeper the Knowledge, the More Eager the Love³⁹, usually ranged from the May Fourth Movement of 1919 to the War of Liberation of 1945-1949. The more the economy flourished, and the CCP's power waned, the more use was made of this "symbolic capital", the "accumulated prestige and honor" in Bourdieu's words, that had been built up during the Long March and the Yan'an period.⁴⁰ Already in 1935, Mao Zedong had designated the Long March as a propaganda item.⁴¹

As an added difficulty, the topic of cleaner politics had to be introduced. It came as a direct result of the attempts to present the new, more benign face of the Party, as well as to break through the popular apathy towards the CCP and its policies. The metaphor that is used most frequently to signal this more sensible approach to politics, or a clear break with past political practices, is that of window cleaning.⁴² The implication of this is obvious: after the darkness and political unpredictability of the past, everybody, including the Party, should start with a clean slate. The activity itself usually is done by women dressed in the white uniform identified with nursing or the service sector. The color white may of course also have been chosen deliberately to indicate innocence. Given the spirit of the times, it is unlikely that it was associated with mourning, as in traditional China.⁴³ Quite a lot of window cleaning is found in a number of posters of the early 1980s, for example in "Today We Are on Duty" (Illustration 7:13, p. 33), which depicts red-scarfed primary school students cleaning windows, and "Take Part in Labor Enthusiastically, Cherish the Fruits of Labor" (Illustration 7:14, p. 33).⁴⁴

Symbols of Modernity

Western science fiction-inspired imagery became a constant element in 1980s propaganda posters to symbolize modernity. Spacecraft in particular seemed to be ascribed with modernizing qualities that were to strike a chord with the people, while the use of building imagery (construction cranes, highrise buildings, and others) was a clear reference to the new policies promising change and prosperity, improving rural and urban living conditions, and changing skylines that became visible all over the country.

These symbols were instrumental in changing the visual language of propaganda prints from rural, utopian visualizations of the future to a more urban perspective. "The Bustling Nanjing Lu of Shanghai", showing among others Western and African visitors, is a fine example, although the density of both pedestrian and road traffic is rather understated.⁴⁵ One observation must be made here. In the early posters and "Cultural Revolution" materials that were located in the countryside, the people were usually actively involved in creating the rosy future as envisaged by the CCP: for example, the peasants were shown actually operating agricultural machinery. The same was the case in the numerous posters extolling the benefits of irrigation and water conservancy. They all indicated to their target groups, in a romanticized but nonetheless very basic

³⁹ *Aiguo shouxian yao zhiguo — zhi zhi yu shen, ai zhi yu qie*, Zhejiang renmin meishu chubanshe, January 1984, print no. 8156.456.

⁴⁰ John B. Thompson, "Editor's Introduction", in Bourdieu, *op. cit.*, p. 14. For a discussion of the formation of "symbolic capital" in Yan'an, see David E. Apter and Tony Saich, *Discourse and Power: The Revolutionary Process in Mao's China*. Harvard University Press, forthcoming.

⁴¹ Lü *et al.*, (Eds.), *op. cit.*, p. 109.

⁴² See Joan Lebold Cohen, *The New Chinese Painting 1949-1986*. New York: Harry N. Abrams Inc. 1987, p. 105.

⁴³ White was the traditional mourning color. It was derived from the brownish-yellow color of unbleached sackcloth. See Eberhard, *op. cit.*, pp. 312-313.

⁴⁴ *Jintian women zhiri*, Shanghai jiaoyu chubanshe, January 1979, print no. 7150.1323; and *Jiji canjia laodong, aixi laodong chengguo*, the fifth of the series *Zhongxuesheng shouze* (Rules for Middle-School Students), Renmin meishu chubanshe, May 1982, print no. 8027.8321.

⁴⁵ *Fanhuede Shanghai Nanjing Lu*, Shanghai renmin meishu chubanshe, June 1989, print no. 85322.16083.

way, how irrigation and water conservancy could be managed by everyone. Thus, the materials gave clear prescriptions for the improvement of agricultural production.

Spacecraft and building, on the other hand, are only used as a setting or backdrop. No materials have been published showing the people themselves engaged in building highrise flats or operating spacecraft. Of course, by placing these visual elements in a faraway future, the posters acquire a truly utopian quality. At the same time, this sudden change in style makes these spacecraft and highrise buildings, and the future for which they represent, less tangible as concrete products of human labor.

Use of Colors

One of the main features of *nianhua* has always been that they brought some color and brightness to their surroundings. Moreover, color symbolism traditionally plays an important part in Chinese culture.⁴⁶ The "new" *nianhua* designed by the CCP likewise appropriated this symbolism and adopted it to fit its own purposes.

Communism worldwide employed the color red because it traditionally had many positive associations. In Russia, red symbolized beauty, while in China, it was seen as a "life-giving" color. It is also the color of wealth, and functions as the emblem of joy, to be used for festive occasions, or for expelling pernicious influences.⁴⁷ The CCP used the color red to denote joy, but also to symbolize itself, and some of its publications. The "Little Red Book" of the "Cultural Revolution" is a nice illustration of the creative mixture of traditional (joyous, driving away non-revolutionary influences) and modern (revolutionary, progressive) connotations of the color red.

