

Immigration and
Refugee Board of CanadaCommission de l'immigration
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Issue Paper CHINA INTERNAL MIGRATION AND THE FLOATING POPULATION September 1998

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GLOSSARY

"blue chop" status

(blue seal, blue card) household registry status, which began in the late 1980s, allowing temporary workers to legally reside in the city

dang'an

personal dossier containing data on an individual's work, qualifications, seniority, party membership, compliance with one-child policy, etc.

danwei

work unit

guanxi

social connections, used to obtain favours

hukou

household registration in urban areas which entitled holders to grain and clothing rations, housing, health care, salaried employment, unemployment insurance, and pension

hukou bu or *huji bu*

household booklet used for identification of urban residents

hukou dengji bu

household registration book kept by the PSB to verify legitimate urban dwellers

jishi

private markets

liudong renkou

floating population (also called "blind" floater)

mangliu

[translation -blind flow] blind vagrant, blind drifter

PSB

Public Security Bureau

tongxianghui

association of people with the same birth place

1. INTRODUCTION

Since the introduction of economic and social reforms in the late 1970s, China has experienced one of the largest peacetime migrations in history—the transference of over 100 million peasant farmers from rural areas to cities (*Current History* Sept. 1996, 277; *Asian Survey* Nov. 1996, 1122; Wang 1994, 25-29; *Population et Sociétés* Jan. 1998, 1-2; AFP 3 Jan. 1998). Throughout much of the Mao era (1949-1976), internal migration was strictly controlled, with peasant farmers largely unable to move to cities and urban workers tied to their particular jobs and accommodations through the *hukou* (household registration) and *danwei* (work unit) systems, making China one of the most static societies in the world (*Asian Survey* Nov. 1996, 1141; Zhou 1996, 154; *Politics and Society* Mar. 1993, 95). Beginning in the early 1980s, however, tides of peasant farmers freed from the countryside by the dismantling of the commune system began flooding cities in the south and east, with most estimates of the size of this unregistered "floating population" now falling between 50 and 100 million people

(*Current History* Sept. 1996, 277, 282; Zhou 1996, 4-5, 137; *Zhongguo Renkou Bao* 20 Apr. 1998; *ibid.*, 13 Oct. 1997; *Asian Survey* Nov. 1996, 1133; *CRF* Summer 1996a, 4). Economic reforms have loosened state controls over mobility for urban people as well; yet while there have been modifications, the *hukou* system remains intact, creating a confused legal status for large numbers of people who have migrated without official permission (*Development and Change* 1995, 9, 25; *CRF* Summer 1996a, 4; *ibid.*, Fall 1994, 1; *The Christian Science Monitor* 2 Jan. 1996; *Politics and Society* Mar. 1993, 101). This paper will outline the history of changes in China's internal migration policies, and discuss the present regulations and practices as they affect individuals' practical abilities to move about the country and change residences, and the state's ability to control individuals, especially with regard to such issues as family planning.

2. BACKGROUND

2.1 Internal Migration Policies 1949-78

Although the new Communist government began the establishment of a system of *hukou* shortly after taking power in 1949, until 1958 Chinese citizens enjoyed a relatively free period of movement, with some 20 million peasant farmers migrating to the cities to labour in the industrialization effort of the time (Ma 1994, 193-94; *Politics and Society* Mar. 1993, 94; *Development and Change* 1995, 3). In 1958 the "People's Republic of China (PRC) Regulations on Household Registration" required citizens to register as permanent residents in their usual place of abode (*ibid.*, 3). Hein Mallee explains that

In cities and towns with a police station, household registration was the responsibility of the Public Security Bureau (PSB) which kept a household registration book (*hukou dengji bu*).... Each household received a household booklet (*hukou bu*), which could be used as a means of identification. Residents of housing or work units, schools or public dormitories had a so-called collective household registration. In these cases, the unit appointed a person to take charge of registration work. In the countryside, records were kept by the collectives, the brigade and commune, and no booklets were issued to individual households. The registers were used to record permanent residence, temporary residence, births, deaths, out-migration and in-migration (*ibid.*, 2-3).

Under the 1958 regulations, residence status is inherited through the mother, since females are generally less mobile than males and authorities wanted to limit the number of children which would be granted urban residency, and thereby limit rural-to-urban migration (*ibid.*, 4; Zhou 1996, 37-38). Agricultural status obligates a peasant to work the land and provide grain quotas to the state, but offers none of the extensive welfare benefits allotted to urban *hukou* holders: grain and clothing rations, housing, free schooling, health care, salaried employment, unemployment insurance and pensions (*ibid.*, 38-40, 140; *Current History* Sept. 1996, 278; *Asian Survey* Nov. 1996, 1141; *Zhongguo Qingnian* Jan. 1997; *The Economist* 14 Feb. 1998; Solinger 1995, 136).

The Economist calls this disparity of opportunity enforced by the *hukou* system "occupational apartheid" (14 Feb. 1998), a comparison used as well by anthropologist Dorothy Solinger, a professor of politics and society:

Like the South African pass and influx control laws, the *hukou* system absolutely determined not just where a person could live but along with that the person's entire life chances—his or her social rank, wage, welfare, food rations, and housing. Also like it, this system worked to keep city status sacred and restricted, thereby upholding the fiction that no matter how long a worker had been present in the city he or she would remain only a

temporary resident (*Politics and Society* Mar. 1993, 95).

The requirements for obtaining permission to change permanent residence were cumbersome: urban *hukou* holders moving to another city had to obtain a migration certificate from registration authorities before moving and then cancel their local *hukou* (Ma 1994, 194; see also *Development and Change* 1995, 3). On a practical level, changing cities also meant changing jobs, which entailed gaining permission from the local *danwei* and the local police, and having the police release the secret dossier (*dang'an*) which reported on a person's work and political record; party members also had to transfer their party affiliations to the party organization in the new area (Zhou 1996, 164-65). Rural residents wishing to move to a city had to

hold an employment certificate from an urban department, or be enrolled in a university, or have been granted permission by the authorities of urban household registration in the place of destination, and then [had to] apply to migrate by going through the out-migration formalities in the place of origin (Ma 1994, 194; see also *Development and Change* 1995, 3).

Nevertheless, government-directed rural-to-urban migration continued on a large scale even through the Great Leap Forward,^[1] encouraged by officials misinformed about massive crop failure brought on by a series of natural disasters and by the agricultural policies of the Great Leap (*Politics and Society* Mar. 1993, 95; Ma 1994, 194; Becker 1996, 64, 83-84; Yang 1996, 37). Subsequent mass political campaigns produced the forced relocation of millions of urbanites to rural areas—as a reaction to the famine of the early 1960s, and during the Cultural Revolution starting in 1966 when students, professionals and cadres (government officials and administrators) were transferred in large numbers to the countryside, only to return to the cities in the late 1970s when the campaign ended (Wang 1994, 27-28; Ma 1994, 195; *Politics and Society* Mar. 1993, 95; *Development and Change* 1995, 6).

