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Implementing the “One-Child-per-Couple” Population Program in Rural China: National Goals and Local Politics

Tyrene White

INTRODUCTION

In September of 1980 the Central Committee of the Chinese Communist Party took the unprecedented step of publishing an “Open Letter” to all Party and Youth League members, calling on them to take the lead in the drive to control population growth. The population program, which limited most couples to one child, allowed a second birth on a case-by-case basis where special circumstances warranted, and prohibited a third or more births,¹ constituted one of the most ambitious regulatory policies China had undertaken. It required a large percentage of the population to alter its behavior in very personal, intimate ways. Verbal compliance and passive acceptance at the group or mass level had to give way to active involvement in family planning by a multitude of discrete individuals, whose number was growing at a rapid rate.² Moreover, because 79 percent of the population was rural, meeting the stated goal of holding the population to 1.2 billion by the year 2000 hinged on the capacity of the regime to make the great majority of couples of childbearing age throughout the countryside refrain from having a

I wish to thank A. Doak Barnett, Thomas Bernstein, Merilee S. Grindle, David M. Lampton, and R. William Liddle for their comments and suggestions. Also, a special thanks to Professor Chen Chung-min for his invaluable help and guidance during the spring of 1982 in China.

¹ *Renmin Ribao* (People's Daily), Sept. 25, 1980, 1.

² *China Daily Commentator*, Dec. 28, 1982, 4, in Foreign Broadcast Information Service, *Daily Report: China* (hereafter *FBIS*), Dec. 29, 1982, K15.

second or additional child for the duration of their childbearing years. In turn, the fate of the "Four Modernizations" hinged on the success of this strict policy for population control.

During the previous three decades of socialist development, China's economy had suffered the ill effects of unbridled population growth. For example, grain production is estimated to have increased at an average annual rate of 2.3 percent between 1957 and 1978, but per capita consumption increased only slightly, from 306 to 318 kilograms. Urban housing space increased by 493 million square meters, but per capita housing was down from 4.5 square meters in the early 1950s to 3.6 in 1983. Perhaps most distressing of all, arable land per capita fell from .2 hectares in 1949 to .1 hectares in 1983, an amount less than one-third the world average.³

Thus, a leadership that had staked its legitimacy on the promise of improving the livelihood of Chinese citizens could see all too clearly the implications of failing to clamp down on population growth. During the 1970s efforts had been made to encourage the use of birth control and family planning, resulting in a significant decline in the population growth rate (see table 10.1). Because of the demographic composition of the population, however, China faced another baby boom in the 1980s, which if left unchecked would place an unbearable burden on an already taxed economy and doom the Four Modernizations drive to failure. Given the weight of their concerns, it seemed a small but necessary step to move from "encouraging" only one child per couple to "promoting" and "advocating" it. In practice, however, the policy distance traveled between 1977 and 1980 was great. The pressure on rural couples rose dramatically, threatening long-held views on, and motives for, childbearing that were incompatible with a one-child household. The decentralized regulatory process that had worked well previously was now strained by demands for new regulations and, more important, the resources to enforce them. The administrative apparatus and technical delivery system that had been adequate for less ambitious family-planning goals were now strained under the weight of strict quotas and increasing demand for contraceptive services. And finally, these problems were compounded by the very success of the ongoing process of agricultural reform, which had a negative impact on the enforcement of population control.

Although China's leadership acknowledged that a successful population policy was the cornerstone of its modernization effort, its implementation posed several dilemmas. Foremost among these was the disjuncture between long- and short-term priorities. The control of population growth was the unquestioned prerequisite for the long-term success of the Four Modernizations,

³ Frederick M. Surls and Francis C. Tuan, "China's Agriculture in the 1980's," in *China under the Four Modernizations*, Joint Economic Committee (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1982), 422; Lu Baifu, "The Way for Agriculture," *Beijing Review*, 1983, no. 4 (Jan. 24): 14; *Xinhua*, Jan. 11, 1983, in *FBIS*, Jan. 13, 1983, K14-15.

TABLE 10.1 Rates of Birth, Mortality, and Natural Increase in Population Growth for the People's Republic of China, 1949–1983 (per 1,000 population)

<i>Year</i>	<i>Birth rate</i>	<i>Mortality rate</i>	<i>Natural increase in population</i>
1949	36.00	20.00	16.00
1950	37.00	18.00	19.00
1951	37.80	17.80	20.00
1952	37.00	17.00	20.00
1953	37.00	14.00	23.00
1954	37.97	13.18	24.79
1955	32.60	12.28	20.32
1956	31.90	11.40	20.50
1957	34.03	10.80	23.23
1958	29.22	11.98	17.24
1959	24.78	14.59	10.19
1960	20.86	25.43	-4.57
1961	18.02	14.24	3.78
1962	37.01	10.02	26.99
1963	43.37	10.04	33.33
1964	39.14	11.50	27.64
1965	37.88	9.50	28.38
1966	35.05	8.83	26.22
1967	33.96	8.43	25.53
1968	35.59	8.21	27.38
1969	34.11	8.03	26.08
1970	33.43	7.60	25.83
1971	30.65	7.32	23.33
1972	29.77	7.61	22.16
1973	27.93	7.04	20.89
1974	24.82	7.34	17.48
1975	23.01	7.32	15.69
1976	19.91	7.25	12.66
1977	18.93	6.87	12.06
1978	18.25	6.25	12.00
1979	17.82	6.21	11.61
1980	—	—	12.00
1981	20.91	6.36	14.55
1982	21.09	6.60	14.49
1983	18.62	7.08	11.54

SOURCES: For all years except 1980 and 1983, *Zhongguo Tongji Nianjian, 1983* (China Statistical Yearbook) (Beijing: State Statistical Bureau, 1983), 105. For 1980, see State Statistical Bureau, "Communique on Fulfilment of China's National Economic Plan," *Beijing Review*, 1981, no. 20 (May 18): 20. For 1983, see *1984 Zhongguo Jingji Nianjian* (1984 Economic Yearbook of China) (Beijing: Economic Management Publishers, 1984), IV-60.

even among those who were concerned over the severity of the one child policy. As important as this goal was, however, the short-term goal of transforming rural economic structures was of much higher priority. Because the agrarian reform program represented not just a policy debate but also the focus of elite struggle, it was on this issue that political resources were mobilized and expended. Taking their cues from the Center, provincial and local Party leaders left family-planning work, as much as possible, to female comrades, who had always been responsible for this aspect of "women's work," while they concentrated their attention on a rapidly changing rural environment. Only after the Open Letter signaled the importance attached to family planning by central Party leaders did local cadres reassess the priority of this work.

By that time, however, a second dilemma had become apparent: the economic and organizational consequences of agricultural reforms were detrimental to the conduct of a strict policy of population control. This regulatory policy, stressing controlled uniformity in childbearing behavior, stood in sharp contrast to the general thrust of rural economic and administrative reforms. In those areas the watchwords were decentralization of decision making, reduction of administrative oversight, and economic diversification of households, groups, and teams based on local conditions. This dramatic dismantling of the collective system of agriculture was viewed as either desirable or threatening, depending on individual political and economic interests. Thus, at precisely the time when a demographic crisis loomed, deregulatory policies were under way which had polarized rural communities. Advocates and opponents of rural reform coalesced in their opposition to family planning, however, with pro-reform elements blaming "leftists" for the one-child policy, and opponents blaming the "rightists" and their neo-Malthusian population theories for the draconian policy.

It was against this backdrop that central policy makers groped for a strategy to deal with a changing rural context and local opposition or indifference. The result was a strategy of regularized, decentralized administration punctuated by periods of mobilization and the veiled use of economic and sometimes physical coercion. It was augmented by the use of economic incentives to gain compliance, a preferred policy technique of the post-Mao reformist leadership.

This chapter will examine the difficult task faced by China's leadership in its attempts to dictate household size in the rural areas. Drawing on archival materials and data from extended field research in Hubei province,⁴ I will

⁴Interviews cited below were conducted in three phases in 1982 and 1984. From March through May 1982, fieldwork was conducted with Professor Chen Chung-min of Ohio State University's Department of Anthropology. The interview schedule was jointly developed to meet the needs of our separate research projects, and Chen conducted the interviews in the field. I wish to express my deep appreciation to Dr. Chen, whose willingness to collaborate and

demonstrate that four sets of factors loom large in accounting for problems of implementation: traditional attitudes and values, the decentralized regulatory process, administrative arrangements and the delivery system for family-planning services, and the environment of rural reform in which population policy is being enforced.

Taken together, these factors pose a number of important obstacles to policy implementation. Binding them together is the common theme of low levels of compliance on the part of peasants and cadres in some localities. Although many measures have been put forward by the state to redress problems in the implementation process, they have fallen short of their goal because they fail to solve this central difficulty.

IMPLEMENTING CHINA'S POPULATION PROGRAM: IMPEDIMENTS

The Impact of Traditional Values on Rural Childbearing Preferences

Since implementing the one-child-per-couple program, a campaign has been waged against what is termed "the resurgence of feudal ideas" in the countryside.⁵ These "feudal ideas" come in the form of age-old sayings, such as "the more children, the more wealth," "regarding men as superior to women," "raise sons to protect against old age," and "carry on the ancestral line." That these ideas remain in contemporary China is indicative of the difficulty of altering the traditional values and preferences of a rural populace. More important, it is also indicative of the failure of the regime to alter sufficiently the economic environment that fosters them.

A 1981 survey of fifteen production brigades in five counties of Hubei province confirms the importance of traditional values and economic considerations in shaping preferences for household size.⁶ Of 728 women of child-bearing age (20-49) surveyed, only 5% wanted only one child, 51% wanted two children, 28% wanted three, and 15% wanted four. In what the author

share his field notes, intellectual insights, and interview techniques worked to my great advantage. During phase two, October-December 1982, the author continued fieldwork independently, conducting interviews at Hua Shan commune and with district family-planning officials. The opportunity for research was provided by Ohio State University through the OSU-Wuhan University Exchange Program. A third phase of fieldwork and interviewing in the spring of 1984 was undertaken as a Graduate Fellow in the National Program for Advanced Study and Research in China, administered by the Committee on Scholarly Communication with the People's Republic of China, National Academy of Sciences.

⁵ *Renmin Ribao* editorial, "Give First Priority to Propaganda and Education in the Work of Family Planning," Sept. 29, 1981, 1; *Xinhua*, Jan. 10, 1983, in *FBIS*, Jan. 13, 1983, K15; *Guangming Ribao*, Jan. 12, 1983, in *FBIS*, Jan. 19, 1983, K22; *Xinhua* Commentator, Jan. 19, 1983, in *FBIS*, Jan. 25, 1983, K21.

