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Chinese Factories
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Exciting Places!

*Janet Goldwasser
and
Stuart Dowty*



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Chinese Factories Are Exciting Places!

Janet Goldwasser and Stuart Dowty*

For the past twenty years America's politicians have pretended, ostrich-like, that China did not exist. Little impressed by such a posture, China's workers and peasants have been busily constructing a new socialist society.

Socialism means the economy and government are run by the workers in their own interest — a 'dictatorship of the proletariat' which has replaced the previous class dictatorship of the capitalists. If this is so, then how do workers in China control their society? What is it like to work in a Chinese factory? These are some of the questions we pursued during our recent visit to China.

In China, things are constantly changing, always moving forward. As the Chinese say, 'The class struggle continues,' always developing and taking on new forms. They speak of 'the struggle between the two lines,' meaning the struggle between the bourgeois and the proletarian ways of running society. They say China today is red — workers' red — and the workers are determined to see that 'it never changes its colour.' This fundamental class perspective is found throughout the country; the specific de-

tails of how they preserve their hue and deepen its colour often vary according to place and time.

How do you describe the nature of work in such a society? What better place to start than workers' attitudes toward their jobs. A woman in a Peking factory told us: 'I'm working to add one more brick for socialism.' Compare this to workers in our hometown, Detroit, who say: 'I'm working to pay the bills.'

China is not yet an advanced industrial society, but she is industrialising. Her guiding principle in economic development is that agriculture is the foundation and industry the leading factor. We investigated several aspects of this 'leading factor' such as: decision making and leadership in factories, industrial working conditions, safety, the nature of the work force, ideological study at work, and health and welfare facilities. These are the topics we will cover in this article. We found there are always lots of things happening in Chinese factories. In the US, we think of factories in dull grey terms. In China we found that they were some of the most exciting places to be.

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From the Masses

The key to understanding decision making and leadership in China lies in the phrase 'from the masses, to the masses.' Leadership 'Western style'

usually means power over others; leaders acquire fame, fortune, special privileges and other material rewards. Leadership in Chinese factories is quite different. It is a collective process summing up the needs and desires of the people. Leadership is exercised on the basis of retaining the confidence of the masses. Leadership in China does not result in personal fame or gain. Different groups in the factory—workers, cadres and army or militia; young, middle-aged and old—come together and exercise collective leadership and decision making.

Ganbu or cadres are an important part of Chinese leadership. The role of cadres is quite unlike anything we are familiar with in the West, combining aspects of civil servants, political and ideological leaders, managers and administrators. The term *ganbu* or cadre is often misunderstood by Western visitors to China, probably because it is used in two different ways. In neither case is it synonymous with Chinese Communist Party membership, a common but mistaken interpretation.

Cadres

First, 'cadre' is used to describe someone who holds a responsible position—anyone who is a leader. A woman in charge of production in a workshop doing electrical wiring is a 'cadre' in that workshop, even though she works full-time at the same job as everyone else. A leader in a study group is called a 'cadre' in that group. The Secretary of a Communist Party Branch who is also engaged in full-time productive labour is often called a 'cadre'.

Second, there is a more specific definition of cadre. Cadres, in this sense, are those 'administrators' assigned to factories by the State. The same is true for cadres on communes. The full-time administrators in factory 'front offices'; the 'responsible person' at a public park in Wuhan; full-time government or Chi-

nese Communist Party leaders—all are cadres. You could call them 'functionaries', but that sounds quite stuffy. In fact, most in no way fit the image of a bureaucrat-functionary. Cadres are dedicated revolutionaries chosen for leadership duties on the basis of their ability. Many joined the revolution long ago and have continued to work in its service for twenty-five years or more. In factories new cadres are recruited from among the ranks of workers. For example, at the No. 1 Machinery Factory in Shenyang workers proudly told us that almost all their cadres had worked there.

The vast majority of cadres are members of the Chinese Communist Party, and their duties and assignments are closely tied to decisions made by the Party structure. But not all cadres are Party members and, of course, not all Party members are cadres. Many, probably most, Party members are full-time production workers in factories or on communes.

Since factory cadres work full-time at administrative duties, there is always the danger that they lose touch with actual production, that a gap develop between the cadres and workers. Several methods have been introduced, especially since the Cultural Revolution, to ensure that cadres do not become 'divorced from the masses'. The general rule is that cadres must regularly take part in manual labour. Within that guideline, there are any number of specific ways to schedule *luo dong* (labour) for cadres.