For the most part, however, until the late 1970s the society was extremely static, with the state, through the *hukou* system, controlling food rationing and accommodations, ensuring that the vast majority of people stayed where they were assigned (*ibid.*, 56; *Asian Survey* Nov. 1996, 1141; Zhou 1996, 154; *Politics and Society* Mar. 1993, 95; *Zhongguo Qingnian* Jan. 1997).

2.2 Internal Migration Policies under Reform 1979-Present

In the late 1970s, the centrally-planned commune system of agriculture began to break up and be replaced by the "household production responsibility" system, which gave control of the land back to family units and freed farmers to sell excess goods in local markets after supplying the state with a grain quota (*Asian Survey* Nov. 1996, 1127; *Current History* Sept. 1996, 282-83; Zhou 1996, 4-5). Political scientist Kate Zhou argues that peasant farmers, in an unorganized, unsystematic movement, surreptitiously began disbanding the communes to take advantage of the Communist Party's 1978 concession loosening control over rural markets and allowing prices to rise (*ibid.*, 4-5). According to Zhou, when it could be clearly shown, and seen, by the early 1980s that agricultural output increased significantly when released from commune and party management, elite Beijing party members supported the movement and claimed it as a party initiative (*ibid.*, 5).

The rise in agricultural output freed enormous numbers of peasants, many of whom, even without permission, began to migrate to coastal cities in the early 1980s to sell their goods at informal markets and to work in the myriad construction projects and other enterprises starting up as a result of economic reforms (*ibid.*, 137; *Asian Survey* Nov. 1996, 1126-31; *Current History* Sept. 1996, 282; *Politics and Society* Mar. 1993, 95; *Urban Studies* 1994, 1629). In 1984 a State Council circular allowed

rural residents to move to small towns temporarily as long as they could provide their own grain and had enough capital for commercial purposes (Zhou 1996, 137; Wang 1994, 28; Ma 1994, 195-99; *Population et Sociétés* Jan. 1998, 2; *Development and Change* 1995, 14). According to Zhou, farmers seized the opportunity to move and ignored the regulation to stay in small towns (Zhou 1996, 137).

The very development of small town rural industries increased the access of rural entrepreneurs to urban areas, and the great proliferation of uncontrolled markets overwhelmed the coercive restraints implied in *hukou*. Surging markets guaranteed a source of food and goods for the surge of migrants (*ibid.*, 138).

In 1985 the PSB issued the "Provisional Regulations Concerning Management of Temporary City and Town Residents," creating two new categories of temporary urban residence permits, one for people engaged in commercial activities and one for those visiting for non-commercial reasons such as staying with relatives or seeing a doctor (*Development and Change* 1995, 13; *Zhongguo Qingnian* Jan. 1997). The new regulations extended temporary registration to small towns, and allowed temporary residents to rent housing (*Development and Change* 1995, 14).

In the late 1980s many cities began selling "blue household registry status" which varied from one city to another in the privileges given, but generally allowed temporary workers to legally reside in the city and freed them from the obligation to provide the state with a grain quota (*Zhongguo Qingnian* Jan. 1997; *Development and Change* 1995, 15-16; Zhou 1996, 169-70). For example, in the Special Economic Zone in Shenzhen, "blue chop" (blue seal, blue card) registration status is available to "non-Shenzhen citizens under the age of 45 with tertiary, postsecondary or technical qualifications who have respectively held temporary status for one, two or three years" (*Zhongguo Xinwen She* 30 Dec. 1995). The "blue chop" status grants holders in Shenzhen a full range of social security and medical benefits, and enables them to apply for permanent resident status after three years (*ibid.*).

Blue card holders revert to their old agricultural status should they try to move to a different city, while the regular urban *hukou* allows for transfer to other cities (*Development and Change* 1995, 15-16). Not only are intermediate status blue cards for sale in many cities, but so too are regular urban *hukou*, which run as high as 50,000 *yuan* (CDN\$10,400) in Beijing down to a few thousand *yuan* in smaller cities (Zhou 1996, 140; *The Economist* 14 Feb. 1998; Solinger 1995, 126; *Development and Change* 1995, 15). A black market exists for *hukou* sales, and corruption among officials is said to be rampant (Solinger 1995, 126; Zhou 1996, 140). The price of a *hukou* and of any corresponding bribe depends on the size and prestige of the city, with *hukou* sales providing up to 40 per cent of government revenues in some counties (*ibid.*, 140-42). Zhou reports that more than one million farmers have bought blue cards in Guangdong Province (*ibid.*, 169). However, Zhou also remarks that:

Many migrants who are not wealthy enough to buy *hukou* or the blue card try not to be noticed. Many go to the cities without the registration that the state requires. Chinese social scientists point out that 60 percent of rural migrants in Chengdu City, Sichuan, do not register, while in Guangzhou, the capital of Guangdong, fewer than one-third of migrants register at all (*ibid.*, 170).

The Christian Science Monitor adds that in Beijing "only one-sixth of the migrants have official employment papers, and only one-third hold residency permits [*hukou* or the blue card]" (2 Jan. 1996), while a Chinese press source indicates that perhaps only as few as 10 per cent of transients who arrive in Shanghai have the proper paperwork (*Shehui* Sept. 1995).

Sources indicate that despite greater opportunities to purchase some form of urban *hukou*, it is

common for rural migrants to maintain close ties with their home villages and even continue their participation in rural labour for part of the year (*Urban Studies* 1994, 1641; *Development and Change* 1995, 15; Ma 1994, 205; *Politics and Society* Mar. 1993, 100). This strategy allows individuals, usually single males, to take advantage of risky money-making opportunities in the city while maintaining, through the family, the security of providing their own food (*ibid.*, *Development and Change* 1995, 15).

NOTE

[1] The Great Leap Forward was launched by Mao and the Communist Party of China (CCP) in late 1957 as a massive communal industrial and agricultural effort designed to increase China's wealth, output and international standing extremely quickly. It coincided with an anti-rightist campaign against government critics, ensuring that no dissenting voices would be heard. On the contrary, inflated statistics regarding industrial and agricultural output were commonly put forward to and by officials (Becker 1996, 63-64, 70, 83-84; Yang 1996, 33-38). As Yang explains, "rural commune mess halls were encouraged to supply food for free, [and] state [grain] procurement was sharply increased on the basis of forecast output, since the logical conclusion from the output claims was that China had solved its grain problem. By the spring of 1959, however, many communes, caught between higher [government] procurement and free supply, had exhausted their grain reserves. Production plummeted and famine began to appear, especially in areas that had pursued the Great Leap Forward with great intensity" (1996, 37). The famine resulted in the deaths of between 16 to 30 million peasants (Yang 1996, 37-38; Becker 1996, 85-86; Zhou 1996, 3).

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3. THE FLOATING POPULATION

3.1 Description

The term "floating population" (*liudong renkou*) refers to "persons staying away from their place of registration without having transferred their hukou" (*ibid.*, 23; see also *Asian Survey* Nov. 1996, 1133; *CRF* Summer 1996a, 4; *Politics and Society* Mar. 1993, 97). As Cheng Li explains, the floating population is not only made up of rural workers going to cities, but also includes:

children, aging people, and non-agricultural workers who flow from one place to the other, including urban-to-urban, rural-to-rural, and urban-to-rural areas.... This category would include temporary residents, contract rural workers, short-term visitors, people on business trips, and so on. Not all floaters are on the move; some stay in the same place for years (*Asian Survey* Nov. 1996, 1133).