⁶ Cheng Du, "Hubei Sheng Nongcun Shengyu Lü Diaocha" (An Investigation of Rural Birth Rates in Hubei Province), *Renkou Yanjiu* (Population Research), 1982, no. 5: 36-38 and 31.

refers to as "hilly districts where traditional ideology is comparatively dense," however, the numbers climb to 27% wanting two or three children, and nearly 72% wanting four. Asked which sex child they prefer, a sample of 100 women in one brigade responded as follows: only 2.2% wanted a girl, 36.7% wanted a boy, and 61.6% were neutral.⁷ In hilly districts, however, the number desiring a male soared to 77%. Asked what they would do if the first child was a girl, 61% said they would want another child. In a separate article based on the same survey, fully one-third of 710 women said they wanted to have a boy even if they already had two girls. Only 2.21% of a sample of 548 said they wanted to have only one girl.⁸

The study concludes that the desire for more children is caused by factors such as the "social economy," "ideology," and "traditional habits." More specifically, 808 people who were asked why they wanted additional children responded as follows: additional labor power, 21%; old-age security, 51%; preserve the ancestral line, 25%; enjoy the pleasure of children, 3%. The problem of old-age security clearly predominates. This category, taken together with those who cited the desire for additional labor power, drew 70% of all responses, demonstrating the role of economic calculations in determining preferences for household size.⁹

The influence of the desire to bear more children, particularly sons, is further evidenced by figures on holders of "only-child certificates" and sterilizations in Hua Shan commune, located in a suburban district of Wuhan municipality, Hubei province. In October 1982 there were 999 couples with only one child. Of these only 42 (4%) had undergone sterilization, and of the 42, only 7 (17%) had girls; 876 had signed "only-child certificates," pledging not to have another child.¹⁰ This certificate rate of 91%, far above the estimated national average of 42%,¹¹ was achieved by offering short-term, five-year contracts to couples reluctant to sign a permanent agreement. In this way, Hua Shan family-planning workers were able to persuade parents of males and females to sign an agreement, and thus forestall unplanned pregnancies over the short term. It was hoped that after the five-year period, couples with healthy children of either sex would no longer be inclined to have another child.

In one brigade, of 123 single-child couples, 59 (48%) signed the "only-

⁷Cheng's article does not make clear that the size of the sample here is only 100 women, not 728. This information was obtained from personal conversations with another scholar who participated in the investigation. Interview File 2, Nov. 25, 1983.

⁸Cheng Du, "Nongcun Renkoude Zaishengchan—Dui Yige Diaocha Baogaode Fenxi" (The Reproduction of Rural Population—Toward the Analysis of an Investigation Report), *Jingji Yanjiu* (Economic Research), 1982, no. 6:56.

⁹Cheng Du, 31.

¹⁰Interview File (hereafter IF) 1B-7, 9 (82.10.14).

¹¹*Renmin Ribao*, Apr. 10, 1983, 3.

child certificate," 54 (44%) signed a five-year agreement, and 10 (8%) refused to sign altogether. In a second brigade, only the five-year agreement was in force; 54 of 111 couples (49%) signed and received the "special status" rewards for their child. The other 57 apparently were reluctant to sign, and eventually agreed only to get a birth certificate for the child; thus, this group did not get the "special status" rewards. In a third brigade, of the 53 couples with one child, 4 (7%) underwent sterilization procedures after having males, 7 (13%) signed long-term certificates (only 2 of these had girls), and 25 (47%) signed a short-term contract (17 had girls). Of the remaining 17 who did not fall in any of these categories, it was said that "most of them have girls." And in a fourth brigade, all 41 single-child couples had either signed a five-year contract or had an operation, but only 5 of these couples had girls (12%).¹² According to a commune family-planning cadre, all 81 couples in Hua Shan who had refused to sign an "only-child certificate" have female children.¹³ In short, reluctance to accept having only one child is not confined to those with one daughter, but parents of females are less inclined than parents of males to formally agree to limit themselves to one child.

Is the desire for more children, and particularly more male children, the product of old ideas or of contemporary economic realities? We already have seen survey evidence demonstrating the importance of economic factors in setting preferences for household size. Although the utility of these survey results admittedly is quite limited, they do suggest that concern for old-age security is the single most important factor motivating the desire for additional children, particularly males. This reflects a contemporary economic and social reality: the absence of a universal or even widespread system of support for the elderly across the countryside.

In 1980 there were 8,262 "homes of respect for the aged," serving 111,700 people in rural China. Additionally, 4,000 basic accounting units provided old-age pensions for more than 180,000 people.¹⁴ In 1981, 282 more retirement homes were established, an increase of only 3% over 1980. Assuming that 5% of the rural population is eligible for such retirement support, these programs cover only about 1% of those eligible.¹⁵

Of the twelve communes in Hong Shan district, where Hua Shan commune is located, in 1982 only one had a retirement home run by the commune. Although the per capita income level of this commune is unknown, one of its brigades had the single highest per capita collective distributable income of all brigades in Hong Shan district or the two suburban counties

¹² IF 1D-9, 10 (82.5.16); IF 1E-11 (82.5.23); IF 1J-9, 10 (82.11.9); IF 1G-10 (82.10.28).

¹³ IF 1B-7 (82.10.14).

¹⁴ *Zhongguo Baike Nianjian, 1981* (Encyclopedia of China) (Beijing: Zhongguo Dabaikue Quanshu Chubanshe, 1981), 545.

¹⁵ *Zhongguo Baike Nianjian, 1982* (Beijing: Zhongguo Dabaikue Quanshu Chubanshe, 1982), 646.

TABLE 10.2 Comparing Mean Statistics for Xiu Hui Commune, Zhang Qiu County, Shandong, with Mean Statistics for Only-Child Households

	<i>Commune</i>	<i>Only-Child Households</i>
No. people per household	4.25	4.39
Labor power per household	1.65	2.37
No. persons supported by each laborer	2.57	1.85
1981 collective per capita income (yuan)	123.00	
1981 per capita income from family side-lines (yuan)	30.00	
Total per capita income (yuan)	153.00	240.40
Percentage of total households with per capita income over 500 yuan	1.60	3.80

SOURCE: Zhang Xinxia, "Du Sheng Zi Nu Hu ye you Tiaojian Fufuqilai" (Single-Child Households Also Have the Conditions for Becoming Rich), *Renkou Yanjiu* (Population Research), 1982, no. 5: 32-33.

of Wuhan municipality—817 yuan in 1981.¹⁶ In six other communes, some brigades offered retirement incomes. In the five remaining communes in the district, retirement support from the collective was not offered. Hua Shan, with its 1981 per capita income of 209 yuan, more than double the provincial average, was among the latter group.¹⁷

Besides old-age insurance, the need for household labor power is another motivating factor for larger households. To counter the idea that wealth and security are strongly associated with household size, several studies have appeared in Chinese journals. Their authors argue that one-child families have higher per capita incomes from collective distribution than multi-child families. A close look at one study, however, reveals that such conclusions have more to do with household size and labor power than with whether it is a one-child household.¹⁸

A study of Xiu Hui commune in Shandong province compares mean commune statistics on household size, labor power, and income with mean figures for only-child households (see table 10.2). Here, one-child households clearly have higher per capita incomes; but to what is that attributable—childbearing restraint or total household size and labor power? In this case, single-child households are on average slightly larger than the commune

¹⁶ *Changjiang Ribao*, Mar. 19, 1982. IF 1K-7 (82.12.1).

¹⁷ IF 1K-7 (82.12.1). Hubei province's 1981 average income from the collective for commune members was 102 yuan. See *1982 Nian Zhongguo Jingji Nianjian* (1982 Economic Yearbook of China) (Beijing: Jingji Guanli Zazhi She, 1982), VI-123.

¹⁸ Zhang Xinxia, "Du Sheng Zinu Hu ye you Tiaojian Fufuqilai" (Single-Child Households Also Have the Conditions for Becoming Rich), *Renkou Yanjiu*, 1982, no. 5: 32-33 and 43.

average, despite having a single-child couple in the household. More important, average household labor power is also higher. We can conclude only that there is a relationship between labor power and income, since average labor power for the commune is 69 percent of that for single-child households, and income is 65 percent. Thus, a study that seeks to argue for the economic advantages of having only one child actually substantiates peasant assumptions that over the long term, more children are desirable because they bring more labor power to the household.

Not only do peasants remain unconvinced that smaller households generate higher incomes, they also question the argument that females are as economically desirable as males, and for good reason. Traditionally, daughters contributed little or nothing to the family coffers and left the household upon marriage. While they make a substantial contribution in contemporary China, that contribution still shifts to their husband's household at marriage. Moreover, rural wage-earning policies discriminate against women. Where the work-point system remains in force, women typically receive only 70 to 80 percent of what their male counterparts earn.¹⁹ Where land has been contracted to the household, allotments are based on the number of people in the household.²⁰ Although this eliminates inequalities in the short term, over the longer term single women will leave the household, whereas men will bring a wife into it. Thus, the land distribution formula now in effect under the agricultural responsibility system reinforces traditional attitudes and behavior toward women.

Moreover, in some cases the land-allotment process itself discriminates against women by linking the size of an individual's allotment to his or her previous work-point standard. An example of one team in Hua Shan commune demonstrates the full implications of this distribution system for peasant incomes. When one of Hua Shan's brigades implemented the household-contract responsibility system in 1982, team five had 169 mu of land to distribute among 42 households, 163 people. The land was divided into three grades, each grade having a different quota attached: for grade 1, 1,100 jin of rice per mu (1 jin equals 1/2 kilogram); for grade 2, 1,000 jin per mu; for grade 3, 900 jin per mu. Of team five's land, 66 percent was grade 1,

¹⁹Hong Ying, "Women in China Making Headway to Full Equality," *China Daily*, Mar. 6, 1982, 5, in *FBIS*, Mar. 8, 1982, K.15; Wu Naitao, "Rural Women and the New Economic Policies," *Beijing Review*, 1983, no. 10 (Mar. 7): 19. In Hua Shan the same pattern prevailed. IF 5B-13 (82.10.14).

²⁰Zhang Huaiyu, "Lun Renkou yu Jingji Jianji Dangqian Nongcun Renkou Kongzhi Wenti" (A Discussion of Population and Economics Concurrently as the Current Problem of Rural Population Control), *Jingji Yanjiu*, 1981, no. 12: 37; Liu Honglian, "Kongzhi Wo Guo Renkou Zengzhang buneng Fangsong" (Do Not Relax Control of Our Country's Population Increase), *Sichuan Caijing Xueyuan Xuebao*, 1982, no. 2:5; Xu Xuehan, "Resolutely Implement the Policy of Rural Population," *Renmin Ribao*, Feb. 5, 1982, 5.