In Tangshan, we talked with Ko Kai-chen, the vice-chairman of the revolutionary committee at the Tangshan Pottery Institute. A tall middle-aged man with a thin face, he has worked there for many years as an artist, making designs. During the Cultural Revolution he was chosen by his fellow workers to be a leading member of the new revolutionary committee. 'But I had a contradiction between the need to do a lot of administrative work and the need to do produc-

tive labour. At the beginning, I only did work in the office and I never went into the workshop. The workers came and told me: "You were a worker, but now you're a bureaucrat!" I learned from them, and now I spend two days a week in the workshop, four days in administrative work.' He added: 'We say that a person can change his position, but he shouldn't change his colour!'

In Peking, we talked with workers at the Foreign Languages Printing House. They have adopted a rule that cadres must spend one day a week in manual work and two months a year in labour and investigation. Cadres and intellectuals who have not previously worked in production must spend one year in the shops.

The battle to integrate cadres and workers is continuous, and some factories have been more successful than others in their assault. We did visit one or two places where reinforcements seemed to be needed. In these factories we had little chance to talk with workers; the cadres monopolised the discussion and avoided ideological questions. We observed little interaction between cadres and workers. We were reminded of our experience at work in the US and how we felt when the bosses from the front office brought visiting businessmen through the plant. The division between cadres and workers at these few exceptional places was in sharp contrast to most factories we visited, where cadres and workers treated each other as friends, not as 'superior' and 'subordinate'.

More typical was a heavy machinery manufacturing plant in Tientsin. There the vice-chairman of the revolutionary committee gave us a running account of the production process as we walked through the shops. But we were often interrupted by workers who would leave their job to talk with him. He clearly knew both the process of production and the people intimately. He was no 'boss' touring the plant, no superior inspecting

his subordinates. His relations with the workers were relaxed and friendly; workers would come up, throw their arms around his shoulders and talk and joke.

The 'Two Joins'

The Chinese speak of the 'two joins': workers join in leadership and cadres join in production. Although this principle is applied unevenly, we think that the general level of success is quite high. They discuss shortcomings openly and frankly, with a determination to struggle and improve. Both workers and cadres recognise that there are still problems and this, it seems to us, is half the battle. The point which makes the whole approach realistic is that their socialist system encourages improvement and makes it possible, unlike capitalist relations which themselves are the cause of differences between workers and management.

But cadres are only one part of leadership; workers also lead. Workers are involved in forming and making decisions, carrying them out, and, when necessary, changing them.

Chinese factories have two leading organs which make and administer decisions: The Party committee is the basic decision making body and exercises top leadership. The revolutionary committee is the top administrative body, carrying out the decisions of the Party committee. Most factories we visited also had a workers' representative congress, a new mass organisation formed since the Cultural Revolution. It organises education, provides for feedback, and administers workers' welfare activities.

The revolutionary committee is a 'three-in-one combination' of workers, cadres, and army. It is a new form, developed during the Cultural Revolution to involve workers in running the factories.

Army representatives come from units stationed in the area, and participate in factory leadership along with revolution-

ary workers and cadres. They play an important role in political education; one cadre told us, 'The People's Liberation Army is a great school of Mao Tsetung Thought, founded and led by Chairman Mao. They bring a fine tradition with them to the factory.' Army representatives on the factory three-in-one revolutionary committees are generally chosen within the PLA structure, although the number of PLA representatives is usually decided by the factory organs.

Worker and cadre representatives on the revolutionary committee are chosen through an extensive process of nomination and discussion within the factory. This differs in detail from one factory to another, but is always consistent with the general principle of involving the masses of workers. Members of the revolutionary committee include both Communist Party members and non-Party workers and cadres.

Workers and cadres at the Wuhan Sewing Machine Factory compared their selection procedure with 'elections' in the United States. They choose representatives on the basis of being good workers, having close relations with the masses of workers in the factory, and being diligent in the study of Marxism-Leninism and the thought of Chairman Mao. The workers have discussions in their shop groups and make nominations. The names are then discussed by everyone, including the Party organisation in the factory. We asked if people ever put their own names in nomination. They replied that people usually were nominated by fellow workers who knew them well. 'We don't have big election campaigns like in the United States; people are modest and are known among the workers.' The kind of 'electioneering' done in the US was regarded as a sign of 'immodesty' and low political consciousness—both undesirable traits for a leader. After the discussions representatives are chosen by an election among the masses of workers.