A more derogatory term that is sometimes used is mangliu, literally "blind flow,"^[2] but also "vagrant," which evokes the derision, suspicion and fear with which many permanent residents regard the transients (*Development and Change* 1995, 23; *Current History* Sept. 1996, 277; see also Solinger 1995, 121; *Renkou Yanjiu* 29 July 1996).

Estimates of the size of the floating population vary widely, from a figure of about 30 million reported by the State Council Development Research Centre (*Zhongguo Renkou Bao* 24 Apr. 1998; see also *Zhongguo Xinwen She* 19 Feb. 1997) to as many as 100 million or more reported by Western analysts (AFP 11 Mar. 1998; *The New York Times* 17 Aug. 1997; *CRF* Summer 1996a, 4; *Current History* Sept. 1996, 277; *Country Reports* 1997 1998, 728). Figures from the late 1980s indicate transients making up over one-fifth of the population of such major cities as Beijing, Shanghai, and Guangzhou (*Asian Survey* Nov. 1996, 1136).

The majority—some 60 per cent according to a 1990 nationwide survey of large cities—move from the countryside to urban areas looking for work, with the rest moving between cities (*ibid.*, 1133, 1137; *Politics and Society* Mar. 1993, 98; *Zhongguo Xinwen She* 19 Feb. 1997; Scharping 1997, 42-43). Young, single males make up the greatest proportion of these transients, but figures vary, from

55 per cent male to well over 80 per cent depending on the source and sample being measured (Xinhua 3 Apr. 1998; *Asian Survey* Nov. 1996, 1137; *Renkou Yanjiu* 29 July 1996; *Zhongguo Renkou Bao* 15 July 1996; *Politics and Society* Mar. 1993, 98; Solinger 1995, 119). For example, Solinger reported Ministry of Construction statistics for Beijing which find 87 per cent of transients to be male (ibid., 119), while the Beijing Municipal Bureau reports that males make up only about 63 per cent of the Beijing transient population (*Zhongguo Renkou Bao* 15 July 1996). In Shenzhen and Foshan in Guangdong Province, however, female migrants outnumbered males in a 1993 survey, a finding explained by the dominance of "labour-intensive electronic and processing industries [which]...need a plentiful labour force, especially young women" (Scharping 1997, 87).

One of the problems in measuring the floating population is its changing nature: in Guangzhou, for example, some 10 million transients regularly move in and out of the city during spring festival (*Nanfang Ribao* 17 Jan. 1998).

Sources indicate that the current floating population is only the tip of the iceberg: the countryside holds another 120-200 million surplus labourers who are being increasingly drawn to urban areas in the south and east (*Asian Survey* Nov. 1996, 1133-1134; *The Christian Science Monitor* 2 Jan. 1996; *FEER* 15 Jan 1998, 46; *Jingji Cankao Bao* 4 Apr. 1998). While China's rural population has declined from some 80 per cent of the country's total population in 1980, it still stands at about 65 to 70 per cent of nearly 1.3 billion people, and economic projections indicate that China's cities and industrialized township areas will have a very hard time providing employment for such a huge reservoir of people^[3] (*The Christian Science Monitor* 2 Jan. 1996; AFP 3 Jan. 1998; *Jingji Cankao Bao* 4 Apr. 1998; *FEER* 15 Jan. 1998, 44-47).

3.2 Employment

For the most part transients take up work that urban residents do not want to do—often difficult, dirty, exhausting labour such as construction, street cleaning, recycling garbage, brick laying, repairing items, and toiling in sweatshop factories (Zhou 1996, 148-50; *Current History* Sept. 1997, 265; *Politics and Society* Mar. 1993, 98; Solinger 1995, 115; *Asian Survey* Nov. 1996, 1132). Often they work as day labourers "one-day mules ... who gather on street corners early in the morning to compete for jobs" (*Current History* Sept. 1997, 265).

In her 1995 article Solinger cites a "major government study of seven of China's biggest municipalities" which found that about 30 per cent of the floating population in large cities work on construction sites, another 22 per cent peddle goods in produce markets, 18.5 per cent work in "household service," as nursemaids for example, some 6 per cent repair such items as shoes, bicycles, pots and pans, and knives and another 21.7 per cent do "other types of hired labour" (Solinger 1995, 114-15).

Solinger divides migrants workers into two groups. The first is the small minority with either the money or the social connections (*guanxi*) to break into the regular urban life of the privileged *hukou* holder; the second group, in the vast majority, end up in exhausting, dead-end labour that keeps them marginalized despite their move to the city or town (ibid., 115-26, 128 29).

Offering a somewhat different view, Zhou acknowledges the difficult, lowly-status of much of this work, but emphasizes the entrepreneurial, risk-taking spirit of many of the migrants who analyze the myriad needs of city dwellers and then find ways to fill them, often in the face of local regulations (1996, 148-49). One example she gives is the creation of private markets (*jishi*) beginning in the early 1980s. In many localities city officials worked to close down or restrict these markets to certain areas,

but Zhou argues that these types of regulations actually gave the migrants a legal status that had not been there before, and that local governments came to depend on the revenues from fees and fines paid by rural entrepreneurs operating in the markets (*ibid.*, 149-50).

In March 1996 Xinhua reported on the establishment in Zhejiang Province of a "complete employment system" which includes over 1,000 job placement agencies licensed for operation in cities, townships and villages (20 Mar. 1996). Over half of the 1,800 townships and villages in the province have employment agencies, according to the report (*ibid.*). As well, *Fazhi Ribao*, a Beijing newspaper, reported the development of "a labor service coordination system" for transient labourers in "several large regions" of the country (10 Sept. 1997). The article makes clear, however, that regulation and control of transient labour are priorities of this system rather than finding them appropriate work (*ibid.*).

For the most part migrants do not get work through agencies or official channels but through word of mouth and personal connections, often having to do with shared geographical origins (Zhou 1996, 151-53; *Politics and Society* Mar. 1993, 102-103; Scharping 1997, 47). Zhou reports on the revival of *tongxianghui*, (association of people with the same birth place):

Rural migrants spread information about jobs, housing, and other services among themselves. In every city, especially the big cities, certain parts of the city are so dominated by rural migrants from one province they are known as a village of that province. They often dominate all services and commerce in one district, usually without formal organization or formal leadership (1996, 152-53).

