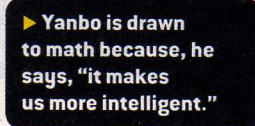




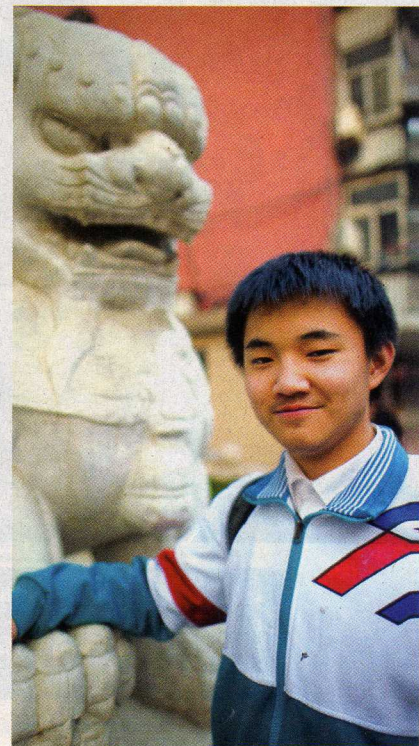
◀ College students in Pengzhou, China, take a break after classes.



▲ Wanzhu wants to be a singer or a novelist.



▶ Yanbo is drawn to math because, he says, "it makes us more intelligent."



## Life Under Mao

The history of modern China began in 1949, when rebel leader Mao Zedong led a Communist revolution, seizing control of the country and renaming it the People's Republic of China. As Chairman of the Communist Party and supreme leader, Mao ruled China for nearly three decades.

But his **totalitarian** regime and its stranglehold on the economy had disastrous effects. A program called the Great Leap Forward, begun in 1958, was designed to quickly convert China into an industrial power by sending farmers to work in factories. Instead, the policy destroyed the country's agricultural system. A series of famines claimed the lives of an estimated 35 million to 50 million Chinese.

In recent decades, China has made an effort to control and provide for its huge population through

*continued on p. 12 →*

Yet it is this kind of ambition that helps explain why China's economy is booming. The clothes, toys, computers, and countless other goods it manufactures dominate worldwide markets, filling the shelves of Wal-Mart and other stores in the U.S.

## A Breathtaking Rise

During the recent recession, while other countries struggled to keep their economies afloat, China's share of global trade increased. Experts predict that the country will soon overtake the U.S. as the world's top economic superpower.

Through most of the 20th century, China suffered under an

economy wrecked by decades of war, followed by mismanagement by its **Communist** government. Then, in 1978, the government began an ambitious program of reform, adopting elements of capitalism and opening its doors to international investment and trade.

The results have been breathtaking. The reforms have lifted millions of people out of poverty, created a growing middle class, and transformed China from a poor, **third-world** nation into a global powerhouse. One World Bank economist called the progress "an achievement unprecedented in human history."