In Tangshan, we visited a Rolling Stock Plant which manufactures locomotives and railroad coaches. They have a slightly different method of choosing representatives which is called the 'two times up, two times down' process. First, workers in each section of the factory have discussions and put forward names of people for the revolutionary committee. The names are sent up to the leading body, which holds its own discussions and sends its opinions back down. This process takes place twice; thus the 'two ups and downs.' (In some places this is done three times.) After the final discussion, they agree on a group of people for the committee, but no vote is taken—it is all handled by discussion. They said it does occasionally happen that some names are put forward by the workers but not approved by the leading body. In such cases they come to agreement through further discussion. They said they judge people according to 'how they fit into the class struggle and the struggle between the two lines,' and whether they are 'continuing the revolution.' Here PLA members are also discussed by the workers but the PLA has the final say on who their representatives are.

The proportion of cadres, army and workers within the revolutionary committee varies considerably from place to place. At the Tangshan Rolling Stock Factory, there are 25 people on the revolutionary committee: 10 cadres, 2 PLA and 13 workers. The revolutionary committee of the Wuhan Sewing Machine Factory has 17 members: 4 cadres, 4 army and 9 workers; at the Shenyang No. 1 Machinery Factory there are 29 on the revolutionary committee: 8 cadres, 5 army and 16 workers.

Party and Party Members

Members of the Party committee are chosen in much the same way as members of the revolutionary committee. However, only Communist Party mem-

bers can serve on the Party committee, and only Party members are directly involved in the selection. About 15 per cent of the workers and cadres in the factories we visited were members of the Chinese Communist Party. The Party committee was often, but not always, a 'three-in-one combination.' In some cases they did not have a three-in-one principle, but in practice it worked out that way. The Party committee is often chosen at a congress of all Party members in a factory, involving extensive discussions and elections.

How do you become a member of the Chinese Communist Party? This, too, is part of the question of leadership because all Chinese Communist Party members, not just those on the Party committee, are leaders and activists. Membership in the Party is considered to be both an honour and a responsibility. Party members are expected to set a good example and provide leadership wherever they are. The Chinese Communist Party is the leading organisation throughout China, tying together all economic, political and social endeavours. Thus, Party members in a particular factory are also part of the over-all leadership in Chinese society. Workers and cadres run their factories, and together with peasants run China itself. The Chinese Communist Party is the main vehicle which makes this possible.

We talked with Chen Lin-ti who works in a textile mill in Chengchow. Both she and her husband are members of the Party. She told us that a Communist 'should serve the people well, both the people of China and the people of the whole world,' adding that a Communist should also study to increase his or her consciousness. 'Many people gave their lives in the revolution and we should learn from them.' Chen Lin-ti's neighbour, who works in the same textile mill, told us that a Communist should engage in criticism and self-criticism and should 'have good relations

with the masses.' Sacrifice, responsibility, high consciousness, and good relations with the people are all requirements for membership in the Party.

To become a Party member you submit an application; you should also be recommended by two members of the Party. Then a process of discussion follows, both within the Party and among the people you work with. These discussions sometimes stretch over a long period of time. Tsun Chiu-lan, a young woman worker at the Shenyang Transformer Factory, told us she first applied to join the Party in 1966. After she applied Party members 'paid more attention to my growth and education' and 'gave me help and education, so my consciousness was raised.' She was approved for membership in 1969. Both Party members and workers who are not in the Party discuss an applicant and whether they are qualified for Party membership. The final decision, however, is made by the local Party branch or group. Party members are generally the most active and politically advanced section of workers in a factory. Party members will often be responsible for leading study groups and are expected to take the lead in working on technical innovations and political struggle.

Worker Participation

How are workers involved in making important decisions in the factories? One clear example came from a discussion with workers and cadres at the Shenyang Transformer Factory in the North-east. An old factory set up by the Japanese in 1939, it was greatly expanded after Liberation and now has about 5,000 workers. They explained how their '1971 production quota was decided.

In conjunction with state planning agencies, the factory Party committee analysed their specific factory conditions, the needs of the State, and arrived at a figure of 12,000 units production for the

year. This decision was then taken to the workers. The total output was broken down into a specific figure for each workshop. Workers then discussed it, and broke it down further into sections of each workshop. In this way they could discuss what the plan would mean for each job in the coming year. The workers took issue with the proposed figure; they said it was too low. They argued that the factory was capable of producing more and criticised their leadership for aiming too low. They made alternative suggestions which were discussed by everyone—workers and cadres. Finally, all agreed at a goal of 14,000 units for the year. In fact, they did produce that number in 1971—doing it five days ahead of schedule.