Visual propaganda of the "Four Modernizations" era was characterized by less strident coloring than that which was used in the single-line, flat coloring of the *Zhongguo hua*-style of the preceding decades. According to a Chinese author, the demands emanating from the countryside for the use of more "elegant" colors, as opposed to the bright and bold greens and reds, were a reflection of the increased living standards.⁴⁸ The propaganda of the "Cultural Revolution" in particular was marked by the frequent and abundant application of bright green, magenta, cyclamen and other technicolor shades and hues, whereas the former makes a slightly impressionistic use of more subdued, darker colors. It was precisely the darkness and gloominess invoked by this coloring that the peasantry so strongly disagreed with when Western-inspired woodblock prints were introduced in the 1930s; the same criticism was leveled against the first works of Soviet Socialist Realist art introduced after 1945.

Given the traditional Chinese appreciation of bright coloring, it is interesting to note that quite a few materials published in the 1980s were in simple black-and-white. The posters published by the Falū chubanshe to spread popular knowledge and understanding of the newly codified laws, for example, were almost exclusively executed in a monochrome cartoon style. This style, with its quirky close-ups and meticulous attention to the depiction of non-peopled spaces, is quite reminiscent of the "Corto Maltese" stories by the French cartoonist Hugo Pratt. This is particularly the case with the two-sheet poster "Son Lives in the 'Golden Bell Hall', Mother Dwells in the 'Sheepfold'" (Illustration 7:16, p. 34).⁴⁹ It recounts the story of a son living the good life in a spacious apartment, no doubt as a result of the modernization policies, while he neglects his mother who is forced to live in a stable.

⁴⁶ See C.A.S. Williams, *Outlines of Chinese Symbolism & Art Motives*. New York: Dover Publications, Inc., 1976), pp. 76-79.

⁴⁷ White, *op. cit.*, p. 5; Williams, *op. cit.*, pp. 76, 78; Eberhard, *op. cit.*, pp. 248-249.

⁴⁸ Zhang Daoliang, "Nianhua chuban zongshu" (Summary of New Year Print Publication), in *Zhongguo chuban nianjian 1983* (Yearbook of Chinese Publishing 1983). Beijing: Shangwu yinshuguan 1983, p. 197.

⁴⁹ *Zi zhu "jinluandian", mu qi "muyangjiao"*, Falū chubanshe, December 1983, print no. 8004.009.

Traditional *Nianhua*

Traditional *nianhua*-related symbolism was only reintroduced in the late 1970s, in those posters that urged the people to adhere to the newly promulgated population policies. The chubby baby boys holding carps in particular, denoting male offspring and abundance, encapsulated traditional ideals such as wealth, happiness and longevity.⁵⁰ In the 1980s, babies continued to be shown with protective charms around their necks, clutching peaches of immortality, surrounded by magpies and mandarin ducks, but increasingly more baby girls were portrayed, doubtlessly to counter the traditional preference for boys and the practice of female infanticide.

Moreover, various visual elements of economic development began to creep in. It started with highrise buildings in the background, as in "In the Heyday of the Year of the Dragon Plump Babies are Born"⁵¹, and traditional imagery was increasingly crowded out as time progressed. The climax was no doubt reached in the bi-lingual series containing "Do a Good Job in Family Planning to Promote Economic Development", "Clever and Pretty, Healthy and Lovely", and "Carry Out Family Planning, Implement the Basic National Policy".⁵² In these posters, all traditional imagery has been replaced by modern, or even Western imagery: highrise buildings, spaceships, atomic symbols, even remote controls. The visual element that these posters have in common is the dove; this bird is not presented as the traditional emblem of long life⁵³, but as the internationally accepted icon of peace.

Given this shift from traditional symbols to more modern ones, the question remains what this will imply for the votive aspects of *nianhua* that played such a major role in the development and popularity of the genre. The "dissident" poet Duoduo (the pseudonym of Li Shizhen) has observed, in the context of his review of an exhibition of Chinese avant-garde painting in the city of Rotterdam in 1993, that Chinese society is evolving from one which was politicized to the extreme, into one in which money governs everything.⁵⁴ In his view, political symbols are increasingly replaced by financial imagery. In reality, it is not a novelty: money symbolism had already crept into traditional *nianhua* as a reflection of the fact that commerce had become an avenue for upward mobility in pre-modern China.⁵⁵

When we look at the non-political *nianhua* in the traditional style that have been produced in the early 1990s, for example "The Gods of Wealth Enter the Home from Everywhere; Wealth, Treasures and Peace Beckon"⁵⁶, Duoduo's remarks are confirmed (Illustration 7:18, p. 35). The *San Xing*, the gods of happiness (Tian Guan, the "Heavenly Official"), emolument (represented by Zhou Wen Wang) and longevity (in the archetypical form of the bald-headed Shou Gong), looking young and vigorous, holding their various symbols of rank, dominate the top half of the picture. The He-He twins, symbolizing good fortune, marital harmony and wealth⁵⁷, hold up a copper pot adorned with the characters *facai* (to make a fortune). The attention of the viewer is drawn to the contents of this copper pot, which is located strategically in the center of the print:

⁵⁰ Laing, "Persistence of Propriety in the 1980s", in Link *et al.*, *op. cit.*, pp. 159-160.

⁵¹ *Shengshi longnian yu pang wa*, Tianjin Yangliuqing huashe, June 1987, print no. 8174.1499.

⁵² *Gaobao jihua shengyu, cujin jingji fazhan, Meili congming, jiankang ke'ai, Shixing jihua shengyu, guanche jiben guoce*, Xin jiating baoshe (Liaoning), no date (but after 1986), no print no.

⁵³ See Williams, *op. cit.*, p. 131.

⁵⁴ Duoduo, "Het is geld en anders niets" (It's Money and Nothing Else), *NRC-Handelsblad*, 18 June 1993, translated by Michel Hockx.

