

USA Today: Military 'Camp' Inspires 'Patriotism, Teamwork and Sacrifice' in Chinese Kids

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Created 2007-09-05 04:10

USA Today lends a big assist in promulgating Chinese propaganda as the paper helps explain away the nature of the forced military training that Chinese children undergo. Calling the compulsory training a benign sounding "camp" and presenting the children's training as if it is a mere summer excursion, USA Today soft sells China's militarization of their youth in theirs titled, "Chinese kids undergo required military training." [1]



As USA Today dutifully reports China's propaganda -- the children go there to "sing songs" with the training only meant to "bolster teamwork" -- we see a disgraceful example of the MSM's practice of not "offending" a totalitarian nation so as not to lose their "access" there. Instead of reporting the harsh truth, we have USA Today offering a sunny and happy report on Chinese warmongering.

The Chinese government forces all children between the ages of 9 and 18 to undergo military training at regular intervals during Summer break from school. They have no choice and neither do their parents. This is the sort of complete lack of freedom of choice that can be expected from a totalitarian government, of course. In the West, we decry militarizing our children by force, so isn't it odd that USA Today so softens this training? Isn't it shameful that the paper helps China promote the propaganda that these military training sessions are really a wonderful time for China's youth?

BEIJING -- Yang Liheng, 12, heads back to school near Beijing this week, filled with memories of camp.

It was not a summer of nature hikes and cool dips in the lake. Liheng was one of 20 million youngsters who spent up to four weeks at compulsory military camps run by the People's Liberation Army (PLA).

The camps are part of a nationwide training network in which a record 50 million Chinese children ages 9 to 18 will get military education this year, according to the PLA. The program, expanded in the past year, is intended to inspire patriotism, teamwork and sacrifice in a generation of children who, for the most part, have grown up without siblings and known little hardship.

Ah, yes. Our little Yang Liheng so fondly remembering his "camp" that was only meant to "inspire patriotism, teamwork and sacrifice." Thanks USA Today for that wonderfully heart-warming report.

Heck, little Liheng got a bunch out of his fun Summer "camp."

The highlights, he says, included singing army songs, learning self-defense and studying advanced weaponry, such as U.S. Black Hawk helicopters and aircraft carriers. The low point came when he was forced to stand rigid at attention for 20 minutes in the broiling sun because of his poor marching form.

The experience "stepped my willpower," Liheng says. He admits, "I was afraid at first. Lots of us cried at night when we missed our parents."

And China is trying really, really hard to allay the fears that all those other mean 'ol countries have over rampant Chinese militarization... at least so says USA Today.

The expansion of the program comes as China tries to address concerns by the United States and others about its military buildup and lack of transparency in defense spending. Beijing tacitly acknowledged those concerns over the weekend by agreeing to submit basic information about the size of its military budget and weapons purchases to the United Nations for the first time in more than a decade.

The boot camps are less about militarizing China's youth than trying to bolster teamwork and offer the "rare experience of collective life (that) will help prevent these children from being too selfish and conceited as their parents spoil them," says child psychologist Liu Zhe of the Beijing Institute of Medical Psychology. Life at a PLA boot camp "resembles Boy Scout training in Western countries," Liu says.

But, wait. Weren't they teaching little Liheng how "U.S. Black Hawk helicopters and aircraft carriers" work? That doesn't sound so benign to me! How is learning the vulnerabilities of your enemy's capabilities only an exercise in teaching children not to be "spoiled?"

But, no, USA Today assures us that little Liheng was really just getting some helpful "discipline" and stuff.

At Liheng's camp, the emphasis was on discipline, self-reliance and respect for others. "Cast aside your spoiled life and pack a strong will in your bag," went a song sung by campers.

Even his Mommy thinks it was great.

Du Chunmei, Liheng's mother, says military training shows "little emperors" how cushy their lives are. China's young "are lazy and not respectful to elders," she says. Du says her son returned from camp a changed boy. "He's much more obedient and less fussy about

eating. He makes his bed ... much better than before, because in the training they're taught to fold their blankets 'as sharp as a block of bean curd.' "

But, USA Today also presents some of the Chinese parents that don't much like this forced military training though it seems the paper only highlights those parents who want to mollycoddle their children unlike little Liheng's Mother who is looking to instill some useful steel in her baby's spine.

Not all parents share Du's enthusiasm for boot camp. A Shandong provincial newspaper reported last week that tearful parents climbed the walls of a camp in the city of Dongying to bring drinks and sunscreen to their children.

All in all, the report seems to have far more favorable reaction to China's forced militarization of their children than anything else and gives cover to China's ruling despots to explain it away as but a character building exercise instead of the warmongering that it really is.

USA Today is sure to have done this for a reason. Should the paper have reported this as the aggression it really is, it is sure that the Chinese government would take revenge on USA Today's capabilities to report from the Communist nation in the future. The result is that USA Today soft pedals the story so that they will not lose their access.

Remember how CNN made that deal with Saddam [2] prior to his fall? CNN promised not to report on his atrocities so that they could keep their Baghdad office open and operating. They were willing to quash the truth to keep their offices open. So, instead of truthful reporting, CNN merely acted as Saddam's mouth piece and disseminated his propaganda world wide.

Who can doubt that the same thing is happening with this case? And who can excuse USA Today for their willingness to exchange access for truth?

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