Local involvement and autonomy are part, but not all, of decision making. Local needs and desires must also be coordinated with needs of the whole country. Workers are involved in making decisions because they, in the end, carry them out. They know the details of production best. But leadership and coordination with others is also necessary. For example, the production quota at the Shenyang Transformer Factory had to be tied in to the over-all state production plan. One of the advantages of a socialist system is that it allows for over-all, rational planning of the economy. The Shenyang workers could have decided on 20,000 transformers but if the State didn't have enough materials or needed the materials for other urgent projects, then 20,000 transformers would have been impossible. They needed to balance the ability and demands of the workers with the needs of the country as a whole. The state planning agencies help provide that balance on a national level; local leadership, with rank-and-file participation, play an important role in achieving it on the factory level.

Revolutionary committees and in many cases Party committees were 'three-in-one combinations' in two ways. The first

was the workers-cadres-army combination. A second kind of combination was: old—middle aged—young. A 'middle-aged' member of the Revolutionary committee at the Tientsin No. 1 Machinery Factory explained why it was important to have a 'three-in-one' of old-middle-young. 'The young people participate and this helps prevent the restoration of capitalism. Our young people have the spirit of "dare to speak and dare to struggle." They have less conservative ideas and they help prevent the leaders from being divorced from the masses.' The 'old' element is important, he said, because 'veteran workers have gone through the test of war times and they also have much experience.' But the young people 'are quick to raise criticism.' So they combine old, young and middle into one committee, drawing on the experiences of all groups. 'Sometimes it is hard to say who is "old" and who is "middle,"' he added, laughing. He himself is a person who could be in either category.

Many factories we visited have set up workers' representative congresses. New organisation, the workers' representative congresses have in some places replaced the trade unions of the pre-Cultural Revolution period. Most workers are members, but not necessarily all. It is composed of revolutionary workers and, as a worker in Shenyang explained, 'since the class struggle still exists, there are some workers not qualified.'

The workers' representative congress has administrative duties which cover a whole range of activities. These typically include: to organise workers' study and education, to mobilise workers to fulfill the production plan of the factory, to save waste materials, and to promote technical innovation and technical revolution. It is part of the tasks of the workers' representative congress to listen to the needs and demands of the workers, collect opinions and transmit them to the Party committee and revolutionary committee. They also organise sports and other re-

creational activities and arrange for cultural performances. There's really no parallel to it in the West; they perform many functions of a trade union but also do much more than that.

In sum, Chinese workers control their factories in a number of different ways. The Party committee, the revolutionary committee, the workers' representative congress, and Communist Party membership itself all provide structures for workers' participation in leadership and decision making. The practices of recruiting cadres from the ranks of workers, the 'two joins', the 'two times up, two times down', and the 'three-in-one combinations' all provide for and promote workers' involvement in the running of the factories. By running their factories Chinese workers are also part of basic decision making in the society as a whole.

Bread and Butter Stuff

What is it like to work, day-to-day, in a factory in China? How much do you get paid? How long do you work? When do you have breaks? What days off do you get? And most important, who decides all these things?

Most factories in China are State-owned or, as the Chinese say, 'owned by the people as a whole.' A small number of factories are collectively owned and are run under the leadership of a city district or a street committee. The government has set certain standards for work conditions: for example, the eight-hour day (lunch period included), six-day week, and a 56-day paid maternity leave. Within the state guidelines, individual factories add their own details and adapt them to local conditions. Working conditions varied in factories we visited, but in all cases the workers themselves, together with their leadership, decide just what the 'details' will be.

It is hardly surprising to find that conditions of work are reasonable and humane in a society where workers them-

selves determine these things. Chinese workers emphasise meeting the needs of the whole society and that socialist development depends on a collective consciousness. They see no conflict between their own interests and general needs. 'When the big river is full, the little river also has more water,' they stress. Placing priority on personal interest is the way of the 'capitalist roaders', they argue, and results in selfish conflicts, bad working conditions and inequalities. When you think only of 'the little river', the big river runs dry.