TABLE 10.3 Differential Land Allotments for
Hypothetical Households in One Team of Hua Shan
Commune, Wuhan, Hubei

	"Grain-quota land"	"Labor land"	Totals
Case 1. Family of 4: 3 males @ 10 work points (father, 2 sons); 1 female @ 8 work points (mother)	.311 mu × 4 = 1.244 mu	(3.36 × 3) + 2.69 = 12.77 mu	14.014
Case 2. Family of 4: 2 males @ 10 work points (father and son); 2 females @ 8 work points (mother and daughter)	.311 mu × 4 = 1.244 mu	(3.36 × 2) + (2.69 × 2) = 12.1 mu	13.344
Case 3. Family of 4: 1 male @ 10 work points (father); 3 females @ 8 work points (mother, two daughters)	.311 mu × 4 = 1.244 mu	3.36 + (2.69 × 3) = 11.43 mu	12.674

23 percent grade two, and 11 percent grade 3. In dividing the land, each household was to receive proportionate amounts of each grade of land.²¹

Step one was to distribute one-third of the average land per capita to each person as "grain-ration land" (*kouliang tian*) to provide for each person's diet. In team five the amount was .311 mu per capita. No distinctions were made based on age, sex, or physical condition. Step two was to distribute "labor land" (*laoli tian*) based on the laborer's previous work-point standard. In team five the standard varied from 10 to 8.5 for men, and 8.5 to 7 for women. Those who had earned 10 work points a day got 3.36 mu, 9 points got 3 mu, and 8 points got 2.69 mu. Thus, table 10.3 shows the total land area to be allotted assuming (1) different household compositions, and (2) consistent work-point standards of 10 for men and 8 for women. As can be seen, a household with two healthy sons would get .67 mu more than if they had two daughters.

How does this difference in land allotment translate into collective income for the household? In team five 25.3 percent of each household's total rice quota had to be sold to the state at the price of 12 yuan per 100 jin. Another 1.3 percent was to be turned over to the team without compensation. After

²¹ IF 2G-6-9 (82.11.4).

harvest each household was responsible for paying the agricultural tax of 4 yuan per mu of contracted land and for contributing 3 yuan per mu to the team welfare fund. Finally, brigade cadres estimated that average grain consumption was 600 jin per capita, and that household expenses toward agricultural production averaged 15 yuan per mu of contracted land.²² If we assume that actual yields are equal to quota levels, that investment and consumption levels are the same for each household, and that all excess production is sold to the state at its above-quota price of 18 yuan per 100 jin, it is possible to calculate household and per capita incomes from rice production alone, assuming different household compositions. The following list gives estimated income from rice production for three hypothetical households in a team in Hua Shan.

	<i>Per Capita Income</i>	<i>Household Income</i>	<i>Household Income as a Percentage of Case 1</i>
Case 1.	415.34	1,661.34	100
Case 2.	390.26	1,561.04	94
Case 3.	365.26	1,461.03	88

We find a spread of 50 yuan in per capita income between families with two sons and families with two daughters, 25 yuan between families with two sons and those with one son and one daughter. For household income, the spread is 200 and 100 yuan respectively. The household income of cases 2 and 3 is shown as a percentage of case 1. The spread of 6% and 12% respectively is slightly wider than under the old system where, assuming that the same number of full labor days is worked by all, families with one daughter and one son would have earned 96% of the income of two-son families, and two-daughter families would have earned 90% of two-son family incomes.

Thus, while the contract system has tended to boost peasant incomes overall, it has *enhanced* the economic value of male offspring relative to female. Moreover, as per-unit yields go up, the value of each additional increment of land increases. In our example, we assumed only that the quota levels for yield per mu were met, whereas the 1981 brigade average yield was 25% higher than the team-five quotas.²³ If 25% higher production levels were used to calculate incomes, the difference of .67 mu between male and female allotments would translate into even wider discrepancies in household income.

The combined weight of traditional values and economic realities, then, is creating strong pressures for more offspring, and especially for more sons. The consequence has been a substantial number of "illicit" births, that is,

²² Ibid.

²³ Brigade rice production in 1981 was 2,810,000 jin. Rice acreage was 2021 mu. Average yield per mu equals 1,390 jin. IF 3G-2-3 (82.11.2).

births outside the plan, and an upsurge in reported cases of abuse of women who give birth to females and of female infanticide.²⁴

Underscoring its concern over this phenomenon, *Renmin Ribao*, in April 1983, published birth statistics collected in two counties in Anhui province, which demonstrated a strong bias toward male births. Statistics for four communes in Huaiyuan county show the number of male births as a percentage of the total, ranging from 57.5 to 62.4. In three brigades, the discrepancy between males and females is even higher, with males constituting 77.8 to 90% of all births. Although these figures conceivably could be the result of a naturally occurring pattern of births, two additional cases suggest that it is not. The report notes that one team in the same county had forty cases of female infanticide in 1980 and 1981. In the first three months of 1981, one brigade recorded eight births—three healthy boys and five girls. According to the report, of the five girls three were drowned and two were abandoned.²⁵ Although the number of reported cases of this kind has been small, many more probably go undetected, particularly cases of infant death through neglect or abandonment. The Chinese press has been vocal in denouncing such behavior, but the phenomenon continues.

The Decentralized Regulatory Process

China's experience with population control is a monumental confirmation of the dilemmas posed by geographic and organizational dispersion in the implementation process.²⁶ Though based on a centrally directed goal, the implementation of the one-child-per-couple population program is decentralized in two ways: First, it is left to the localities to generate family-planning regulations consistent with central directives and local conditions; second, it is up to the localities to establish and maintain the organizational structure charged with implementing the policy.

China's central directives on family planning instruct cadres to promote only one child per couple, strictly limit second births, eliminate the occurrence of third births, and stress the need for late marriages and late childbirth.²⁷ To enforce the policy, subordinates are further instructed to establish a system of rewards and penalties designed to encourage compliance. The September 1980 "Open Letter" to all Party and Youth League

²⁴ *Renmin Ribao*, Mar. 7, 1983, 1; *Guangming Ribao*, Jan. 12, 1983, 1, in *FBIS*, Jan. 19, 1983, K22; Yang Fan, "Save the Baby Girl," in *Zhongguo Qingnian Bao*, Nov. 9, 1982, 3, in *FBIS*, Dec. 7, 1982, K55-56; "Protecting Infant Girls," *Beijing Review*, 1983, no. 5 (Jan. 31): 4; *Renmin Ribao* Apr. 7, 1983, 4.

²⁵ *Renmin Ribao*, Apr. 7, 1983, 4.

²⁶ On this generic implementation problem, see, for example, Merilee S. Grindle, "Policy Content and Context in Implementation," in Grindle, ed., *Politics and Policy Implementation in the Third World* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1980), 10.

²⁷ *Renmin Ribao* editorial, "Firmly Adhere to the Scientific and Correct Population Policy," Mar. 14, 1982; *Xinhua*, Mar. 13, 1982, in *FBIS*, Mar. 15, 1982, K4-6.

members outlined several "special considerations" for only-child families: free nursery and school enrollment, medical care, preference in job allocation for the child when it matures, extra housing space for urbanites, and in the rural areas, extra portions of private plot and preference in the allocation of land on which to build houses.²⁸ Penalties for noncompliance, however, are advocated but not specified, leaving it to the provinces and localities to generate appropriate regulations.

The result of this decentralized approach to family-planning regulations has been some divergence across localities with respect to the provisions in force. In implementing Shaanxi's family-planning regulations, for example, Vice-Governor Tan Weixu stated that the provincial levy for having an unplanned second child, "10 percent of the standard wages or labor income of both husband and wife," conformed with "the standard implemented by all provinces and municipalities." Looking at regulations for Tianjin, Shanghai, Shenyang, and Guizhou, as well as Shaanxi, we see that the 10 percent levy is indeed the common penalty. What varies is the length of time the penalty remains in force. Whereas couples in Tianjin with an unplanned second child would pay the levy for five years, Shanghai violators would pay for only three years. In Shenyang, however, the same couple would have their income docked for fourteen years.²⁹ In Hua Shan, commune cadres said the penalty was to apply for seven years, in accordance with regulations set by "higher authorities."³⁰

Divergence in the regulations does not end at the provincial and municipal levels. Lower-level administrative units are responsible for drafting their own regulations. In Tianjin, for example, the family-planning decision of June 1, 1981, states: "In view of the great differences in economic conditions existing in our rural counties, every rural County People's Government may formulate its own stipulations concerning the length and amount of levies in accordance with local conditions and should report its stipulations to the municipal family planning office for the record."³¹ This provision grants the five counties under municipal jurisdiction a great deal of autonomy in generating specific regulations governing sanctions for unplanned births.

Why allow local autonomy in the enactment of family-planning regulations? Local generation of rules is preferable, it is argued, in order to take into account different economic levels, different types of agricultural arrangements, and different demographic characteristics across localities. This

²⁸ *Xinhua*, Sept. 25, 1980, in *FBIS*, Sept. 26, 1980, L1-4.

²⁹ Tianjin City Service, Apr. 29, 1981, in *FBIS*, May 8, 1981, R2-3; *Jiefang Ribao*, Aug. 10, 1981, 3, in *FBIS*, Sept. 2, 1981, O3-6; Shenyang Liaoning Provincial Service, Oct. 25, 1981, in *FBIS*, Oct. 28, 1981, S2-3; Guiyang, Guizhou Provincial Service, Nov. 13, 1981, in *FBIS*, Nov. 23, 1981, Q1-2; Xian, Shaanxi Provincial Service, May 3, 1981, in *FBIS*, May 4, 1981, T2-5.

³⁰ IF 1B-11 (82.10.14).

³¹ Tianjin City Service, in *FBIS*, May 8, 1981, R3.

rationale for the voluntary delegation of authority to lower levels, however, masks the structural dilemma—the limited ability of higher levels to compel local administrators to adopt the regulations drafted above, a modified version of them, or any at all. The problem becomes increasingly acute toward the bottom of the administrative system (brigades and teams), for it is there that the rules must finally be enforced, and it is there that the costs of enforcement—material, political, and manpower costs—must be borne.