⁵⁵ Holm, *op. cit.*, p. 151.

⁵⁶ *Lulu caishen jin jiamen, zhao cai zhao bao zhao ping'an*, Zhongguo huabao chubanshe, no date (but in 1993), ISBN number 880024.182.

⁵⁷ Eberhard, *op. cit.*, p. 142.

stacks of 50 and 100 *yuan* bills, and, believe it or not, a sizable stack of American \$100 bills. Obviously, riches has again become an important avenue for social mobility.

Visual Syntax

In this section, the visual syntax, or the relationship among images⁵⁸, of a number of posters will be analyzed, in order to show that visual propaganda was increasingly unable to address adequately the issues it was supposed to propagate.

POSTER 1. "I'M ENTHUSIASTIC AND FAIR, I HOPE TO SEE YOU EVERYDAY"⁵⁹

This poster (Illustration 7:19, p. 36) was published in 1984, obviously during a drive to urge those working in the service sector to be more customer-oriented. It is of a rather simple design, compared with the materials already mentioned.

The poster is dominated by a woman wearing an apron, bearing the number 015, while weighing tangerines, against a white background. Judging by its realistic style, this print could as easily have been produced in Eastern Europe, further proof of the continuing Westernization of the image of women on posters. It is difficult to say whether the shop assistant is employed in a State enterprise or whether she is a private entrepreneur. The number on the apron would suggest the former. On the basis of the scales that she uses to weigh her tangerines, indicating the fairness of the transaction, however, a case could be made for the latter option; such scales are used frequently in free markets.

The "message" of this poster is contained in the text, which is provided in both characters and *pinyin* transcription (which the Chinese do not read easily). The fleeting smile on the woman's face and the scales which she uses provide a visual indication of the contents of this message, which is that a saleswoman needs to be enthusiastic and fair in order to attract customers.

When we compare this poster with "Selling the Fruits of a Bumper Harvest in a Friendly Manner"⁶⁰ (Illustration 7:20, p. 37), published some months before the adoption of the "Four Modernizations" program, a number of differences stand out. On the whole, the latter poster contains considerably more visual indications of the message that is presented. Most remarkable is the Socialist-Realist, somewhat dreamlike quality the image exudes, a result that is enhanced by the soft colors which have been used.

"Selling the Fruits" is obviously located in a State enterprise, as indicated by the slogans on the wall ("*Zhudong, reqing, naixian, zhoudao*" meaning "initiative, enthusiasm, patience, being considerate"), the sophisticated weighing apparatus and the way the fruit is stocked. As in the image analyzed above, this poster is also dominated by a saleswoman, dressed in a white coat. The abundance of fruit in the fore- and background of the composition, however, draws the attention of the viewer more to the "bumper harvest" element that is provided in the modest caption. Although the image of the demurely smiling woman is employed to show the friendly manner in which these fruits should be sold, she seems to function more as a conduit between the abundance of fruit already present as a result of the bumper harvest, and the prospective customer. The consumer, as one of the people, can rightfully claim his share of this harvest.

The friendly treatment of the customer that this poster calls for, then, is not obligatory, and is not seen as boosting the sales of the fruit on display.

⁵⁸ Bonnell, *op. cit.*, pp. 55-56.

⁵⁹ *Reqing gongping xiwang tiantian jiandao nin*, Shanghai renmin meishu chubanshe, March 1984, print no. 8081.13952.

⁶⁰ *Shanshou fengshou guo*, Shanghai renmin meishu chubanshe, April 1978, print no. 8081.11120.

POSTER 2. "BETTER BIRTH AND UPBRINGING, STURDILY GROWING"⁶¹

This poster (Illustration 7:21, p. 38), produced after 1986 to support the "one child" campaign, makes use of visual elements that correspond largely with the traditional concepts and symbolism surrounding childbirth as they are employed in *nianhua*, although it does so in a rather clumsy way. The message of the poster is given both in characters and (misspelled) English, something that demands even more of an intellectual effort from the recipient than when the *pinyin* transcription had been used.

The traditional visual elements used⁶² in this poster include a little apron that the baby boy wears, "tiger slippers", as well as amulets around his neck and his left wrist. Moreover, he has a red spot painted on his forehead as protection against disease. However, he is not smiling. Nor is he chubby, as babies are supposed to be, and instead of holding a fish (*yu*, a homophone of the word denoting abundance), he holds a rather skinny toy panda. Other auspicious symbolism is missing as well; worst of all, the dominant color is blue, which is considered an ambiguous color⁶³, and the auspicious red is almost completely absent. On the whole, the image creates a rather subdued mood. It is hard to say how such a poster can induce popular conformity with the message.

The difference between this print and an earlier one, "The Fish is Fat and Big"⁶⁴ (Illustration 7:22, p. 39), is striking. Most remarkable is the exuberance and happiness emanating from the latter poster. This in itself gives the image the quality of bringing joy that is ascribed to *nianhua*. The baby, in full frontal nudity, may also lack a red spot on his forehead, as well as amulets for magical protection, but he is obviously very happy. Moreover, he has succeeded in hooking the fish of abundance in a pool of lotus flowers (*lian*), meaning "May you have abundance (*yu*) year in and year out (*lian*)".⁶⁵ If it had carried the slogan "Better Birth and Upbringing, Sturdily Growing", or its equivalent, it would probably have created a much more forceful attitudinal indication than poster 2.