Zhejiang Village, a centre for the tailoring trade in Beijing, is a prominent example of an area dominated by migrants from one particular location—Zhejiang Province—but Beijing has also been home to villages of people from Henan, Jiangsu, Sichuan, Xinjiang, and many other areas (*ibid.*, 151; *CRF* Summer 1996a, 4, 7; see also *The Christian Science Monitor* 2 Jan. 1996). Solinger gives other examples across the country:

People from Nantong in Jiangsu congregate along particular streets in Xinjiang's Changji District, Heilongjiang's Daqing and in Shanghai. In most districts of Shanghai, floaters from Jiangsu predominate. In Urumqi as of late 1989, a 'blind floaters' village' was said to house 27,000 migrants from the central 'inland' part of the country. Near Zhongshan University on the outskirts of Guangzhou, a whole village of 10,000 peasants had rented 2,000 rooms from the locals and outnumbered them by a ratio of three to one. Squatter settlements graced several other areas of the city; three or four separate ones could be found in the Baiyun District in the late 1980s, sheltering people from Sichuan, Hunan and Guangxi provinces (*CRF* Summer 1996a, 7).

Conditions and terms of work for migrants vary considerably, although a number of sources stress Dickensian conditions of low pay, long hours, forced overtime, insecurity, few benefits, victimization, and hazardous working environments resulting in thousands of work-related deaths each year (*Current History* Sept. 1997, 267; *CRF* Fall 1994, 2-3; *Modern China* Apr. 1995, 166-67). Meisner adds that "living conditions are primitive, often in unhygienic factory dormitories, ... workers are often preyed upon by greedy bureaucrats demanding payment of newly invented fees" and "many workers are young teenagers [who] along with female labourers in general, are pitilessly victimized by owners and managers" (*Current History* Sept. 1997, 267). Meisner also notes that "while there are national and local laws limiting the length of the workday and prohibiting abuses such as child labour, the laws are rarely enforced" (*ibid.*).

Crushing workloads are common: Mobo C.F. Gao reports 1994 Guangdong Provincial Trade Union (GPTU) survey results that found that:

"60 per cent [of migrant labourers] worked seven days a week, more than 49 per cent worked ten to 12 hours a day and 51 per cent did more than three hours' overtime; one factory in Longhuazhen made workers perform 244 hours of overtime a month" (*CRF Fall 1994*, 3).

In January 1995 the Chinese government promulgated a new labour law permitting a maximum of three hours of overtime per day, but many migrants reportedly work longer than that (Scharping 1997, 64).

Gao visited 40 enterprises in three southern provinces in the summer of 1993 and found that even when contracts existed, they often stressed the obligations of employees rather than those of the employer^[4] (*CRF Fall 1994*, 2-3). Gao also reported that mistreatment of transient workers is common, with workers being beaten by management, and managers collecting and controlling identity cards, locking the windows and doors of factories, and levying fines for going to the toilet, being sick, or failing to do overtime (*ibid.*). Many enterprises also collect a range of deposits from new contract workers for such things as security, tools, insurance against resignation, and residence permits, which leave the workers indebted to the enterprise from the beginning (*ibid.*).

Migrant labour has penetrated many different types of enterprises^[5] and Solinger reports a range of treatment depending upon the organization (*Modern China Apr. 1995*, 160-177). She found that in general migrant labourers fortunate enough to be employed in state-run enterprises^[6] met with better work conditions than those employed in the non-state sector (*ibid.*, 165). According to a 1991 State Council document cited by Solinger, contract labourers in state-run enterprises are supposed to receive many of the same bonuses, holidays, pay rates and benefits as the permanent workers (*ibid.*, 161). Solinger's personal research into state-run firms reveals a range of labour practices regarding contract workers: some enterprises lay off a sick employee (usually after giving a lump sum payment of three months' salary), and provide no insurance or housing; others have subsidized factory clinics and hospitals, provide insurance, and have regularized hours to match regular tenured workers. Some firms provide free medical care but no wages for minor illnesses, and send workers home without pay for major ones; still others can afford to be more generous so that wages and benefits for contract staff approach those for regular staff (*ibid.*, 163-64).

According to Solinger, the poorest conditions were generally in the non-state sector, with a litany of problems that she equates with the worst abuses of 19th century laissez-faire capitalism (*ibid.*, 166-68). The November 1993 factory fire in Shenzhen that killed some 83 peasant workers who had been locked in is one of the worst examples of the unregulated nightmare of labour conditions experienced by many migrant workers (*ibid.*, 167; *CRF Fall 1994*, 3). In September 1997 another fire, in a shoe factory in Jinjiang City, Fujian, killed 32 people who, contrary to fire ordinances, were living at the factory; as in Shenzhen, the doors and windows had been locked and secured by iron bars (*Zhongguo Xinwen She* 22 Sept. 1997).

Interviews conducted by Solinger with managers at a number of firms indicate the cost savings made by hiring temporary migrant labourers: there is no insurance to pay, young workers are less likely to get ill and are expected to depart before getting old; there is no need to set up schools, nurseries, or day cares, or to provide maternity leave when workers are required to be unmarried and childless; housing is very cheap when six or more live in one room; and workers are only paid for the

time they work (*Modern China* Apr. 1995, 170).

Solinger reports that although various levels of government have set forth regulations on labour practices, there is a wide variation between enterprises regarding whether the regulations are implemented and how strictly they are followed (*ibid.*, 171). Foreign-funded firms in particular often escape regulation or inspection, and most of these firms refuse to allow the establishment of trade unions (*ibid.*, 172-73). Along with the generally poor conditions of work faced by transient workers, the labour situation in China also suffers from massive lay-offs in unprofitable state-run enterprises and rampant corruption amongst officials (*FEER* 15 Jan. 1998, 44-46; *ibid.*, 26 June 1997, 14; HRIC 16 July 1997; *CRF* Summer 1997, np; *Sunday Times* 19 Oct. 1997).

3.3 Housing and Accommodations

During the Mao era public housing was promoted over private in urban areas, and this system still dominates in cities (*CRF* Summer 1996b, 1-2). In rural areas, as Wenfang Tang describes, "housing has always been built by each household and privately-owned—although its sale is not permitted" (*ibid.*, 1). Urban housing now features ownership by various levels of government as well as the *danweis*, with only a small percentage of rental and borrowed units available outside this system (*ibid.*, 2; Solinger 1995, 133). Urban rents are still largely subsidized by the state, and although the government is trying to raise rents to more accurately reflect the cost of housing, regular hukou-holding urban residents still commonly pay only about 5 per cent of their salaries towards rent (*CRF* Summer 1996b, 2, 4; see also Scharping 1997, 32-33).

Most housing is distributed through the *danwei* by a housing assignment committee, which measures such factors as years of employment and years of membership in the work unit, education, family planning status, age of children and number of generations living together, military service, minority status and whether one is a "returned overseas Chinese" (*CRF* Summer 1996b, 2-3). Need and seniority are the priorities (*ibid.*). But, as Wenfang Tang explains, corruption is also a common factor:

Some families conceal the fact that they have already been assigned an apartment by another work unit in order to get a new one. Bribery of housing assignment committee members is common. High-ranking officials are allocated more living space, and some even get an apartment at each place they work. After three job changes, the family will have three apartments for the parents and their children. The extra space is not a financial burden on such a family since the rent is so low. Some of these apartments remain vacant for a long time while other families have no place to stay (*ibid.*, 3).

