

Millions of Chinese youth 'volunteers' to be sent to villages in echo of Maoist policy

Tuesday 23 April 2019, by [Agence France-Presse](#) (Date first published: 12 April 2019).

Communist Youth League students to 'spread civilisation' in countryside and 'promote technology'.

[China](#) is planning to send millions of youth "volunteers" back to villages, raising fears of a return to the methods of Chairman Mao's brutal Cultural Revolution of 50 years ago.

The Communist Youth League (CYL) has promised to despatch more than 10 million students to "rural zones" by 2022 in order to "increase their skills, spread civilisation and promote science and technology", according to a Communist party document.

The aim is to bring to the rural areas the talents of those who would otherwise be attracted to life in the big cities, according to a CYL document quoted in the state-run Global Times daily on Thursday.

"We need young people to use science and technology to help the countryside innovate its traditional development models," Zhang Linbin, deputy head of a township in central Hunan Province, told the Global Times.

Students will be called upon to live in the countryside during their summer holidays, although the CYL did not say how young people would be persuaded to volunteer.

Former revolutionary bases, zones suffering from extreme poverty and ethnic minority areas will receive top priority, according to the CYL.

Relations are often fraught between the Han majority, who make up more than 90% of the population, and ethnic minorities like the Tibetans and Muslim Uighurs.

Users on the Twitter-like Weibo social platform reacted warily. Many evoked the chaos of the [1966-76 Cultural Revolution](#), when Mao sent millions of "young intellectuals" into often primitive conditions in the countryside, while universities were closed for a decade.

"Has it started again?" wondered one user named WangTingYu. "We did that 40 years ago," wrote Miruirong. "Sometimes history advances, sometimes it retreats," noted KalsangWangduTB.

President Xi Jinping, known for his nostalgia for the Mao era, himself spent seven years in a village in the poor northern province of Shaanxi from the age of 16.

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