Wages

Take the question of wages. State policy is that all factories have an eight-grade system of wages. Workers are assigned to one of eight grades, with every person in the same grade receiving the same pay. At each factory, workers themselves decide what the salary for each grade will be, and they also decide who gets assigned to each grade. We found that the range of wages varies from place to place. There are also differences in what criteria are used for assigning grades.

In general, wages range from a low for 'grade one' of about 33 *yuan* a month to a high for 'grade eight' of around 100 *yuan*. In a few cases beginning workers get less than 30 *yuan* and sometimes technicians, engineers or veteran cadres get over 100 *yuan* a month. The average wage at most factories we visited was between 40 and 50 *yuan* a month.

These figures are low by US standards.* But in terms of 'real wages' — what can be bought with that money — they are not all that low. Rent is low (usually 5 per cent of a family's income), food is very cheap, medical care is free or at nominal cost, pensions are guaranteed, and there are no taxes. We asked several families to outline their monthly budget.

* One *yuan* = US\$0.42.

Everyone had plenty to cover the basics of shelter, heat and food; they had money for entertainment and other sundries and they usually had made purchases of items like children's toys, clothing and other daily needs. Most families also owned consumer items like bicycles, radios, wrist watches and sewing machines. These take up a higher percentage of wages than do the basic necessities of life. For example, a bicycle or sewing machine costs a little over two months' average salary. Everyone also had money left over to save; in some families this came to 30-40 per cent of their total monthly income. It was clear that real wages in China allow for a very adequate standard of living; a 'simple' standard, compared to US life, but one that has risen over the years and shows every promise of continuing to rise. Compared to conditions of old China the differences are, as we were told, 'like comparing night and day.'

How are wages determined? Workers in the Wuhan Sewing Machine Factory outlined their procedure. First, they hold discussions in their work units or shop groups and suggest a specific grade for each person. They said that usually someone else suggests the grade you should receive. There is no fixed schedule regarding when or how often these discussions take place. This, they added, is decided according to production requirements and local and state needs. For example discussions are held when production processes change greatly or when production and political priorities make wage increases possible. Sometimes, they reported, fellow workers will suggest that a good worker get an increase in wage grade. Workers can also raise the question if they feel their grade should be changed, but to be considered seriously it was clear that the motive should be based on need, not material gain.

The recommendations workers make for each other are taken to the revolutionary committee which either approves them or sends them back for more discus-

sion. Generally, they said, there is little disagreement over the suggestions from the shop groups. As one man told us, 'We all do different jobs, but everyone knows they are working for the revolution. So we don't argue much about different wages.' They also pointed out that since the workers know each other well and the revolutionary committee members are quite familiar with everyone, any inconsistent grade assignments would be noticed immediately.

Workers' Grades

What criteria are used to determine a worker's grade? What do they consider in these discussions? Again, things vary from place to place. The three criteria used most often were: skill, political consciousness, and seniority. Seniority is figured on the total length of time a person has worked for any State-owned enterprise, not just for one factory. If you change jobs, your seniority is not affected. In general, seniority appeared to be one of the most important criteria, but it was never considered independently of the other factors. At the No. 3 Textile Mill in Chengchow workers emphasised political consciousness and skill in making their recommendations. At the Loyang Tractor Works, they mentioned the same two factors and added that a person with 'high political consciousness' overfulfils his tasks, has good relations with his fellow workers, and has a clear understanding of political struggle in terms of class struggle and the struggle between the two lines.

At the Kairan Coal Mine in Tangshan they also consider the kind of work a person does. Those working underground at the coal face average 14 *yuan* a month more than those working aboveground. At the Wuhan Iron and Steel Works we were told that people who worked in high places get an extra ten *yuan* a month — a kind of 'hazardous duty' pay. Workers at the Wuhan Sewing Machine Factory

laid great emphasis on 'politics in command'. They considered three things in deciding a worker's grade: political consciousness, how well they worked, and how long they had worked at the factory. 'Skill is not a factor; consciousness is the main factor. We do this because a person might have a high level of skill, but he could work for the reactionaries. So we put politics in command and use a person's consciousness to determine wages.'

In general, Chinese workers discourage bourgeois materialism. Concentration on wages or possessions is considered as a sign of low consciousness. What was important to most people we talked with was not how much they made, but what they were doing with their lives. As one woman put it, 'Wages are not a way to measure a person's attitude. We estimate a person according to how he contributes to socialism. Does he unite with other workers? Does he work with enthusiasm?' She reminded us that 'right now, two-thirds of the world's population has not been liberated and is still suffering. The people in the liberated countries have the duty to support the liberation struggles of people in the other countries.'