At the grass roots, teams and brigades must find the funds to provide paid pregnancy leave and “preferential treatments” for single-child households, pay cash bonuses to those who agree to undergo sterilization after having one child, and provide land for those who want to build homes. In addition, they must devise a mechanism to extract penalties from policy offenders, not just once, but for three, five, seven, or fourteen years. The source of funds to reward those who comply with the one-child policy is typically the collective welfare fund, which has been taxed by the new burden placed on it. In some places it has proved inadequate to meet the demands for rewards; thus, promised rewards never materialize.³² Implementation of the responsibility system has exacerbated this problem, as well as the problem of enforcing penalties. In Guizhou “the necessity to make rewards and penalties stick” was termed by the vice-governor in November 1981 the “current main problem” in family-planning work.³³ Similarly, Jiangsu deputies to the Fourth Session of the Fifth National People’s Congress noted that some rural areas “can neither afford to give awards nor do anything as a penalty.”³⁴

In short, because family-planning regulations are enforced through local funding with local personnel, higher levels cannot force them to be adopted, or if adopted, to be carried out. In Hua Shan commune, for example, there was resistance to the enforcement of economic penalties for those who had violated the birth plan. Only three of six brigades for which information is available had penalties in force in 1982, despite a January 1982 commune meeting encouraging the adoption of stiffer sanctions. Among the three, only one enforced the so-called standard penalty of a 10 percent deduction from the offending couple’s combined income for seven years. The two other brigades both opted for a flat fee of 200 yuan for a second birth, and one brigade raised the levy to 300 yuan in the event of a third birth. Where such “flat fee” sanctions are enforced, peasants with rising incomes may increasingly come to view this payment as a good investment for long-term household security.

³² Zhang Yongchen, Cao Jingchun, “Shengchan Zerenzhi yu Kongzhi Nongcun Renkou Zengzhang” (The Production Responsibility System and the Control of Rural Population Increase), *Renkou yu Jingji* (Population and Economics), 1982, no. 1: 13; Zhu Mian, “Nongye Shengchan Zerenzhi yu Nongcunde Jihua Shengyu Gongzuo” (The Agricultural Production Responsibility System and Rural Planned Birth Work), *Renkou Yanjiu*, 1982, no. 5:27.

³³ Guizhou Provincial Service, Nov. 13, 1981, in *FBIS*, Nov. 23, 1981, Q1.

³⁴ *Xinhua*, Dec. 8, 1981, in *FBIS*, Dec. 10, 1981, K1.

In Hua Shan a brigade women's leader noted that one woman pregnant outside the plan had resisted all efforts at persuasion and threats of a 200 yuan fine by saying that even if she had to pay 500 yuan, she would still have the child.³⁵

When asked about the variable enforcement of economic sanctions, the commune family-planning cadre conceded that brigades could not be made to enforce the regulations advocated by the commune.³⁶ The importance of such sanctions is demonstrated by figures on third births in Hua Shan. Of the five cases of third births which were admitted to have occurred in 1981 and 1982, four were born in brigades that had no penalty in force.

The problems faced by county and commune-level cadres trying to enforce economic sanctions at the local level have been exacerbated by the enactment of structural reforms in the countryside. With the decision to slowly shift political and administrative responsibilities away from the commune to newly established *xiang* governments, the position of commune cadres was called into question and their authority was diminished, in anticipation of the impending structural change, which was scheduled to be completed by the end of 1984.³⁷ Moreover, in areas where communes were divided into multiple townships, new cadres had to be recruited to carry on all aspects of township work, including family planning. In one Hubei county, however, no county funds were available to pay the salaries of additional family-planning cadres, and the township refused to use collective funds for this purpose. As a result, thirty-one of the fifty-five townships established in early 1984 were still without family-planning cadres six months later.³⁸

Thus, commune structural reforms—taken together with the effects of (1) calls for increased exercise of brigade and production team autonomy, (2) a reduction of the number of local-level cadres drawing collective support, and (3) a decrease in the amount of time cadres are willing to spend away from their “responsibility fields” (*zeren tian*) fulfilling administrative duties—are changing the political landscape in the countryside. With the influence of commune-level cadres on the wane, and the formal administrative structure in flux, brigades and teams are becoming increasingly important decisional units in the policy process, particularly when they retain substantial administrative autonomy, as in the case of population policy.

Administrative Structure and the Delivery System for Family-Planning Services

In 1973, Offices for Planned Birth were established at the state, provincial, municipal, and county levels. These offices were charged with overseeing the implementation of population policy, the focus of which was voluntary adop-

³⁵ IF 1C-4 (82.4.6); 1D-8 (82.5.16); 1F-13 (82.10.12); 1H-15 (82.11.4); IF 1J-10 (82.11.9).

³⁶ IF 1B-11 (82.10.14).

³⁷ *Renmin Ribao*, Nov. 23, 1983, 1.

³⁸ Interview File No. 17 (84.6.9), 4.

tion of birth control measures and reduction of family size. In the 1970s this administrative system, combined with a rural delivery system for contraceptive services and supplies, was effective in helping to bring down birthrates.

The system that was adequate for a voluntary family-planning program, however, has been strained by the increasing pressures to limit family size and meet birth quotas. Organizational weaknesses that could be tolerated under a voluntary program have posed severe impediments to implementation of the mandatory one-child-per-couple program. Moreover, new responsibilities have been placed on the administrative and technical cadres, making coordination of activity and high quality performance increasingly difficult at the grass-roots level.

Before discussing the weaknesses in this system, let us first examine more closely one example of how the system works. Hua Shan commune, in early 1982, had a population of approximately 30,600, with 7,100 households and 4,344 couples of childbearing age. Only two individuals at this level are directly involved in daily administration of family planning: the head of the Women's Federation branch, and a staff worker (*ganshi*) in charge of family planning, both of whom began their jobs in January 1981. Before that time the staff position did not exist.³⁹

In addition to these cadres who directly administer population policy, the commune director and Party secretary also play a role. These leaders, particularly the local Party secretary, have broad oversight duties in all policy areas; population policy is no exception. Besides being accountable for the results of population-control efforts in the commune, they play an active role by attending meetings on family-planning work. Additionally, they allocate and manage locally generated funds targeted for population work.

Above the commune level is the Hong Shan District Office for Family Planning, the lowest-level office in the formal family-planning structure originating in Beijing. Before the creation of this office in 1979, the district government, the health bureau, and the office for women and children all jointly managed family-planning work. The district office has only 6 people to oversee an area with a population of 364,200, including more than 63,400 women of childbearing age (20–49 years). The staff positions include a director, a vice-director, staff workers for propaganda and professional work, and two staffers handling routine business. The office coordinates laterally with district government and Party officials and reports vertically to the Wuhan Municipal Family Planning Office.⁴⁰

Below the commune level are brigade and team cadres. In Hua Shan brigade administrative committees generally consist of a director, three deputies, and one to four additional committee members. All brigade leaders

³⁹ IF 1A-7 (82.4.6).

⁴⁰ IF 1K-1 (82.12.1).

were male, as were the majority of deputies and committee members. However, each brigade committee has one deputy in charge of "women's work" (*funu gongzuo*) called the "brigade women's leader," as is customary. It is this group of women who do the bulk of the daily work in implementing population policy. In Hua Shan they average thirty-eight years of age, have a middle-school level of education, and have been on the job six years. The majority served as team women's leaders before being promoted to the brigade level.⁴¹

Besides the brigade women's leaders, brigade directors and branch Party secretaries, like their commune-level counterparts, attend meetings, submit reports, and assume general responsibility for fulfilling local population plans. Unlike their superiors, however, they sometimes become more actively involved in policy enforcement, as when they are called on to accompany brigade women's leaders to the homes of recalcitrant couples who do not wish to comply with the birth plan. These cadres also exercise substantial autonomy in the adoption and enforcement of family-planning regulations, and are accountable for brigade performance.

Finally, team-level cadres sit at the bottom of the family-planning administrative structure. Production teams in Hua Shan generally have three administrative cadres, one of whom is the team women's leader. On average, team women's leaders are slightly younger and slightly less well educated and have been in their jobs longer than brigade women's leaders.⁴² They are responsible for enforcing the team plan in their own villages, among friends and neighbors with whom they work and live, and for coordinating activity with the brigade women's leader. The team leader plays a role similar to brigade cadres, with one major exception. He does not set the family-planning rules, as brigade cadres do. He does, however, retain substantial influence on the enforcement of them.

Another group of actors involved with population policy are the technical cadres at the commune and brigade levels. In 1982 there were fifty-four bare-foot doctors spread among two commune clinics and brigade health stations. Of these, twenty-three had passed qualifying exams to achieve the rank of "country doctor." These individuals, in addition to providing medical services, train brigade and team women's leaders in the use of various birth control devices and offer technical guidance. It is still the women's leaders, however, who actually carry out the routine work of supplying contraceptives and monitoring pregnancies. Commune clinic personnel are responsible only for these technical medical services: (1) providing guidance as to the most appropriate form of birth control for those with special health considerations;

⁴¹These mean characteristics are based on information for all nineteen brigade women's leaders. IF 3A-1-8 (82.4.13).

⁴²These mean characteristics are derived from information on team women's leaders in four brigades. IF 3B-14 (82.3.30); IF 1E-6 (82.5.23); IF 3C-7-9 (82.10.26); IF 3D-2-4 (82.11.4).

(2) performing contraceptive procedures; and (3) conducting semiannual check-ups for wearers of intrauterine devices.⁴³

How do these personnel coordinate the implementation of population policy? The first task of family-planning cadres is to designate birth quotas. National birthrate targets are set annually by the state, which sets the standard for each province. Once provincial targets are set, lower administrative levels must establish quotas in line with these targets. In Hong Shan district the target is set by government and Party cadres, the district Women's Federation Head, and family-planning-office personnel. According to a district-level family-planning cadre, rather than utilizing a formula based solely on territorial population, such specific factors as the number of couples newly married but childless and the projected number of newlyweds are also considered when local targets are set. Ultimately, however, any specific calculations of this kind must be reduced to a set number of births per 1,000 population. In the case of Hua Shan, the 1982 birth quota was 13.5 per 1,000.⁴⁴

At the brigade level, cadres translate the 13.5 per 1,000 formula into an actual allotment of births for the year. A brigade of 2,000, for example, would plan for 27 births in 1982. In five brigades for which such information is available, three brigade women's leaders further divide the quota to individual teams, while two do not. One cadre noted that rather than subdivide the brigade allotment to the team, she maintained a "unified brigade plan" for births. Because couples usually had a child soon after marriage, she went on, it was better to remain flexible throughout the brigade and allocate birth permits to newlyweds, no matter which team they were from.⁴⁵

In addition to setting birth quotas, brigade cadres also issue birth permits. These permits are the sanction of legitimacy for newborns. In theory, these permits are issued to couples who are entitled to bear a child during that year. In Hua Shan cadres noted that couples who have been married longer and are still childless have first priority. However, birth permits are not issued until after the birth, to avoid having permits illegally transferred to another party. Thus, rather than formally designate who has priority, brigade women's leaders wait to see who becomes pregnant. It is assumed that newlyweds will want to have a child right away; despite national policy, nothing is done to discourage early pregnancy beyond the minimal verbal advocacy of late childbirth by brigade and commune cadres.⁴⁶

A third duty of family-planning cadres is to coordinate the supply and distribution of birth control supplies. Unlike the "top to bottom" process of

⁴³ IF 4A-1-2 (82.4.9).