POSTER 3. "HAVE CULTURE"⁶⁶

The vagueness and ambiguity of those posters that call for a change of thinking have been pointed out before. In the case of this particular poster (Illustration 7:23, p. 40), it is absolutely unclear how the addressee is supposed to acquire the message that is propagated.

The center of the poster is dominated by a good-looking, non-Chinese girl. Her right hand, which supports her chin, holds a fountain pen, indicating that she is, or aspires to be, an intellectual. To her right, a rocket is ascending in the sky. To her left, the Great Wall is visible, while a flock of cranes, the symbol of accumulated wisdom⁶⁷, flies over it. The composition of the image seems to be mirrored: instead of looking towards the future, as represented by the rocket, the girl gazes toward the past, as embodied by the Great Wall.

With behavioral indications lacking in the image, the intended message of the poster must be found in the text. At the bottom of the picture, the text "Have Culture" is provided in both characters and *pinyin* transcription. The text is augmented by a line on top of the poster, which

⁶¹ *Yousheng youyu, zhuzhuang chengzhang*, Xin jiating baoshe (Liaoning), no date (but after 1986), no print no. In the poster, the English word "better" is misspelled as "bette".

⁶² Eberhard, *op. cit.*, p. 249.

⁶³ *Idem*, pp. 42-43.

⁶⁴ *Yu er fei you da*, Renmin meishu chubanshe, no date (presumably the mid-1970s), print no. 86.834.

⁶⁵ Eberhard, *op. cit.*, pp. 168-169.

⁶⁶ *You wenhua*, Sichuan meishu chubanshe, February 1986, one of a set of four, set no. 8373.661.

⁶⁷ Eberhard, *op. cit.*, p. 75.

calls on the recipient "to become a generation of New People having ideals, morality, culture and discipline". But again, no indication is given as to how these qualities could be acquired.

The image of the companion poster "Have Discipline"⁶⁸ (Illustration 7:24, p. 40) is slightly more forthcoming. The central element is made up of the silhouettes of what seem to be a student, a worker, and a miner. The indications of a disciplined lifestyle are provided by the huge clock in the center, showing eight o'clock, and the fighter planes flying in formation. The texts in the poster, below and on top, contain the same elements as the "Have Culture" poster. Nonetheless, neither of these two posters contain any concrete indications as to how their calls can be implemented.

POSTER 4. "LET OUR LIVES HAVE MORE ORDER"⁶⁹

This poster (Illustration 7:25, p. 41) can be characterized as one of the more enigmatic ones produced during the 1980s. Given the CCP leadership's stress on order, the slogan of this poster, given in both characters and *pinyin* transcription, seems to turn this regime-directed attitudinal stimulus into a popular request.

The image, however, does not support this request in any clear way. From the gloomy, lower left corner, a nuclear family (father, mother and daughter) walks over a pedestrian crossing towards the brightly lit horizon in the upper right corner. This horizon is dominated by brightly colored circles. Do they represent the future? In that case, propaganda artists have done a better job in visualizing it elsewhere. Is it the glitter of Beijing, or another urban center? This is highly unlikely, as the leadership attempts to divert the population flow from the direction of the big cities toward the rural townships. Could these circles serve as an artist's impression of traffic lights, as the colors red, yellow and green can be vaguely made out? If so, the concept of "order" is defined in an extremely narrow fashion and echoes the calls for basic social skills directed toward primary school pupils. The discussion of this poster, and the two preceding ones, indicates that general political and/or behavioral indications, aimed at a change in thought rather than in behavior itself, have become increasingly difficult to visualize.

Alternative Applications of Propaganda Posters

This raises the question why the CCP and its organizations responsible for propaganda never considered turning its infrastructure for visual propaganda into producing a public information service type of posters. In various neighboring countries with a large percentage of Chinese among the population, mechanisms for the production of materials that contain such calls for modified behavior have reached a high degree of perfection. In the case of the PRC, such a type of communication could be an ideal vehicle for addressing the undesirable, negative social developments and phenomena that started springing up in society as a result of the modernization process. Such phenomena include a rise in prostitution, rampant corruption among the cadres, increased crime rate, etc. At the same time, other problems, such as the neglect of communal facilities in the countryside, could be addressed in similar ways. Providing the people with the necessary clear-cut and normative information that would enable them to guard against these undesirable trends might prove more effective than the hard-line editorials in the printed media.

The first signs of such a type of public information material could already be detected in those posters that were designed to spread legal knowledge, those that called for basic hygiene, or stressed the need for safer production. They prove that vertical, sociological and rational propaganda can be produced for narrowly circumscribed applications. The next step would be to spread the use of such materials to larger complexes of undesired social phenomena, for example the increase of the "floating population", i.e., peasants illegally moving to urban centers in search

⁶⁸ *You jilü*, Sichuan meishu chubanshe, February 1986, one of a set of four, set no. 8373.661.

⁶⁹ *Rang womende shenghuo geng you zhixu*, Liaoning meishu chubanshe, February 1983, print no. 8161.0279.

of a better-paid job and a more meaningful life.

Such a spread could be facilitated by the fact that various mass organizations, including the Women's Federation, the Communist Youth League and the All-China Federation of Trade Unions, started to share the responsibility for the production and distribution of visual propaganda in the 1980s. In cooperation with the educational sector, for example, visual materials could have been put to use in campaigns aimed at a more rational distribution and management of human resources.