Transients moving into a city or town often face a housing shortage, due to government policies against renting out publicly owned living spaces to non-*hukou* holders and against occupying land or building or buying houses unless one is already an urban resident or a "returning overseas Chinese" (*CRF* Summer 1996a, 4). However, in parts of China there is also a construction boom. As Tang explains, housing regulations and practices vary considerably across the country: "Privatization is more common in southern cities and small cities and towns than in large and more centrally controlled cities" (*CRF* Summer 1996b, 5; see also Scharping 1997, 32-33). *Fazhi Ribao* reports that some areas of Guangdong, Jiangsu and Fujian provinces have even been able to build housing for the floating population (10 Sept. 1997).

Many transients end up living on the outskirts of urban areas in suburbs which might remain officially agricultural but offer an easy commute into the city by bicycle (Zhou 1996, 145-46; *CRF* Summer 1996a, 5-6; *The Christian Science Monitor* 2 Jan. 1996; *Politics and Society* Mar. 1993, 99).

Transients will quietly rent a room from a farmer who will not ask for identification papers and will not report the income for tax purposes; these practices are technically illegal but fairly common since both the farmer and the resident stand to gain, as do corrupt local officials likely to accept bribes (Zhou 1996, 146; *CRF* Summer 1996a, 6). According to Solinger, about 40 per cent of transients either rent in this way or else stay with relatives (1995, 133). Solinger further explains:

Another 20 percent [of migrant workers] are in collective unit shelters (this would relate mainly to workers in factory dormitories, but might include those in temporary work shacks at construction sites as well). A further 20 percent stay in hotels (including the many private inns and 'underground hotels' that have cropped up everywhere in China today, many of which make ideal residences for peddlers and others in town for relatively brief commercial sojourns), hostels or hospitals.

The remaining 20 percent are in 'various other places.' According to my research, these 'other' places include a wide array of miserable hovels, such as squatter settlements, train stations, on the streets, under the eaves, under bridges, in free markets (a common practice for vegetable and egg peddlers is to lie on a plank under plastic sheeting inside their marketplace), on boats or wharves, in bathhouses, in public toilet stalls, in garbage dumps, on dormitory stairs, or along the river banks (*ibid.*, 133-34).

According to Solinger, only a small percentage of floaters exist with the "three withouts"—no legal papers, no profession, and no home—mostly scraping by as beggars and scrap collectors (*Politics and Society* Mar. 1993, 104; see also *CRF* Summer 1996a, 5-6; *Shehui* Sept. 1995).

The most visible homes for transients are in shantytowns and squatter communities built without permission on the outskirts of major cities (*ibid.*, 5; *ibid.*, Fall 1994, 1; *The Christian Science Monitor* 2 Jan. 1996; Solinger 1995, 134; *Current History* Sept. 1997, 265; *The Economist* 14 Feb. 1998). These communities are often described as run-down and ramshackle, providing rudimentary or nonexistent services and dominated by informal organizations likely to be more affiliated with local gangs than municipal officials (*The Christian Science Monitor* 2 Jan. 1996; *CRF* Summer 1996a, 7, 29; see also *ibid.*, Fall 1994, 1, 5). According to Zhou, once established, migrants set up satellite villages around the suburbs, which "became centers of rural enterprises, most of which operated without permission from the state" (1996, 146-47). For example, despite not having business licences, many factories have been routinely built and clandestinely operated in these satellite villages (*ibid.*).

Accommodations provided to migrant workers by employers are often bleak (*CRF* Fall 1994, 1). According to Gao:

The best living conditions for migrant workers are those in factory dormitories, generally rooms of ten to 16 square meters shared by ten to 16 people of the same sex. The only privacy is afforded by a mosquito net, while each individual's belongings are placed on the bed or under it. The beds are double-deck wooden structures for which the workers bring their own bedding. One bulb hangs in the middle of the room. Workers have to pay for this lodging, usually 30 *yuan* [CDN\$6.30] a month. They cannot have their families with them.... Dormitories usually have a communal bathroom in which workers line up to have a shower in summer or a wash in winter. For those who build their own shelters there may not be a tap nearby, in which case they have to fetch water from a well or a distant tap, and there are no toilets. A furniture workshop I visited looked like a dump: about 30 migrant workers had built shelters around the workshop. They got all their water from a well (*ibid.*).

Gao also found that the food provided in factory canteens was uniformly drab: "rice porridge with pickled vegetables for breakfast, some steamed rice with a seasonal vegetable mixed with a few pieces of fatty pork for lunch and the same for supper" (ibid., 1-2). According to Gao workers complained of malnutrition and of having to supplement with their own food to eat properly, and hygiene standards were not met at most factory canteens (ibid., 2). Since 1986 however, grain has officially been allowed to be bought and sold in open markets without hukou-distributed ration coupons, and reports indicate that since the early 1990s good harvests and open food markets have undermined the coupon system to such an extent that many provinces no longer use the coupons (*Politics and Society* Mar. 1993, 96; *Development and Change* 1995, 9; Zhou 1996, 144). Thus even migrants with no access to *hukou* are able to buy food in markets at generally affordable prices (ibid., 138; *Zhongguo Qingnian* Jan. 1997; see also *Economic Development and Cultural Change* Jan. 1997, 322).

3.4 Education and Health Care

It has been estimated that there are some 20 million school-aged children among the transient population (*Fazhi Ribao* 10 Sept. 1997). In March 1998 Agence France Presse (AFP) cited a *China Daily* article to the effect that 2.5 million of these children cannot access schools in China's cities (11 Mar. 1998). Apparently many schools refuse to accept children whose parents do not have temporary urban residence permits; city authorities expect they would get an even greater influx of migrants if they allowed these children to attend school (ibid.). Those schools that do accept the children of migrants have reportedly been charging at least twice the normal tuition, leaving education beyond the grasp of many families (ibid.; Solinger 1995, 132-33). According to Solinger, some families prefer to have their children work at odd jobs rather than pay the high school fees (ibid.). According to a March 1998 *China Daily* report carried by AFP, new regulations from the State Education Commission and the PSB forbid schools from charging higher fees for non-residents; as well, education services and enterprises are being encouraged to provide schools for migrants and their families (AFP 11 Mar. 1998). In 1996 the State Education Commission set up pilot projects in Beijing, Shanghai, Guangdong, Zhejiang, Hebei and other areas to promote school attendance by children of migrant families, and eventually a national program is expected (*Fazhi Ribao* 10 Sept. 1997).

For now, however, the absence from school of many children of migrant families has affected vaccination rates (AFP 9 Jan. 1998; *Xinhua* 5 Dec. 1997). In December 1997 the Chinese Ministry of Health announced plans to vaccinate some 60 million four-year-olds against polio, with a special focus on children in border or poverty-stricken areas and children of migrant families (ibid.). In the general population, schools usually ensure that children get the requisite vaccinations (AFP 9 Jan. 1998).