⁴⁴ IF 1K-10-11 (82.12.1); IF 1B-5 (82.10.14).

⁴⁵ IF 1E-8 (82.5.23); IF 1F-15 (82.10.12); IF 1G-8 (82.10.28); IF 1H-16 (82.11.14); IF 1J-11 (82.11.9).

⁴⁶ IF 1C-4 (82.4.6); IF 1F-14 (82.10.12); IF 1G-11 (82.10.28); IF 1J-11 (82.11.9).

allocating births, the supplying of contraceptives relies on a "bottom to top" reporting system. Brigade and team women's leaders go from door to door gathering information on needed supplies of contraceptives. Their reports are submitted to the commune cadre, who in turn submits a request to the district officer. On the basis of these local reports, annual plans prepared at the district, municipal, and provincial levels flow up the family-planning bureaucracy to Beijing. On the basis of national estimates for needed contraceptive supplies, the State Family Planning Commission coordinates with the State Pharmaceutical Bureau, which is responsible for setting production plans for pharmaceutical companies under its jurisdiction. Thus, in Wuhan municipality the local pharmaceutical company provides the family-planning office with supplies on a monthly schedule, and district-level cadres are responsible for collecting the monthly quota from designated pharmaceutical stations throughout the city. In turn, cadres from lower units must travel to the district office to pick up their monthly allotments and arrange for the distribution to individual households.⁴⁷

The fourth responsibility of local family-planning cadres is to monitor implementation of the birth plan by regularly inspecting the conduct of work at lower levels. According to the commune Women's Federation Head, however, district personnel come to the commune twice a year for formal investigations, and commune family-planning cadres make scheduled visits to each of Hua Shan's nineteen brigades four times a year.⁴⁸ Below the commune level, formal, periodic investigations give way to sustained monitoring of village conditions by brigade and team women's leaders.

The fifth task of family-planning cadres is to visit localities or homes at the request of lower-level cadres. When faced with recalcitrant couples who cannot be persuaded to take "remedial measures" to terminate a pregnancy, team or brigade family-planning workers often call in more authoritative personages in their unit (i.e., team or brigade leaders, or Party branch secretaries), or higher-level family-planning cadres, to help persuade them to abort. In line with reports throughout the country, Hong Shan district cadres admit they encounter stiff resistance from those who have a strong aversion to the policy.⁴⁹ Nevertheless, couples unwilling to abort a pregnancy, especially a third pregnancy, find themselves under enormous lateral and vertical pressure from those who have complied with the policy and from cadres bent on enforcement.

The sixth job of family-planning cadres is to compile family-planning records. These records, which include data on births, deaths, single-child households, contraceptive methods, abortions, and even menstrual cycles,

⁴⁷ IF 1B-9-10 (82.10.14); IF 1K-3 (82.12.1).

⁴⁸ IF 1A-8 (82.4.6).

⁴⁹ IF 1K-11-12 (82.12.1).

are compiled from the team level up. This process of data compilation has two purposes: First, it enables local and higher authorities to monitor the progress of the population plan. Second, it is necessary to evaluate the performance of each unit against an array of goals (or quotas) set at the start of the year and to reward high achievers. For example, Hua Shan had five family-planning goals in 1982:

<i>Goal</i>	<i>Value</i>
Birthrate: 13.5 per 1,000	40%
"Only-child certificate" rate: 85% of all only-child couples	30%
Late marriage: 90% of marriages	10%
Rate of planned births: 90% of all births	10%
Utilization of birth control: 100% of couples of childbearing age	10%

If the commune achieved 100 percent of its targets, the Party secretary, commune director, and family-planning cadre each received a bonus of 20 yuan. For each target they missed, its value was deducted from this bonus. Brigade cadres who met their quotas each received 30 yuan.⁵⁰

From this review of the multilevel organization for implementing the population program, several conclusions can be drawn. First, there is no question of the efficacy of the organization; penetrating to the team level, the structure is adequate both for the delivery of technical services and for administrative oversight. Second, administrative costs are held down by utilizing available nontechnical personnel to administer the birth plan and to monitor compliance. In the case of Hua Shan only one cadre was added, at state expense, to handle family-planning work. The remaining workers were already holding administrative posts, thus drawing their income from the collective. And third, by supplying birth control supplies directly to the home through this same organization, the state minimizes organizational complexity and competition at the local level and eliminates the need to mobilize couples to acquire contraceptives on their own.

The system also has critical weaknesses, however, which have become more apparent under the strain of increasingly ambitious goals for population control. First, although the co-optation of local cadres as family-planning workers minimizes administrative costs, the result is a specialized family-planning bureaucracy highly dependent on nonspecialized local personnel to enforce the population program. As with rural programs of the past, this one has been plagued by two disruptive responses from local cadres. The first is overzealousness on the part of those eager to overfulfill state plans. This phenomenon was especially common during the early stages of the one-child campaign, the most notorious example occurring in Fujian

⁵⁰IF 1B-12-13 (82.10.14).

province, where it was charged that women were forcefully taken to health clinics for abortions and sterilizations.⁵¹

In Hong Shan district, too, it was clear that 1979 and 1980 had been periods of mobilization of those with two or more children to undergo sterilizations. Of the 63,400 couples of childbearing age in the district, approximately 10 percent had undergone sterilization procedures by 1982. According to a district family-planning cadre, 80 percent of this total occurred in 1979 alone, and most of these individuals already had two or three children.⁵² In Hua Shan commune, data from several brigades also indicate that a disproportionately high number of sterilizations occurred in 1979 and again in 1983. In Yan Jiang brigade, for example, of the total of 170 sterilizations which had been performed by early 1982, 120 occurred in 1979 alone. Here the brigade women's leader proudly stated that she and all team women's leaders had undergone sterilizations to set a good example. Similarly, in Hong Guang brigade 113 out of 166 sterilizations performed by the end of 1983 occurred in 1979, or 68 percent of the total. In 1983, an additional 52 sterilizations occurred, with only one occurring in the intervening three years (1980–82). In Hua Shan and He Dong brigades more than half of the total number of sterilizations performed by the end of 1983 occurred in 1983 alone; in Hua Shan 99 out of 162 (61%) occurred in that year, and in He Dong 34 out of 48 (70%) occurred in 1983.⁵³ Abortion totals for the commune were also high in the early 1980s, with a ratio in 1980 of 68 abortions for each 100 births, 65 abortions for each 100 births in 1981, and 78 abortions for each 100 births in 1982.⁵⁴

A series of reports out of Guangdong in 1981 on mobilizations for contraceptive surgery also illustrate the consequences of cadre zealotry. In Huiyang prefecture 102,400 operations were carried out in fifty days during May and June 1981, 27,000 in one month in Dongguan county alone.⁵⁵ In 1982 provincial leaders announced their intention to carry out two "shock attacks" during the year.⁵⁶ National leaders concede that "instances of compulsion" do occur, but that they are "impermissible."⁵⁷ As with the case of Guangdong's "shock attacks," however, it may be difficult to judge where persuasion ends and coercion begins.

The other response detrimental to the program has been the complete

⁵¹ Leo A. Orleans, *China's Population Policies and Population Data: Review and Update* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1981), 18–19.

⁵² IF 1K-10 (82.12.1).

⁵³ IF 1E-9 (82.5.23); Interview File No. 6 (84.3.10), 5, 12; Interview File No. 4 (84.3.3), 14.

⁵⁴ IF 1B-10 (82.10.14); Interview File No. 3 (84.2.28), 12.

⁵⁵ Guangdong Provincial Service, Aug. 28, 1981, in *FBIS*, Sept. 1, 1981, P5; *Xinhua*, Sept. 11, 1981, in *FBIS*, Sept. 16, 1981, P1.

⁵⁶ Guangdong Provincial Service, Feb. 27, 1982, in *FBIS*, Mar. 4, 1982, P5.

⁵⁷ See *Xinhua* report on Hua Guofeng's report to the Third Session of the Fifth National People's Congress, Sept. 7, 1980, in *FBIS*, Sept. 8, 1980, L10–11.

neglect of family-planning work. Rural cadres, sympathetic to the plight of labor-poor households and susceptible to the "feudal idea" of preferring male to female offspring, may nominally implement family-planning regulations but be blind to policy infractions.⁵⁸ In Hua Shan one brigade women's leader resignedly noted that "people want to have boys; what can we do?"⁵⁹ Moreover, some cadres find themselves in the awkward position of enforcing the one-child stricture on relatives or kinsmen in tight-knit or single-lineage villages, as well as exercising childbearing restraint at home.⁶⁰

Higher authorities have limited options for securing the compliance of rural cadres. Threats of demotion, often used against urban cadres, are less potent in villages, where the benefits that accrue from leadership posts do not necessarily outweigh the costs. With respect to material benefits, new agricultural policies reduce the motivations for accepting administrative posts, which reduce the time available for household production but offer little remuneration. Another option, the offer of bonuses for plan fulfillment, may also be of limited utility. Weighing the value of a potential bonus against the time and effort that would have to be expended in order to receive it, local cadres may conclude that the time can be more profitably spent elsewhere.

Another factor affecting cadre enthusiasm and commitment is the lack of remuneration for their efforts.⁶¹ Below the commune level, the bulk of family-planning work falls to brigade and team women's leaders, none of whom receive special compensation for their efforts. Wage scales set in earlier years for brigade women's leaders had not been adjusted by 1982 to account for the added responsibilities. Thus, in Hua Shan, for example, these women received salaries consistently lower than those of other male brigade committee members who hold a lower rank. In three brigades, salaries of brigade women's leaders were from 84 to 91 percent of the salaries of other deputy brigade leaders, and only 87 to 91 percent of the salaries of lower-ranking male administrative committee members.⁶² At the team level women's leaders received no administrative salary, and thus were not monetarily compensated for their family-planning work.