Dilemmas in Visual Propaganda in the 1990s

It is tempting to say that the visualization of the future, always such an important element of visual propaganda, and the representation of reality as it should be, instead of as it is, was successfully continued in the propaganda posters produced in the 1980s. By opening its doors to the outside world, China became acquainted with the largely Western-inspired desires and aspirations for a better future, as shared by the world community. Gone are both the "splendid isolation" that marked the imperial era, and the utopia of agrarian self-sufficiency that was envisioned in the 1950s and 1960s. Judging by the recurring elements of the imagery that was used in the 1980s, the ideals of the information society, outer space exploration and automation have made a considerable impact on Chinese propaganda.

These ideals have struck root in the Chinese consciousness, and have gained a life of their own. Their integration in the frame of reference of the Chinese people has given them culturally defined connotations. This process has been positively influenced by the acceptance and application of Western visualizations of the future in official propaganda art, but television has, in all probability, contributed to this process to an even greater extent.

By applying this borrowed symbolism, however, the CCP has not succeeded in making its leading role synonymous with modernization. An abundance of competing images originating from abroad has shown the people that other ideologies may be more successful, and less demanding, in bringing about the modernization as visualized. The Party has not been able to visualize appropriate, indigenous behavioral stimuli for a society in the throes of modernization, but has limited itself, in an echo of the Confucian tradition, to calling indirectly for obedience, austerity and discipline, albeit against a modernized background. These calls are contradicted by, and conflicting with, the daily bombardment of televised images of protest demonstrations and conspicuous consumption in other countries that the Chinese audience are confronted with.

Of course, there have been leadership attempts to shut out artistic and/or cultural influences that might endanger the national essence, or "Chineseness", as they were seen as undesirable, or vulgar and pornographic. Examples can be found in the political campaigns of the 1980s that tried to combat "spiritual pollution" or "bourgeois liberalization"; or the setting up of a State Media and Publication Office (SMPO) in 1987 in an attempt to regain control over the publication sector. These campaigns, however, were not accompanied by relevant visual propaganda. The so-called Western-inspired "peaceful evolution" (the attempt to transform socialist China into a capitalist China in a peaceful manner) was seen as having an eroding effect on the political authority of the leadership. An effort was made to counter it, although usually in the written propaganda of the newspapers and journals that continued to be published under the guidance of the CCP. What do we make, for example, of the new-style, traditional *nianhua* as produced in the early 1990s, posters that feature not only the traditional element of money symbolism, but also American banknotes?

One must conclude that the visual propaganda of the "Four Modernizations" has lost contact with the population, despite the fact that attempts were made to counter this trend by catering more than ever to popular tastes. What was produced no longer had anything to do with the question of whether propaganda should be used for popularization or raising standards. To paraphrase Stanley Rosen, the CCP leadership basically struggled, and is still struggling, with the dilemma of how the population should be socialized. Should the people be encouraged to support Communist values, in order to create the conditions for the continuing political and social dominance of the Party, thereby undercutting the aims of the policies of modernization? Or should

the people be prepared for a society that is increasingly characterized as being less Communist and that, forced by such mundane considerations as cost-efficiency and productivity, is less willing to take care of and be responsible for their everyday needs than before?⁷⁰

On the basis of the "blank spots" in the visual propagation of modernized behavior and from the experiences that have been gained since June 1989, it is obvious that this fundamental dilemma has still not been solved by the CCP. It continues to define the population's well-being largely in terms of its obedience to Party rule, and to regard successful modernization as dependent on its own ability to maintain order. It would appear that the population is no longer buying that message, at least not in the form of propaganda posters.

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

The numbering of the illustrations on the following pages corresponds to the one used in Stefan R. Landsberger, *Visualizing the Future: Chinese Propaganda Posters from the "Four Modernizations" Era, 1978-1988*, unpublished Ph.D. thesis, Sinological Institute, Leiden University 1994.

- p. 31 Ill. 7:2 "Youthful Dancesteps"
- p. 32 Ill. 7:6 "Build Up a Good Physique, Steel the Will, to Contribute Strength to the Realization of the Four Modernizations" (p. 6)
- p. 33 Ill. 7:13 "Today We Are on Duty" (p. 9)
- p. 33 Ill. 7:14 "Take Part in Labor Enthusiastically, Cherish the Fruits of Labor" (p. 9)
- p. 34 Ill. 7:16 "Son Lives in the 'Golden Bell Hall', Mother Dwells in the 'Sheepfold'" (p. 10)
- p. 35 Ill. 7:18 "The Gods of Wealth Enter the Home from Everywhere; Wealth, Treasures and Peace Beckon" (p. 11)
- p. 36 Ill. 7:19 "I'm Enthusiastic and Fair, I Hope to See You Everyday" (p. 12)
- p. 37 Ill. 7:20 "Selling the Fruits of a Bumper Harvest in a Friendly Manner" (p. 12)
- p. 38 Ill. 7:21 "Better Birth and Upbringing, Sturdily Growing" (p. 13)
- p. 39 Ill. 7:22 "The Fish is Fat and Big" (p. 13)
- p. 40 Ill. 7:23 "Have Culture" (p. 13)
- p. 40 Ill. 7:24 "Have Discipline" (p. 14)
- p. 41 Ill. 7:25 "Let Our Lives Have More Order" (p. 14)

(Illustrations appear on the following pages)

⁷⁰ Rosen, "Value Change", in Link *et al.*, (Eds.), *op. cit.*, p. 213.