Health care is normally covered through the *danwei* for the holders of urban *hukou* (Ma Xia 1994, 211; *The Economist* 14 Feb. 1998; *Current History* Sept. 1996, 278; *Jingji Cankao Bao* 4 Apr. 1998). According to Solinger, in large cities only about 25 to 40 per cent of migrant labourers have medical coverage, with treatment very much dependent on the type of enterprise for which one is working, its management, and what the enterprise can afford (*Modern China* Apr. 1995, 162; see also Scharping 1997, 66). As reported above, generally contract workers in state-owned enterprises receive much better benefits than those in the non-state sector (*Modern China* Apr. 1995, 166-70; see also *CRF* Fall 1994, 4). According to Solinger, migrants not covered by medical insurance are on their own (*CRF* Summer 1996a, 6-7):

The more desperate must throw themselves at the mercy of the city, which, if they are fortunate, might help out. One city's public health bureau claimed that in emergencies individuals would be treated immediately with payment collected later. If the patient had no work unit—which is the case for most floaters—he or she would be expected to pay. But few

have the funds to reimburse the clinic, officials acknowledged, and would probably never pay back the debt. Other migrants are said to rely on travelling doctors with questionable credentials (*ibid.*, 7).

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[2] Wang Liying of the PSB explains that the term "blind" is used because most of the transients follow others to find jobs without first investigating the demands of the labour market. If they are unable to find employment they move on to another place without any definite leads (*Renkou Yanjiu* 29 July 1996). Solinger notes that some people prey on the naïveté of newcomers and encourage criminal and exploitative activities, according to Chinese sociologists who have studied them (1995, 130). [\[back\]](#)

[3] Officially, unemployment in China stands at only 3 to 4 per cent, but this figure does not include rural surplus labour, surplus labour in inefficient state enterprises which are under heavy pressure to make enormous job cuts, or members of the floating population (*FEER* 15 Jan. 1998, 46; *Sunday Times* 19 Oct. 1997; *Jingji Cankao Bao* 4 Apr. 1998). [\[back\]](#)

[4] Gao cites a Shenzhen feather factory contract with two management obligations—providing for pay and lodging—and fifteen employee obligations, which include "having a physical exam; paying insurance and tool deposits; obeying the management and the factory's regulations; and agreeing to dismissal in case of failure to report to work for more than three days, or if the worker contracted a contagious disease, other illness or work-related injury. The contract also said that if a worker broke factory rules three times he could be fired. While the factory can lay off a worker at any time, the worker has to apply for approval in advance of 15 days' notice if he or she intends to leave" (*CRF* Fall 1994, 2). [\[back\]](#)

[5] Zhou, for example, reports that even many cash-strapped state-run enterprises have resorted to hiring transient contract workers to boost cost-effectiveness (1996, 159-60). They have also rented out their facilities to increase revenue (*ibid.*, 150-52). According to Zhou, "the development of *jishi* and [the] renting [of retail space to them] [has] left the state in control of less than 10 percent of all retail businesses" (*ibid.*, 152). While the practice of large-scale renting out of state-owned enterprises was made illegal in 1991, it has continued due to the profitability of such ventures and because the state is unwilling and/or unable to prop up these enterprises in any other way (*ibid.*). [\[back\]](#)

[6] Zhou explains that in the *danwei* system of state-run enterprises, pay is not tied to performance but to seniority, so there is little incentive to work hard, and few permanent workers are willing to do dirty, difficult or strenuous tasks (1996, 159). Thus despite massive surplus labour in state-run enterprises, many of these enterprises have hired contract transient labourers in order to get the work done (*ibid.*, 159). Zhou quotes a popular saying in Shanghai: "The party secretary controls the direction; [the] urban workers play around; the work is left to the rural hicks" (*ibid.*, 160). [\[back\]](#)

4. EFFORTS AT STATE CONTROL

4.1 Permits, Crackdowns, Crime

Migrant workers moving to cities are obligated to have or obtain three cards: a work permit, a temporary household registration card, and an identification card (*Asian Survey* Nov. 1996, 1142; *Fazhi Ribao* 10 Sept. 1997; *Shehui* Sept. 1995). As Solinger explains:

'Temporary residents' are expected to arrive in town with documentation from officials in their home village. This must be presented to the urban public security bureau, which then issues a temporary residence card. Possession of this card is supposedly mandatory before a person can be granted a licence to labor or to engage in commercial work (*Politics and Society* Mar. 1993, 101).

However, many migrants reportedly fail to register, and, according to Solinger, it is also "apparently a relatively simple matter to obtain, forge, and alter residence certificates, and one way of doing this is to bribe officials responsible for adding newcomers to the household registry" (*ibid.*). Indeed, a 1995 poll in Shanghai found that only 10 per cent of transients had their paperwork in order (*Shehui* Sept. 1995; see also Scharping 1997, 89), while nationally in 1995, according to a PSB official,

barely half of the estimated 80 million among the floating population were registered with the PSB (*Renkou Yanjiu* 29 July 1996). However, one Chinese source reported much better compliance rates after concerted government efforts to coordinate management of the floating population: according to official figures, by 1996, 76.5 per cent of the transient population in Shanghai held "Temporary Resident Certificates," while over 80 per cent of outside workers in Fujian held employment certificates (*Fazhi Ribao* 10 Sept. 1997).

Increasingly, Chinese Communist Party-run management committees dedicated to controlling the transient population are being formed at the national, provincial, county, municipal, and even neighbourhood levels (*ibid.*; *Shehui* Sept. 1995; Xinhua 29 Dec. 1997; *ibid.*, 18 Feb. 1997). In December 1997 Xinhua reported on a special campaign, which since July 1997, has focused on checking houses for rent (29 Dec. 1997). In Beijing over 3,700 houses which encroached on public land or facilities such as roads, and which were being rented, were dismantled and some 641 owners were fined. Authorities in Shandong Province found nearly 18,000 households engaged in unauthorized renting (*ibid.*). In 1996 officials in Guangdong cracked down on unregistered migrants, "clearing out and repatriating nearly 60,000 persons and getting nearly 40,000 individuals to return to their home areas voluntarily," according to *Fazhi Ribao* (10 Sept. 1997). Beijing's migrant communities, most notably Zhejiang Village, have been the subject of a number of clean-ups over the years: authorities have moved some 18,000 people from Zhejiang Village's Dahongmen district and torn down 10,000 illegal structures (*ibid.*; *CRF* Summer 1996a, 7, 29; *The Christian Science Monitor* 2 Jan. 1996; *Asian Survey* Nov. 1996, 1123; see also *Politics and Society* Mar. 1993, 106).

In Shanghai, efforts to monitor and control housing and repatriation of transients involve several different government departments: "the public security departments handle the housing, civil administration departments are responsible for managing education, and public security, civil administration, the people's armed police, the railways, and other departments handle escort duties jointly" (*Fazhi Ribao* 10 Sept. 1997). In a 29 July 1996 article Wang Liying of the Jilin Province PSB complains about the lack of coordination between different departments monitoring the floating population, and about the very poor communications between the areas that the migrants are leaving and the areas to which they are going (*Renkou Yanjiu* 29 July 1996). One 1995 study in Jilin Province found that authorities in the home localities ignored nearly three-quarters of requests for information from the provinces to which the migrants had moved (*ibid.*).