⁵⁸ Yunnan Provincial Service, Jan. 6, 1980, in *FBIS*, Jan. 14, 1980, Q1; Guangdong Provincial Service, Sept. 5, 1981, in *FBIS*, Sept. 9, 1981, P2; Chen Guomo, "Nongcun Shixing Shengchan Zerenzhi Zemyang ba Jihua Shengyu Baijinqu" (How to Arrange Planned Parenthood Work in Villages Which Implement the Production Responsibility System), *Renkou yu Jingji*, 1982, no. 4: 39.

⁵⁹ IF 1F-14 (82.10.12).

⁶⁰ Press accounts are replete with examples of errant cadres at all levels who violated the policy or were persuaded to take contraceptive measures. *Guangming Ribao*, Sept. 7, 1979, in *FBIS*, Sept. 19, 1979, Q1-2; Hunan Provincial Service, Sept. 23, 1979, in *FBIS*, Sept. 26, 1979, P2-3; *Renmin Ribao*, Apr. 11, 1980, 4; *Zhongguo Nongmin Bao*, July 4, 1982, 3.

⁶¹ Zhang and Cao (n. 32 above), 13; *Dazhong Ribao*, Sept. 29, 1981, in *FBIS*, Oct. 19, 1981, O1-2; Henan Provincial Service, Feb. 19, 1982, in *FBIS*, Feb. 22, 1982, P3-4.

⁶² IF 5B-8 (82.3.30); IF 5E-8 (82.10.8); IF 5D-8 (82.5.11).

A third problem to emerge has been abuse of family-planning workers. Not only are these individuals subject to verbal abuse, there have been reports of violence against them.⁶³ The threat of violence, taken together with the other factors discussed above, is a powerful disincentive to actively pursue defiant couples.

A second major weakness in the organization is the system of reporting. Statistics are gathered and maintained by family-planning and Party cadres at each level of administration. Although higher cadres go to localities periodically to investigate, it is impossible to get independent verification of local records, short of a house-to-house survey. Thus, district cadres must accept the statistics provided by commune cadres who, in turn, have relied on the reports from brigade cadres. This system of in-house verification leaves a wide margin for tampering with figures to fulfill the local plan. Errors, intentional or accidental, may be passed up through the administrative network undetected. Equally important, higher cadres overseeing family planning have little or no incentive to seek out errors, with bonuses and commendations at stake. With no independent auditing mechanism, then, errors in the reporting system are likely to multiply.⁶⁴

A related problem is the manipulation of registration records. In many localities, households have been denied registration for unplanned births. Additionally, reports have circulated concerning manipulation of the system by people who go to the city or another village to have a child and then return to their rural or urban homes.⁶⁵ There, cadres are told that the baby was born to relatives and is registered elsewhere. Because the child is actually not registered in either location, and because sympathetic cadres have no incentive to uncover the deception, it goes unreported.

Two additional weaknesses are found in the delivery system for family-planning services. The first is the quality of medical services available. In some localities, low-quality medical procedures have caused patient injuries.⁶⁶ Moreover, those who suffer such injuries are sometimes denied

⁶³Tonghua County Family Planning Office, "Cong Yingebu Gongshe Lishugou Daduide Gongzuo Chengguo Tantaou Jihua Shengyude Gongzuo Fangfa" (From the Work Achievements of Yingebu Commune's Lishugou Brigade Discuss the Work Methods of Planned Parenthood), *Renkouxue Kan* (Demography Journal), 1982, no. 2: 53; Zong Xin, Bai Jian, "Shilun Nongcun Shengchan Zerenzhi yu Jihua Shengyu" (Exploratory Discussion of the Rural Production Responsibility System and Planned Parenthood), *Renkouxue Kan*, 1982, no. 1: 10; *Hubei Ribao*, Apr. 12, 1982, 2; *Hubei Ribao*, Nov. 12, 1982, 2.

⁶⁴Beginning in 1980, Chinese sources admitted that population statistics were among the types of data subject to falsification at the local level. See John Aird, "Recent Demographic Data from China: Problems and Prospects," in *China Under the Four Modernizations* (n. 3 above), 202-3.

⁶⁵Changshan County Family Planning Office, "Lun Nongcun yi sheng Liangtai Yuling Fufu Ying Shixing Jiezhai" (Rural Couples of Childbearing Age with Two Children Should Undergo Operations), *Zhejiang Renkou Tongxun* (Zhejiang Population Bulletin), 1983, no. 2: 34.

⁶⁶Evidence on medical "accidents" is implied through press accounts that refer to the need to improve the quality of technical services and reduce the number of accidents. *Xinhua*, Jan. 10, 1983, in *FBIS*, Jan. 13, 1983, K15; *China Daily*, Jan. 4, 1983, 1.

medical treatment for them.⁶⁷ Also common is the improper installation of intrauterine devices, with some localities reporting IUD failure rates of as high as 20 percent of all wearers.⁶⁸ To improve the quality of medical services, some localities are offering bonuses to doctors who perform consistently without any "accidents."⁶⁹ Though the technique of offering bonuses is seen as a positive incentive to reduce errors and improve medical quality, it may also encourage medical personnel to perform the maximum number of procedures possible, even to the detriment of women's health. The second problem with the delivery system for family-planning services is the provision of contraceptive supplies. As with many other commodities, the supply and distribution system for contraceptives is flawed. Shortages afflict major cities like Beijing, as well as rural areas, disrupting family-planning efforts.⁷⁰

To summarize, the organization for family planning suffers from administrative and technical weaknesses. The administrative weaknesses derive from the dependency of the system on local cadres, especially brigade and team cadres, to carry out family-planning work. Because these individuals are sympathetic to peasant desires for larger families, because the work is hard and the payoff small, and because there is no independent oversight of their performance, those who choose to ignore or loosen the policy run little risk in doing so. Technically, the system suffers from problems of supply and quality of service, further impeding progress toward the goal of one child per couple.

The Impact of the Agricultural Responsibility System

A fourth impediment to implementing the population program has been the policy environment. Agricultural reforms, and particularly the agricultural responsibility system (ARS), have posed major obstacles to family-planning work. In its most liberal form, the ARS allows households or individuals to contract for a specific production quota. Land is parceled out for use by a household, for example, which is responsible for supplying and utilizing the inputs necessary to reach the assigned quota. Households or individuals bear

⁶⁷ For example, Shaanxi's regulations on family planning include the stipulation that "medical units should improve the quality of surgery and ensure safety. They must provide treatment for accidents and illness caused by this surgery," Shaanxi Provincial Service, May 3, 1981, in *FBIS*, May 4, 1981, T5.

⁶⁸ Zhang Xinxia, "Qian Tan Yuling Funu Qingkuangde Xin Bianhua" (Discuss the New Changes in the Conditions of Childbearing Age Women), *Renkou yu Jingji*, 1982, no. 3: 47. In Hong Shan district, cadres estimate that about 20 percent of all IUD wearers have problems with it, such as slippage and expulsion; of these, it was said that "many" get pregnant. IF 1K-11 (82.12.1).

⁶⁹ *Jiefang Ribao*, Aug. 10, 1981, 3, in *FBIS*, Sept. 2, 1981, O5; Xin Dan, Peng Zhiliang, "Sichuan Sheng Peng Xian Shixing Jieyu Jishu Zerenzhide Jingyan" (The Experience of Sichuan Province's Peng County in Carrying Out a Birth Control Technical Responsibility System), *Renkou Yanjiu*, 1982, no. 6: 29-31.

⁷⁰ Beijing City Service, Aug. 24, 1981, in *FBIS*, Sept. 4, 1981, R1; Beijing Domestic Service, Feb. 25, 1981, in *FBIS*, Feb. 26, 1981, L2-3; Zong Xin, Bai Jian (n. 63 above), 13.

all responsibility for meeting quotas, and income is tied directly to their own production. In short, the basic accounting unit reverts to the household, with team or brigade units acting mainly as agents for the household in the marketing process.

This system of full responsibility (*da bao gan*) has been detrimental to the population plan in four ways. First, as was discussed above, division of land generally has been based on the amount of household labor power, with the result that labor-rich households receive more land, often boosting their incomes faster than their labor-poor neighbors can. This pattern of distribution sets a negative example for young couples already influenced by traditional values and family pressures.

Second, under *da bao gan*, brigade cadres receive parcels of land along with other peasants, and are assigned production quotas. Whereas they formerly drew administrative salaries from the collective, under this system all or a part of their income from the collective comes from cultivating their allotment of land. In three Hua Shan brigades, for example, two brigade leaders got land allotments 50 percent the size given to a full-time male laborer, and one got 30 percent of the allotment. Other brigade cadres also got 50 percent allotments, and team-level cadres got 50 percent or more.⁷¹ As a result, cadres have tended to neglect administrative duties of all types, including family-planning work, preferring to busy themselves on their assigned plots of land in an effort to boost their income from production.⁷²

Another effect of the ARS has been to diminish or deplete local welfare funds, from which benefits are paid to holders of one-child certificates. Under the old system, collective income was distributed after the team had siphoned off funds for the welfare fund and various expenses. Now individuals and households are entitled to receive directly all the income from their production, from which they must pay the agricultural tax and contribute to the welfare fund. As a result, the fund sometimes has less money than before, since the team no longer has the discretionary power to set the annual contribution levels. At the same time, a heavier burden has been placed on the fund to provide for the medical and educational costs and other rewards promised to single-child couples. The result, in some instances, has been depletion of the fund without providing all the promised rewards.⁷³ In Hua Shan, data from two brigades does demonstrate that collective welfare funds have diminished since 1979. In one brigade the fund was cut in half between 1979 and 1981, dipping from 12,000 to 6,000 yuan. In a second brigade, the 1981 welfare fund of 4,648 yuan was only 36 percent of the 1979 level of

⁷¹ IF 6E-12 (82.10.8); IF 6G-10 (82.11.4); IF 6H-6 (82.11.9).

⁷² Liaoning Provincial Service, Oct. 25, 1981, in *FBIS*, Oct. 28, 1981, S3; Zhu Mian (n. 32 above), 27, 29; Cui Fengyuan, "Guanyu Wo Guo Nongcun Funu Shengyu Lü Wenti" (On the Question of Our Country's Rural Women's Birth Rate), *Renkou yu Jingji*, 1982, no. 2:50.

⁷³ Zhang and Cao (n. 32 above), 13; Zhu Mian, 27.