Illustration 7:2



Illustration 7:6



Illustration 7:13



积 极 参 加 劳 动 ， 爱 惜 劳 动 成 果 。

Illustration 7:14



Illustration 7:18



Illustration 7:19

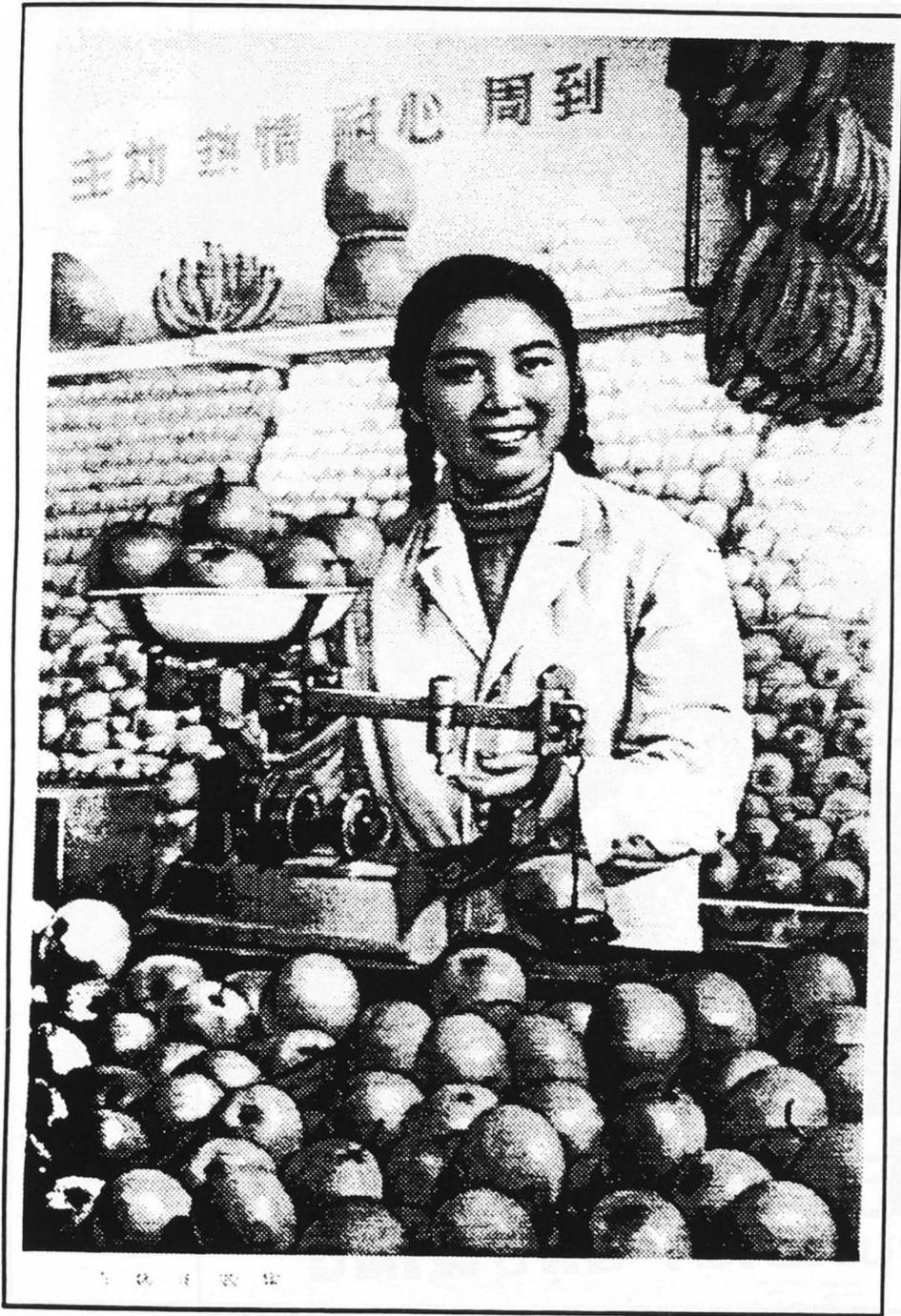


Illustration 7:20

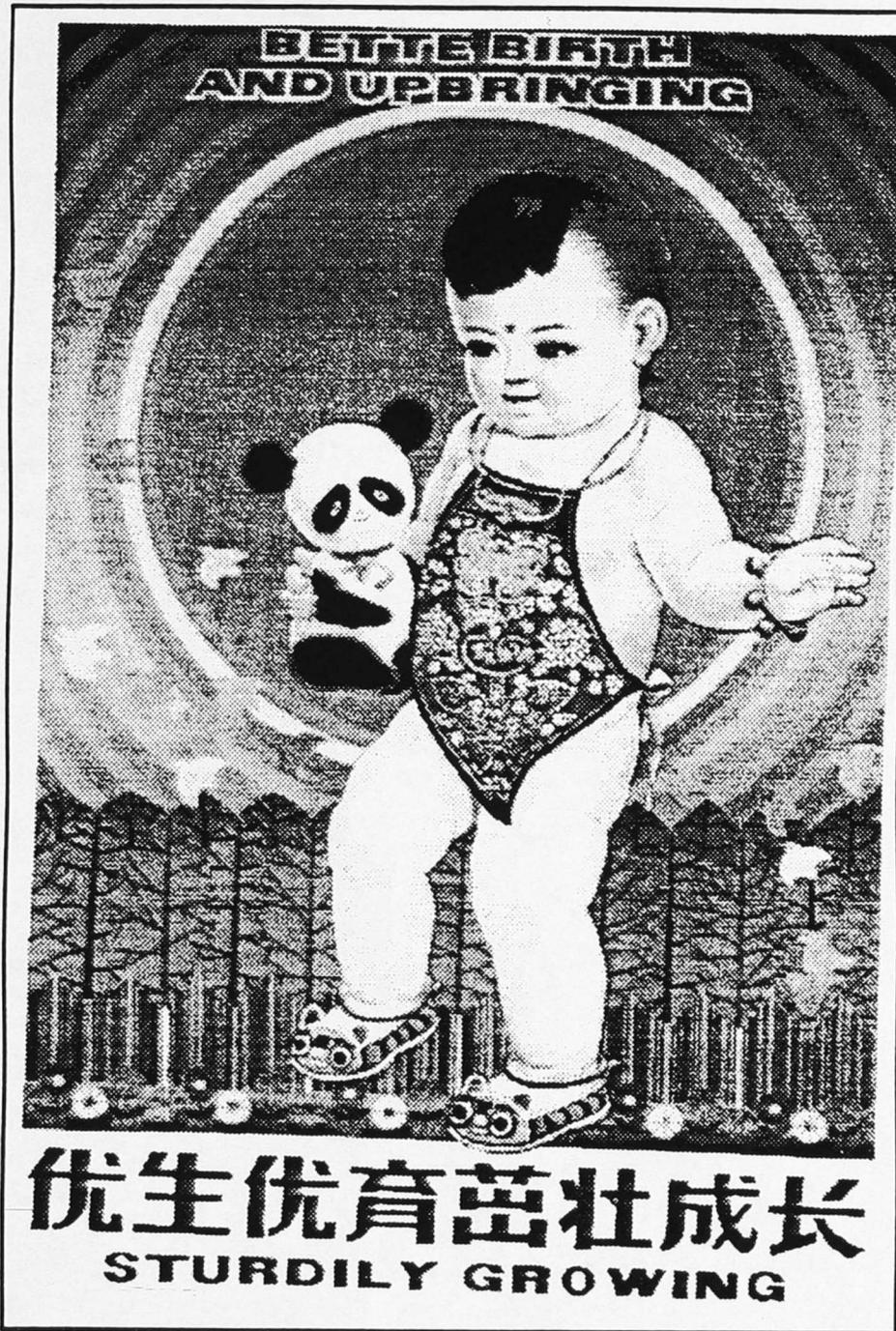


Illustration 7:21



鱼儿肥又大

- Illustration 7:22