Local officials may not be very motivated to put a stop to out-migration: not only does it ease local labour and population pressures, but remittances from migrant labourers to their families in home areas have become significant sources of local income (*Shehui* Sept. 1995; *Politics and Society* Mar. 1993, 107). Corrupt officials reportedly participate in issuing false documents to ease the way of people wishing to leave (*ibid.*; *Shehui* Sept. 1995). Even provincial governments have protested efforts to repatriate transient migrants from Beijing (*The Christian Science Monitor* 2 Jan. 1996; *Politics and Society* Mar. 1993, 107).

Solinger also points to the difficulties bureaucracies are having to coordinate the management of the floating population. She argues that there are so many accounts of offices being unable to clear out or manage the floating population "that it becomes clear that these offices stand to gain from their presence" (*ibid.*, 105). According to Solinger:

The units served by the floaters range from management departments to urban governments at various levels, to the banks, labor departments, and even the public security offices. As in any situation where bureaucratic rules are present, those with the

power to oversee these rules are in a position to collect. Bribery is common, and its beneficiaries include not just the managing departments, which excessively demand payments, but also offices not authorized to take fees, such as the public security and the labor department itself (ibid., 106).

The floating population has been blamed for a rise in crime rates in many cities, and police reportedly target them to a greater degree than they do permanent residents (*Asian Survey* Nov. 1996, 1138-39; *Shehui* Sept. 1995; *Politics and Society* Mar. 1993, 105; *Fazhi Ribao* 10 Sept. 1997). Ministry of Public Security figures reported in *Asian Survey* in November 1996 claim that "In Shanghai, Beijing, and Tianjin, migrants committed 50 percent of the crimes; in Guangzhou and Shenzhen, over 80 percent" (1139; see also *HongKong Standard* 11 Dec. 1995). Cheng Li reports that migrants are often treated as scapegoats, and that many of those put to death in larger anti-crime campaigns in China are migrants who have not received a proper trial (*Asian Survey* Nov. 1996, 1139).

Also there has been a reported rise in organized crime involving migrants (ibid.; *Shehui* Sept. 1995). Among their activities are "gang leasing and borrowing of houses and shops to set up underground workshops where they make and sell phoney cigarettes, alcohol, soy sauce, invoices, and train tickets" (ibid.). A September 1997 article reports that Beijing authorities cracked down in Zhejiang Village and arrested people for theft, drug use and trafficking, weapons possession, prostitution and pornography (*Fazhi Ribao* 10 Sept. 1997).

There have been incidents of backlash by residents against migrants (*Asian Survey* Nov. 1996, 1123). In December 1995, for example, security forces opened fire in Shenzhen to quell a riot between some 500 migrant workers and several hundred local residents; several people were killed in the brawl and many more injured (ibid., 1123-24; *HongKong Standard* 11 Dec. 1995; ibid., 6 Dec. 1995; *SCMP* 6 Dec. 1995). Chinese authorities refused to comment on the specific cause of the riot, but tensions between locals and migrants were reportedly long-standing (*HongKong Standard* 6 Dec. 1995; *SCMP* 6 Dec. 1995).

4.2 Family Planning

Chinese authorities have long complained about lack of control over the transient population regarding family planning (Zhou 1996, 191-96; AFP 5 Mar. 1998; *The New York Times* 17 Aug. 1997; Renkou Yu Jingji 25 Jan. 1998; see also *Asian Survey* Nov. 1996, 1139; Solinger 1995, 120). Since its launch in the late 1970s, the one-child policy has been markedly more successful in urban rather than rural areas (Zhou 1996, 178-181; *Population et Sociétés* Jan. 1998, 5-6; *The New York Times* 17 Aug. 1997). In urban areas the *danwei* traditionally controls not only employment but also housing, social benefits and the *dang'an*, leaving officials with many levers to pressure families into compliance (ibid.; *Asian Survey* Mar. 1996, 248; Zhou 1996, 154). However increased job mobility has eroded the traditional strength of the *danwei* by giving workers more choice—many professionals, for example, now moonlight with contract jobs in the private sector on weekends or evenings, and *The Economist* reports that personal dossiers have become irrelevant in many private-sector firms^[2] (14 Feb. 1998; *Asian Survey* Mar. 1996, 249-50; Zhou 1996, 164-67). However, in general, family planning for permanent residents in large cities is still tightly controlled: urban birth rates remain low, permission to have even a first child can be difficult to obtain, penalties for second children can include job loss and heavy fines, and some areas have launched pilot projects to computerize family planning management, which in urban *danweis*, has included tracking female workers' menstrual cycles (*Zhongguo Renkou Bao* 15 July 1996; *Courrier international* 16-22 Oct. 1997; *The New York Times* 17 Aug. 1997; Renkou Yu Jingji 25 Jan. 1998; Zhou 1996, 178-79; *The Sunday Telegraph* 14 June 1998).

In the countryside however, the shift to the household production responsibility system in the late 1970s, freed individuals from commune control, increased family incomes and made migration to avoid family planning officials a possibility (Zhou 1996, 181, 185-86; *Population et Sociétés* Jan. 1998, 6). In 1984, after massive non-compliance in the countryside, a shift in regulations allowed a second child in many rural families (Zhou 1996, 194; *Population et Sociétés* Jan. 1998, 7; *Le Monde* 7 Mar. 1998). In practice, according to Zhou, this meant nearly all rural families felt free to go ahead and have a second child (Zhou 1996, 194).

Zhou also documents the rise of informal "underground railways": networks of relatives and friends who help women travel to different locations to hide from family planning officials and give birth (ibid., 189-93). Some villages have become birth hiding places, where locals rent out rooms and provide services for pregnant women on the run (ibid., 191-92). According to Zhou, local officials in the countryside collaborate in covering up this type of policy evasion (ibid.). As well, many rural women go to cities to have unauthorized children despite the stricter enforcement of family planning in cities; for migrants the controls are much looser, since most do not work in enterprises with *danwei*, and most are not dependent on *hukou* for accommodations or food (ibid., 192-93; *The New York Times* 17 Aug. 1997; Renkou Yu Jingji 25 Jan. 1998). In Shanghai the rate of unauthorized births is thirty times greater among the floating population than among permanent residents; in total, some 1 million "black" or unregistered children are born among the floating population every year (*Asian Survey* Nov. 1996, 1139; *Current History* Sept. 1996, 282; *Politics and Society* Mar. 1993, 105).

An article in Renkou Yu Jingji sums up the problems for family planning officials in dealing with new labour force realities:

The army of urban migrants is huge in size and complex in diversity. In addition to peasants moving into the cities, there are all manner of fund-raising households, self-managed grain households, demolition and relocation households, personnel in development zones who move from agriculture to the non-agriculture sector without changing their place of residency, peasants who work in enterprises and institutions, temporary workers, seasonal workers, rotation workers, contract workers, and negotiated workers. They are joined by a variety of people who have quit their jobs, people waiting for jobs, and people who are out of a job. Not only is there no guarantee that funds would be available for their regulation, but the departments in charge cannot even get in touch with these people. Regulatory measures are difficult to implement. According to the urban sample survey [for 1996 and 1997 in Sichuan province], only 20 percent of the rural residents migrating to the cities apply for family planning papers. Of these people, less than 20 percent return pregnancy testing documents regularly, about 10 percent do so sporadically, and over 70 percent never bother to do anything. The rural population which has migrated to cities accounts for more than 30 percent of all extra-plan births in the province (25 Jan. 1998).