12,974 yuan. In both cases, the dramatic drop occurred in 1980 when the responsibility system was introduced into the area.⁷⁴

The responsibility system has also posed problems for the enforcement of penalties. Where the work-point system remains in effect, teams can deduct a percentage of work points earned from those who violate the policy. However, where this system has been abolished, as under *da bao gan*, taking deductions from salaries becomes more problematic, since income flows directly to the peasants.⁷⁵ Moreover, as peasants begin to utilize private supply and marketing cooperatives, now being encouraged by the state, local cadres will have no basis for determining household income beyond the value of contractually stipulated quotas. Since "within-quota" income will constitute an increasingly lower percentage of total household income, cadres who do persist in enforcement may find that such penalties fail to deter offenders.

In short, the responsibility system, by its very success, added to the difficulty of population-control work. It demonstrated the economic value inherent in labor power, further undermined the commitment of local cadres to family-planning work, and disrupted the system of rewards and penalties on which compliance largely depends. Thus, as the *da bao gan* system spread across China between 1980 and 1983 (see chapter 9), population growth rates rose to a peak of 14.55 per 1,000 in 1981 and remained high at 14.49 in 1982. Moreover, as the contract system stabilized in 1983 and emphasis was placed on extended contracts, single-child households who had not benefited under the initial land-division process were told that no further readjustments of landholding would be made. In Hua Shan one brigade women's leader conceded that the failure to provide extra allotments of land was a primary cause of the poor state of family-planning work in her village.⁷⁶

TOWARD IMPROVING THE IMPLEMENTATION OF POPULATION POLICY

Faced with this intricate mix of implementation problems, the regime has attempted or proposed several concrete solutions: (1) the drafting of a family-planning law; (2) the provision of retirement insurance; (3) the enforcement of a "dual contract" system linking family planning with agricultural production; and (4) conducting family-planning propaganda and mobilization campaigns.

In an effort to enforce uniform national guidelines, a family-planning law

⁷⁴This drop cannot be attributed to decreases in the overall solvency of the brigades. In both cases, total production value, net income, and per capita income all increased between 1979 and 1981. IF 7E-8-9 (82.10.12); IF 7G-8-9 (82.11.2).

⁷⁵Zhang and Cao, 13; Zhang Huaiyu (n. 20 above), 37.

⁷⁶Interview File No. 6 (84.3.10), 10, 15.

was drafted by the Family Planning Office of the State Council and submitted for discussion by the Commission on Legislative Affairs of the Fifth National People's Congress. According to a report by Peng Zhen, vice-chairman of the NPC Standing Committee, the draft went through several revisions between June 1979 and September 1980, and was originally scheduled to be submitted for approval at the Third Session of the Fifth NPC in September 1980. In explaining why it was not submitted, Peng noted that some "unresolved problems" remained and that "the draft is not the result of consensus of all quarters."⁷⁷

A number of factors probably contributed to the failure to adopt a family-planning law. First, according to a *Xinhua* report in July 1979 during the Second Session of the Fifth NPC, the draft law included specific regulations concerning the rewards to be given to single-child families in both urban and rural settings. Such specificity would have required localities with widely differing economic and demographic characteristics to adopt uniform regulations, even if these were inappropriate to local conditions.

Second, the imposition of a national law that specified the obligations of localities to provide special incentives for single-child couples, while making no provision for financial compensation, could hardly have been welcomed by delegates to the NPC sessions. As early as 1980 a report from Guangdong referred to "the impossibility of implementing the policy of rewards and punishments due to a lack of funds."⁷⁸ Moreover, this issue had been discussed at an earlier October 1979 State Council meeting. According to Li Xiuzhen, then deputy director of the State Council's Family Planning Leading Group, the vice-premiers present agreed that the State Council should allot "some money" (*yibufen qian*) for the purpose of providing rewards to single-child couples. The issue was not resolved, however, but held over for "additional research."⁷⁹ In short, although it was easy to agree in principle to state subsidization of the costs of a family-planning-incentive program, the politics of budgetary allocation precluded any immediate solution.

Third, there continued to be numerous concerns about the imposition of a one-child policy, if not outright opposition. Most prominent were concerns about (1) an aging of the population (*laohua*), (2) a reduction in the size of the labor force and the pool of eligible military recruits, and (3) the increasing numbers of elderly people dependent on state welfare subsidies.⁸⁰ Although

⁷⁷ *FBIS*, Supplement No. 76, Sept. 23, 1980, 35.

⁷⁸ *FBIS*, May 20, 1980, P2.

⁷⁹ Li Xiuzhen, "Dangqian Jihua Shengyu Gongzuode Xingshi he Renwu" (The Current Situation and Tasks in Family Planning Work), *Renkou Yanjiu*, 1980, no. 1:4.

⁸⁰ *Xinhua*, Dec. 22, 1979, in *FBIS*, Dec. 28, 1979, L8-9; *Xinhua*, Feb. 13, 1980, in *FBIS*, Feb. 15, 1980, L12-13; Chang Wen and Xin Hai, "Nongye Baochan dao Zu hou Jihua Shengyu Gongzuo Ruhe Kaizhan—Sichuan Sheng Mianzhu Xian Jihua Shengyu Gongzuo Diaocha" (How to Do Family Planning Work After Output Quotas Were Assigned to Groups in

such arguments were countered in the press, they continued to provide a concrete rationale for all who opposed the stringency of the one-child program. In the end, no family-planning law was passed; instead, the new constitution adopted in December 1982 contained a much milder provision making family planning an obligatory practice.⁸¹

Concern over the welfare of the elderly was especially serious among the rural population. For the present, however, the state has no remedy for the crucial problem of peasants' old-age security. It advocates the establishment of retirement pensions or "homes of respect for the aged," but the implementation and funding of these programs is left to the localities. Consequently, most rural villages do not have either retirement homes or pensions.⁸² As of 1981 less than 1 percent of the rural elderly were covered by pensions or housed in retirement homes, and average income from pensions was only 10 to 15 yuan a month.⁸³ At that rate, pensions for the approximately 40 million elderly in the rural areas would cost the state about 5 billion yuan a year.

Proposed alternatives to direct state subsidies include the levying of a supplemental agricultural tax to provide for long-term social security needs,⁸⁴ or joint contributions from the state, collectives, and individuals, creating a fund to be administered by the family-planning departments or by a specially created organ.⁸⁵ Although plausible in theory, in practice such schemes would present a host of organizational, management, and distribution problems to those charged with implementation, and would require substantial outlays of state funds, above and beyond monies targeted for old-age support, to support the bureaucracy that would inevitably be created. Moreover, the establishment of a system of old-age support cannot be expected to bring immediate returns in terms of fewer rural births. Its reliability could only be proven after many years of uninterrupted payments to peasants, who in the meantime may be hedging their bets by having a second or third child.

Moreover, with the current emphasis on reducing peasants' financial burdens, including their contribution to such programs as family planning and

Agriculture—An Investigation of the Family Planning Work in Mianzhu County, Sichuan Province), in *Zhongguo Renkou Kexue Lunji* (Symposium of Chinese Population Science), edited by The Institute of Population Economics, Beijing College of Economics (Beijing: China Academic Publishers, 1981), 189.

⁸¹ *Zhonghua Renmin Gongheguo Xianfa, 1982* (The Constitution of the People's Republic of China) (Beijing: People's Publishers, 1982), 27.

⁸² *Zhongguo Baike Nianjian, 1982*, 646.

⁸³ *Zhongguo Baike Nianjian, 1981*, 545.

⁸⁴ Cheng Du (n. 8 above), 56.

⁸⁵ Zhou Shigang, "Dui Nongcun Du Sheng Zinu Jiating Shixing Laonian Shehui Baoxian Tiantao" (An Inquiry into the Implementation of Old-Age Social Insurance in the Villages), *Renkou Yanjiu*, 1983, no. 5:55.

old-age insurance, it is unlikely that either the wide-scale establishment of state-local cooperative insurance programs or locally funded programs will occur in the near future. A circular issued by the Agricultural Research Office of the CPC Secretariat in November 1983 advocates the establishment of homes for the elderly (*jinglaoyuan*) only where local conditions permit, and only by decision of the local populace.⁸⁶ Left with the choice of contributing to the maintenance of retirement homes or supporting a second or third child, peasants will undoubtedly continue to prefer the economic potential of additional children to the state's promise of a stable welfare system in the future.

Neither a State Family Planning Law nor a comprehensive rural system of retirement support addresses the short-term problem of gaining the compliance of rural cadres and of couples of childbearing age. With the family-planning structure disrupted at the local level by the spread of household contracting in 1981 and 1982, China's leaders became increasingly vocal supporters of the "dual contract" (*shuang bao*) system, linking agricultural production quotas with family-planning quotas.⁸⁷ The first national publicity for such a system came in 1981, when *People's Daily* reported on the experience of an Anhui prefecture with the new system. Localities in Sichuan and Jilin also began experimenting with this approach in late 1980 and early 1981.⁸⁸

The "dual contract" system requires that household or individual contracts for agricultural production include a clause for family planning, committing the signatory to uphold the local birth plan by not having an unplanned child. The contract also specifies the consequences for failing to comply, whether they be cash penalties, higher state quotas, or in more extreme cases, forfeiting one's right to contract land for production.⁸⁹ Typically, commune, brigade, and team cadres are also required to sign contracts with their superiors committing themselves to meet specified family-planning goals. Unlike peasants who forfeit part of their income if found in violation of the policy, however, cadres generally have at stake only bonuses, not their basic income.⁹⁰

According to Hong Shan district family-planning officials, this system began to be implemented in 1982. Demonstrating the policy autonomy of lower units, however, Hua Shan officials were totally unfamiliar with the term

⁸⁶ *Zhongguo Nongmin Bao*, Nov. 17, 1983, 1.

⁸⁷ See, for example, the comments of Qian Xinzhong in *China Daily*, Jan. 4, 1983, 1, in *FBIS*, Jan. 5, 1983, K24.

⁸⁸ On Anhui, see *Renmin Ribao*, June 16, 1981; also, *Renmin Ribao*, Aug. 18, 1981, 4; Chen Guomo (n. 58 above), 39 and 38.

⁸⁹ For specific examples of contracts in force, see Zhu Mian, 29, and Zhang and Cao, 14-15 (n. 32 above); Chen Guomo, 39 and 38.

⁹⁰ IF 1K-6 (82.12.1).

shuang bao as late as October 1982.⁹¹ Explaining this, district officials said that three communes in the district had taken the lead in implementing this program, with 90 percent of commune members operating under it. Of the remaining communes, eight had adopted the system, which covered 80 percent of their members. Only Hua Shan was said to have failed to adopt the system.

