



▲ Workers on an assembly line in a toy factory make dolls—largely for the U.S. and other overseas markets.

► Factory smoke and car exhaust make the air in China's cities among the most polluted in the world.



its one-child policy. Yanbo is a product of that policy, which, in the 1980s, sought to prevent most Chinese from having a second child.

Wanzhu's parents grew up during another dark period, the Cultural Revolution. Beginning in the late 1960s, Chairman Mao sought to eliminate challenges to his Communist philosophy by closing schools and persecuting **intellectuals**, among other measures. During this reign of terror, Chinese were encouraged to betray each other to the authorities, families were torn apart, and the economy again failed.

After Mao died in 1976, the government recognized that changes were needed. China's new leaders instituted a "second revolution" of reforms, which, over time, improved life dramatically. As a result, millions of young Chinese today enjoy many of the same things as American kids, including iPods, computer games, and basketball, which is hugely popular.

Wanzhu's family embodies these changes in the country. Her parents were some of the first students to attend the country's newly reopened universities in the 1970s. They are proud of their daughter's grades and happy that she was chosen to lead her class's Communist Youth League group.

But China's spectacular eco-

people have crowded into cities, working in factories to make the shirts and sneakers that the rest of the world buys. Many of them work 12 hours a day, 7 days a week, earning as little as \$150 a month. Critics say that this massive supply of cheap labor has made it impossible for U.S. factories to compete, and has cost many American jobs.

“I feel pressure to succeed because I'm the only child. I'm my parents' only hope.”

nomics progress has not come without costs, including deep scars on the country itself. As factories pop up and 2,000 new cars drive onto the roads of Beijing each day, China's environment has suffered. Pollution in Chinese cities is among the world's worst, with air so contaminated that children are often warned not to play outside.

Then there are the conditions for Chinese workers. Millions of farmers and poor, uneducated

The U.S. is also concerned that China will use its new wealth to build up its military and challenge the U.S. and its allies.

While greater economic freedom has improved the day-to-day lives of millions of Chinese, the government has not allowed them any more political freedom. Unlike the U.S., China is not a democracy. Its citizens cannot vote for their leaders (*see sidebar*). The government controls the media and blocks many