The same article complains that management at many private enterprises does not care about or bother to enforce family planning regulations, and that underfunding or nonexistence of family planning offices in these enterprises is common (ibid.). In March 1998 Prime Minister Li Peng announced that China will begin stricter enforcement of family planning regulations both among the floating population and in the countryside; however, he gave no details as to how this is to be accomplished (AFP 5 Mar. 1998).

Seth Faison reports that family planning enforcement varies "from province to province and town to town. Many rural areas have never been able to keep families from having two, three or four

children, while in others officials have been quite strict" (*The New York Times* 17 Aug. 1997). Officials in areas where enforcement is less strict will often accept a flat rate fee for an unauthorized birth: US\$1200 in Dazu, Sichuan, for example, "a large but affordable sum" that can be borrowed from family members (*ibid.*). The price drops to US\$400 in Anhui province, but rises to US\$1500 in Guangzhou, while in Shanghai the penalty is far more severe: three times the annual salary of the mother and father (*ibid.*). In discussing excess birth fines, however, Ann and James Tyson caution that in villages cut off from areas of prosperity, excess birth fines of as little as US\$280 can be "more than twice the per capita annual income in the village" (*Current History* Sept. 1996, 281-282). Abusive officials can also confiscate belongings and compel abortions and sterilizations (*ibid.*; *The Sunday Telegraph* 14 June 1998).^[8]

Despite loosened controls over migrating workers, some studies show that the birth rate among the floating population is not significantly higher than that of the rest of the country, since rising income levels and changes in lifestyle and attitudes have meant that families have voluntarily chosen to keep the number of children low (*Asian Survey* Nov. 1996, 1139; see also Zhou 1996, 197-98).

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[7] *The Economist* reports that in urban areas the dang'an, a record of personal political record, professional qualifications, and seniority, is held by the *danwei* and can be viewed only by Communist Party officials (14 Feb. 1998). A black mark in the dang'an can disqualify one for promotion; one's personal record is also considered when allotting housing and birth quotas (*ibid.*; *CRF* Summer 1996b, 2). For people employed in foreign-funded firms, however, the dang'an is held by the Ministry of Foreign Trade, which "knows little about political attitudes or performance—nor does it care. It has few of the [employer] obligations towards the workers concerned, such as providing housing" (*The Economist* 14 Feb. 1998). Also according to *The Economist*, "The job of guarding files for people employed in the private sector has been contracted out. In the capital, the files of most privately employed workers are guarded by the Beijing Talent Centre, which is housed inside a former concubines' compound in the Forbidden City. Wu Yong, a senior manager there, calls the centre a 'service business.' The Talent Centre lacks the power of a party chief to annotate people's files, and merely has them for safekeeping. But [the files are] also meant to help with social welfare and other issues" (*ibid.*). [\[back\]](#)

[8] Seth Faison reports that "the worst excesses of local officials seem to have diminished in recent years" (*The New York Times* 17 Aug. 1997). Yet some reports still surface. In June 1998, for example, Gao Xian Duan, a former family planning official from a town in Fujian Province who fled the country in 1997 to seek asylum, testified in front of an American Congressional committee to having ordered forced sterilizations of women and abortions of fetuses on the verge of birth (*The Sunday Telegraph* 14 June 1998). She also testified that houses of family planning violators were sometimes demolished (*ibid.*). As well, in September 1997 more than a thousand police and soldiers were sent to Gaozhou, south-west of Guangzhou, to break up a large protest over the death of a woman, apparently from a forced sterilization procedure, and over excessive family planning fines (AFP 10 Sept. 1997; *ibid.*, 7 Sept. 1997; *SCMP* 8 Sept. 1997). [\[back\]](#)

NOTES ON SELECTED SOURCES

Chinese media sources (various).

This report makes use of a wide range of Chinese media sources, including, among others, *Fazhi Ribao*, *Jingji Cankao Bao*, *Nanfang Ribao*, *Renkou Yanjiu*, *Renkou Yu Jingji*, *Shehui*, *Xinhua*, *Zhongguo Qingnian*, *Zhongguo Renkou Bao*, and *Zhongguo Xinwen She*. Selected articles from these sources are available in English translation through the Foreign Broadcast Information Service (FBIS). These articles give, at times, an insightful view of government policies regarding the floating population and indicate that debate over the issue of internal migration is on-going in many levels of Chinese society.

Scharping, Thomas

Scharping, Thomas, et al., eds. 1997. *Migration in China's Guangdong Province: Major Results of a 1993 Sample Survey on Migrants and Floating Population in Shenzhen and Foshan*. Hamburg: Verbund

Stiftung Deutsches Übersee-Institut.

The above-mentioned book is a collaboration between researchers at Modern China Studies in Cologne University, Germany, and the Department of Population and Employment Statistics of the State Statistical Bureau of China. Just over 5,000 residents of Shenzhen and Foshan in southern Guangdong Province, both migrants and non-migrants, were questioned extensively in 1993. The study provides a wide range of statistical data on the lives of migrants: who they are, where they come from, how long they have been in the city, how they found out about work opportunities, where they live, what sorts of work they do, what pay and benefits they receive, what their most pressing problems are, and how often they return home. The study also provides helpful commentary and a good summary of results.

Solinger, Dorothy J.

This paper cites the work of Dorothy J. Solinger through four articles or chapters published in *China Rights Forum (CRF)* (Summer 1996a), *Modern China* (Apr. 1995), *Politics and Society* (Mar. 1993) and *Urban Spaces in Contemporary China* (1995). Solinger, a professor of politics and society at the University of Southern California at Irvine, writes extensively on the floating population based on both Chinese and foreign sources and on her own field research in China. In these articles Solinger explores political and philosophical issues raised by mass migration in China as well as practical questions such as where migrants live, what they work at, and how they are treated.

Zhou, Kate Xiao.

Zhou, Kate Xiao. 1996. *How the Farmers Changed China: Power of the People*. Boulder, CO: Westview Press.

Kate Xiao Zhou is assistant professor of Chinese politics and comparative politics at the University of Hawaii at Manoa. Born in Wuhan, China, she was sent to the countryside during the Cultural Revolution, then returned to university in Wuhan in the late 1970s. Her rural experience raised her interest in studying the changes to peasant life and to the nation as a whole as a result of the disbanding of the communes in favour of the household responsibility system of agricultural production. Zhou contends that rural reforms came as a result of wide-scale but unorganized, farmer-led initiatives, and were later embraced by the CCP only after it became evident that productivity increased significantly. An important by-product of the reforms, however, was the slackening of official control over internal migration which has led to many other changes in Chinese society (Zhou 1996, xix-xxvii).

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