By June 1984, however, the same officials indicated that the provisions of the "dual contract" system, where implemented, were no different than the local regulations had been before the contracts were enforced. In other words, the contracts did not link production quotas or landholding to family planning. Instead, they simply specified the same rewards and penalties already in effect. Moreover, these officials noted that the "dual contract" system was also weakened because of failure to coordinate with legal departments to ensure that the family-planning contract was legally binding. As a result, it was judged an ineffective measure in that district.⁹²

Thus, where the "dual contract" system was strictly enforced, the effect may have been to reduce substantially the incidence of unplanned births. However, adoption and enforcement of the "dual contract" system, like other regulations, also rested with local cadres, many of whom apparently chose not to adopt it or, if pushed from above to adopt it, not to enforce it. Cadres sympathetic to peasant concerns undoubtedly took little pleasure in inflicting higher state quotas on offending households, much less denying them the right to contract for "responsibility fields."

Although the overall effectiveness of the "dual contract" system is difficult to judge, it is clear that the 1982 population growth rate was only marginally lower than the 1981 rate, both of which were far in excess of national targets. By August 1982, participants in a family-planning work conference were well aware that work was suffering under the combined influence of "feudal" childbearing attitudes and agricultural reforms.⁹³ Thus, plans were made to launch a Family Planning Propaganda Month in early 1983 to popularize (*puji*) family-planning policy, birth control knowledge, physiology, hygiene, and eugenics.⁹⁴

This meeting was followed in November by a Family Planning Propaganda Work Meeting, which outlined plans for the campaign extending from January 1, 1983, through Spring Festival in February. Armed with the alarming results of the July 1982 census,⁹⁵ Family Planning Commission director Qian Xinzhong made clear in his remarks to the meeting that the

⁹¹ IF 1F-14 (82.10.12).

⁹² Interview File No. 16 (84.6.6), 3.

⁹³ Beijing Domestic Service, Aug. 16, 1982, in *FBIS*, Aug. 24, 1982, K14.

⁹⁴ Peng Zhiliang, "Ba Jihua Shengyu Gongzuo Tigao dao yige Xin Shuiping" (Raise Family Planning Work to a New Level), *Renkou Yanjiu*, 1982, no. 6:22.

⁹⁵ *Renmin Ribao*, Oct. 28, 1982, 1, 4.

“propaganda” month would combine talk with action—that is, require couples of childbearing age with two or more children to undergo sterilization.⁹⁶ Faced with the intransigence of rural couples who violated the population policy by having a second child, and lacking any effective means of dealing with them, the state shifted its emphasis to the continuing problem of multiple births (*duotai*). With third or additional births still comprising 28 percent of all births in 1981 and 24 percent in 1982 despite the official policy of strict prohibition, it was determined that significant improvements could be made in the birth rate and population growth rate in 1983 by concentrating resources on this offending group.⁹⁷ Moreover, reducing the number of multiple births would make possible an increase in the number of second births which could be permitted under state plans.

Thus, Family Planning Propaganda Month was a peak mobilization period. According to a January 1983 *Xinhua* report, “1.37 million propaganda workers” and “over 138,000 medical workers” were trained in fourteen provinces, municipalities, and autonomous regions to carry out the month’s activities, and in ten provinces approximately 226,000 sterilizations were performed between December 1982 and January 10, 1983. By the end of February “incomplete statistics” indicated that 8.86 million “birth control operations” had been performed nationally.⁹⁸ Although the total number of sterilizations performed nation wide during the campaign is unclear, its impact can be seen in statistics from Hubei province, where one million sterilizations occurred during 1983, constituting almost one-third of the cumulative provincial total of 3,020,000.⁹⁹ In Wuhan alone, one million yuan drawn from the municipal finance department was spent on this extraordinary effort, dwarfing the annual family-planning budget of 600,000 yuan.¹⁰⁰ Nevertheless, faced with a hostile rural population, an inability to eliminate the occurrence of third or more births, and a high incidence of abortions—costly in both human and economic terms—family-planning officials concluded that “persuading” all those with two or more children to undergo sterilization was the most effective and economical alternative

⁹⁶ Qian Xinzong, “Nuli Kaichuang Jihua Shengyu Xuanchuan Jiaoyu Gongzuo Xin Jiumian—Zai Chuanguo Jihua Shengyu Xuanchuan Gongzuo Huiyishangde Jianghua” (Make Great Efforts to Initiate a New Phase in Family Planning Propaganda and Education Work—Speech delivered at the National Family Planning Propaganda Work Conference), *Renkouxue Kan*, 1983, no. 1:9. See also, *Beijing Review*, 1983, no. 7 (Feb. 14): 23.

⁹⁷ For the 1981 figure on multiple births, see Qian Xinzong, “Evolution of China’s Population Policy,” *Beijing Review*, 1984, no. 3 (Jan. 16): 19. For 1982, see Liang Jimin, Peng Zhiliang, “Quanmian Zhunquede Lijie he Zhixing Dangde Jihua Shengyu Fangzhen Zhengce” (Understand and Implement the Party’s Family Planning Policies in an All-Round and Accurate Way), *Renkou Yanjiu*, 1984, no. 3:12.

⁹⁸ *FBIS*, Jan. 13, 1983, K13–14; *FBIS*, Mar. 3, 1983, K11.

⁹⁹ Interview File No. 14 (84.6.8), 8.

¹⁰⁰ Interview File No. 15 (84.6.7), 9–10.

available. Although this mobilizational technique was no panacea for the myriad problems of local-level implementation, the sustained emphasis on sterilization throughout 1983 and 1984 undoubtedly contributed to a reduction of the annual population growth rates to an estimated 11.54 per 1,000 in 1983 and 10.8 per 1,000 in 1984.¹⁰¹

CONCLUSIONS

In any look at China's efforts with population control in the rural areas, the capacity of the regime to enforce changed behavior patterns, and in this case, childbearing behavior patterns, should not be underestimated. Indeed, compared with the lack of connection between government and village throughout much of the world, Beijing's penetration to the household is awesome. In 1979, mobilization campaigns for "voluntary" sterilizations, abortions, and adoption of contraceptive measures were widespread, and the fine line between persuasion and coercion was crossed frequently.

Despite the growing desire of the central leadership to move away from this method of implementation, in 1979 mobilization was the only mechanism available for ensuring the rapid exposure of the rural population to birth control education and their adoption of birth control methods. Provincial-level regulations were being issued, but months would go by before rural localities actively began to enforce them. In addition, Party-directed mobilization was the only means by which to cut through the bureaucracy and compel propaganda, health, family-planning, pharmaceutical, and financial departments to cooperate in the provision of the requisite human and material resources. Local-level cadres, placed under familiar pressures, reacted in familiar ways, assuming that their performance would be judged first and foremost on the achievement of numerical quotas, and that this campaign, like others before it, would peak, wane, and end.

Instead, central leaders, still lacking the organization for administrative enforcement, upped the ante by formalizing the one-child policy in 1980 and firmly extending it to the rural areas. This time, however, Party cadres at all levels would themselves resist being the vehicle of implementation, because of (1) a lack of support for the policy; (2) an impatience with a policy viewed by many as a nuisance; (3) a tendency to view family planning as a women's issue, and thus, of low priority; and (4) a preoccupation with the ongoing agricultural reform process.

With rural Party discipline thus weakened, and with the penetration of

¹⁰¹ 1984 *Zhongguo Jingji Nianjian* (1984 Economic Yearbook of China) (Beijing: Economic Management Publishers, 1984), IV-60; State Statistical Bureau, "Communique on Fulfillment of China's 1984 Economic and Social Development Plan," *Beijing Review*, 1985, no. 12 (March 25): VIII.

the state family-planning bureaucracy dependent on these same personnel, central leaders were compelled to modify the content of population policy in the short term while building a reliable and professional family-planning organization over the long term. Thus, some peasant complaints were addressed by increasing the number of categories in which it was acceptable to have a second child. Simultaneously, however, all those with two or more children were to be persuaded to undergo sterilization. Although this mobilizational technique was at odds with the policy preferences of China's leadership, its use was preferable to program failure, an outcome all too conceivable from the vantage point of mid-1982. In addition, the mobilization campaign had the advantage, as always, of generating local-level compliance as a result of increased pressure from above. Moreover, with work teams composed of family-planning and medical personnel descending on rural villages, cadres were obliged to facilitate their work.

Thus, in 1983 China's population growth rate dropped to 11.54 per 1,000, the first significant drop since 1979. In the intervening years the growth rate had risen, despite monumental efforts to lower it. The failure to do so was partly the result of the demographic composition of the population, of course, as well as the passage of a new marriage law in 1981 that produced a spurt of new marriages that year. More fundamentally, however, it was the result of the gap between program goals and organizational capabilities, a gap which was greatly exacerbated by the ongoing rural reform process. In that environment, the effectiveness of both administrative methods and mobilizational techniques were impaired. Similarly, the decline in 1983's growth rate was due not only to the passing of the most acute phase of the demographic crisis, but also to the most effective use of the combined techniques of regulation and mobilization since the dramatic introduction of the one-child policy in 1979.

In light of the declining population growth rates in 1983 and 1984, should the implementation of population policy be viewed as a success? Despite these more recent achievements, China failed to achieve its targeted rates of population growth in the early 1980s, and the prospect for holding the population to 1.2 billion by the year 2000 is dimming. Using these specific criteria to evaluate performance, then, one is led to conclude that implementation of the one-child-per-couple policy has been less than successful. However, if one's standard of evaluation is not the attainment of specific numerical goals, but is rather the impact of China's population-control drive in increasing the number of one-child households and dramatically reducing the number of third or more births, providing increasingly reliable family-planning services at the grass roots, and sustaining an extensive family-planning propaganda effort geared toward altering traditional childbearing attitudes and preferences, then the process of policy implementation must be considered a success. An important caveat, however, is that these achieve-

ments have come at the cost of serious negative side effects—female infanticide, the use of coercion, and violence against family-planning cadres.

Ultimately, judgment of the success or failure of population control in China must be made in light of the enormity of the task at hand: attempting to restrict most couples of childbearing age to only one child, enforcing the policy for a time span of at least two decades, and making the attempt in a developing country with a rural population of eight hundred million. From this perspective, China's failure to attain exceedingly ambitious short-term goals appears less important than the substantial gains that have been made in depressing the rate of population growth to a level much lower than would otherwise be expected. Indeed, viewed against the backdrop of a rapidly changing rural environment, one in which the mechanisms of political and economic control were destabilized and local authority patterns disrupted, these "limited" achievements are phenomenal. In short, given the myriad of generic problems in enforcing family planning, and the specific obstacles to implementation in the Chinese context, a qualified success is perhaps the best that could be expected.