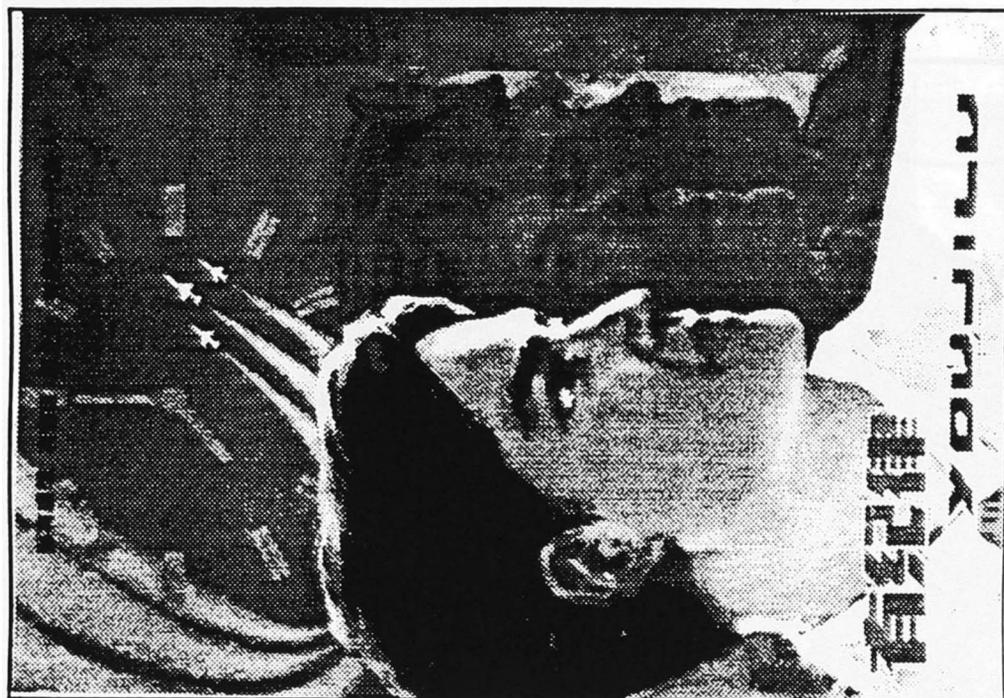


Illustration 7:24

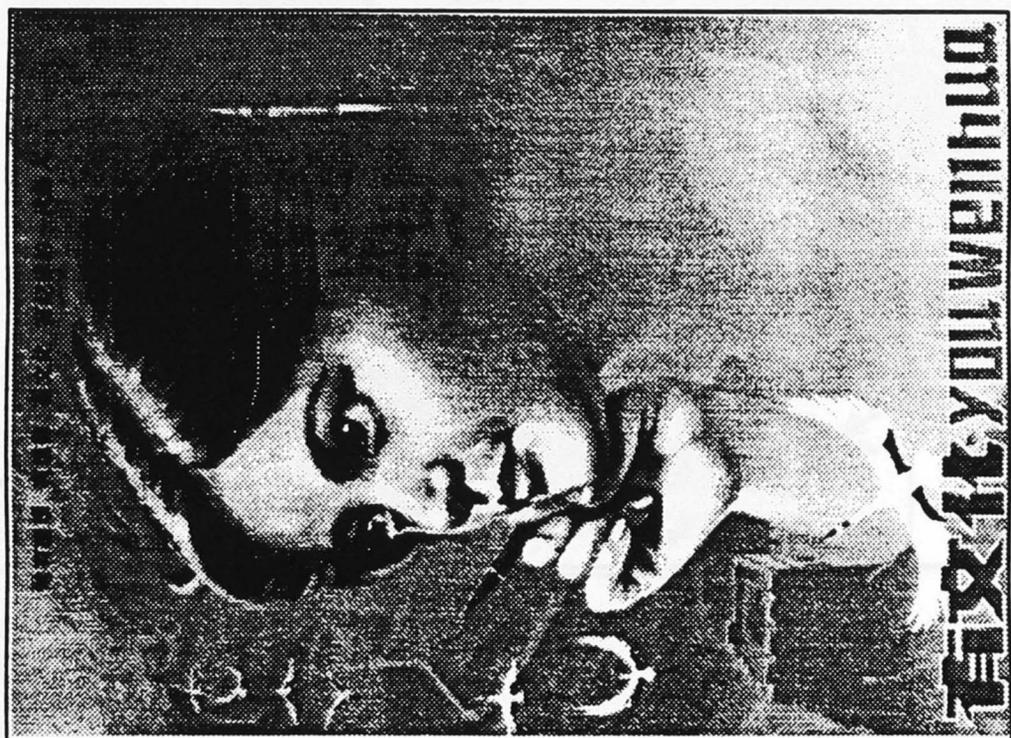


Illustration 7:23

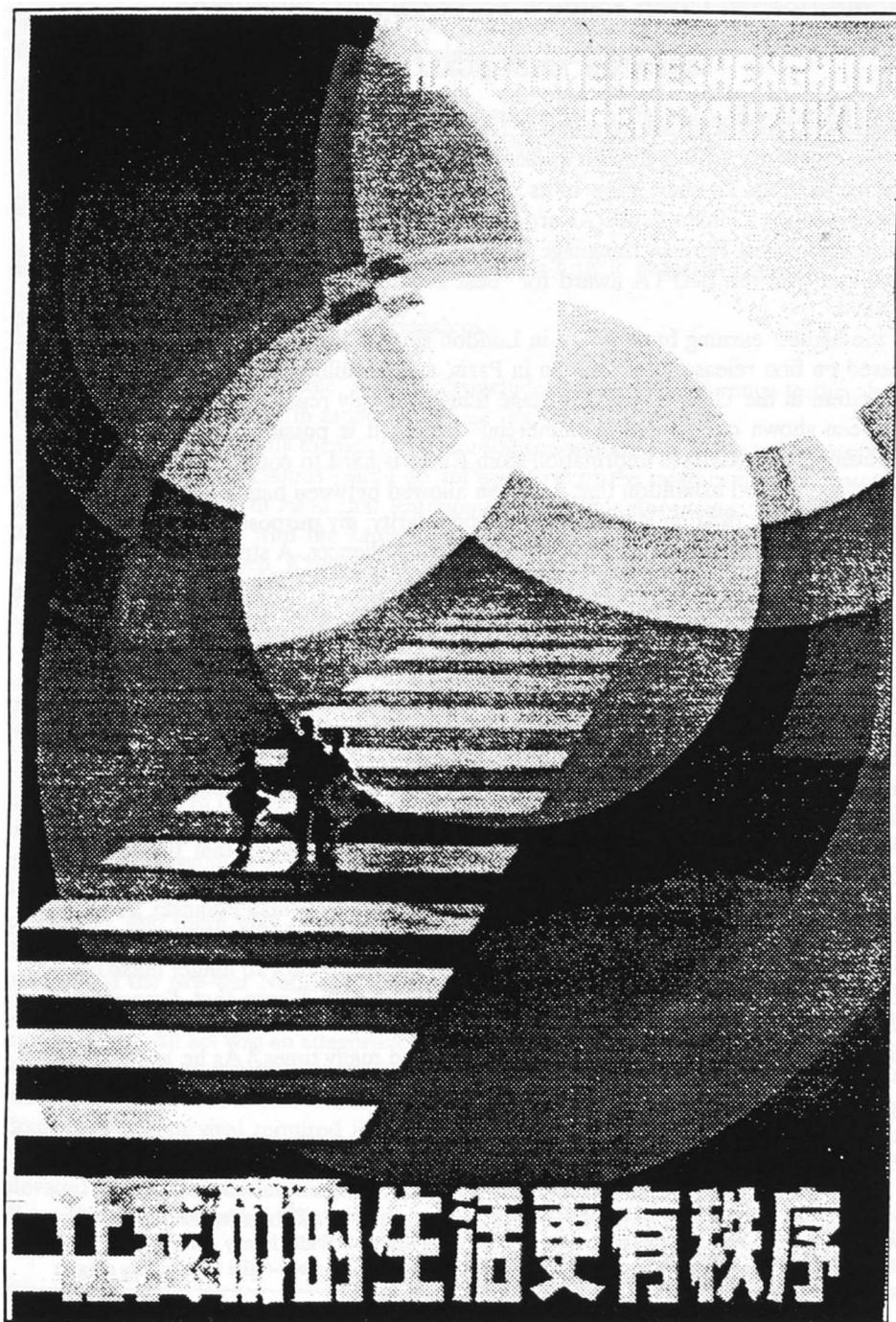


Illustration 7:25