'Material Incentive'

Chinese workers have not always viewed their work in political rather than material terms. 'Material incentives' were common before the Cultural Revolution. Workers told us that during the struggles of the Cultural Revolution they discovered how material incentives were contradictory to socialism.

Su Chuan-chen, an electrician at Foreign Languages Press in Peking put it best: 'Material incentives were like poison in our minds.' He said that before the Cultural Revolution they had a system of bonuses. Each month rewards were given for over-production, quality, quantity, attendance and many other things. At the end of the month workers would meet and decide who should get bonuses.

There were tremendous arguments and disputes; people became jealous of each other. Many people felt they were short-changed. Some chose work on the basis of money, not on the needs of production. Since bonuses were given for over-production, workers rushed to the jobs where it was easy to overfulfil norms. The harder jobs, which were equally vital to production, were left begging. To say the least, as Comrade Su put it, 'This hurt unity and political progress.'

Often, these bonuses came to a good deal of money. Workers at the Kairan Coal Mine in Tangshan said a bonus under the old (pre-Cultural Revolution) system sometimes came to twenty *yuan* a month — about two-thirds of a beginning worker's salary.

We were given other examples. A heavy equipment factory in Loyang had practised a piecework system of pay until they threw it off during the Cultural Revolution. Under the material incentives system those who produced more earned more. This had two devastating results: First, people worked only for quantity, not quality; quality naturally suffered. Second, it caused deep divisions between young and old. Young workers were generally stronger and could produce more, so they earned more. But older workers, with more experience and sometimes greater financial needs, earned less.

Some places still have a 'bonus' pool, but it is divided evenly among all the workers. It is not given as a 'reward' or 'incentive' for production or anything else.

A woman in the Chengchow Textile Mill summed it up: Before the Cultural Revolution 'we thought only of money and forgot political power; we thought only of praise and forgot the Party's leadership.' Now people concentrate on political consciousness, on building unity, on consolidating their socialist practices.

No Time Clocks

The 'eight-hour day' is state policy in China, and includes time for lunch and rest breaks. In some cases it also includes time for study. Lunch breaks are decided by the workers in each factory; in some cases they last an hour and they were never shorter than half an hour.

Some factories have one eight-hour shift, others have three, and in one place they even had a 'three-and-a-half' shift system. How many shifts they have, whether workers rotate shifts, which jobs are working only one shift, which more—these are all questions decided within the particular factory, according to their specific conditions.

We didn't see time clocks in any factory we visited. Once we did encounter a 'time sheet' system where workers signed in for attendance. The workers said this was used to determine production progress in relation to 'man-hours' worked. Before the Cultural Revolution they said this had been used as a 'club' over the workers' heads, but that now it was used only for checking production. They added that if a person needed a day off there was usually no problem in getting it.

What about overtime—one of the big issues in US factories today. Are Chinese workers forced to work overtime? Do they get paid more for it?

'Overtime does sometimes happen,' they told us, 'but it's rare.' Workers will volunteer for overtime for political reasons—because they want to promote greater production. No extra pay is given for overtime work. Steel workers in Wuhan told us that overtime might occur when a big trainload of ore comes in. Everyone works to get it unloaded as quickly as possible and they stay on the job until it is done. They explained this is done because it's important to get the railroad cars back into use quickly.

Another kind of 'overtime' might happen when workers are developing new technical innovations or new products.

Workers at the Tientsin No. 1 Machinery Factory told us when their factory was first started in 1952 they could only make simple lathes. During the Great Leap Forward they decided to produce more complicated gear lathes. Many workers stayed overtime in the process of building their first model lathe. Some became so involved that they brought bedding from home and slept in the workshops. After eight months they succeeded in producing their first advanced gear lathe. But this kind of round-the-clock work is quite exceptional.

Workers in the factories we visited all worked a six-day week. Some factories close down completely for the seventh day and everyone has the same day off. In other factories workers alternate their weekly holiday. Sunday was the most common day off but again this varies. Some factories try to stagger their weekly holidays so stores and parks will not be too crowded any one day of the week.

The State provides six and a half paid holidays for all workers. These are: Chinese Spring Festival (three days); National Day (two days); May Day (one day); and International Women's Day (one-half day). Both men and women got the half-day off on International Women's Day in some places; in others it seemed to be just the women. If any one of these holidays falls on your normal 'day off' from work, you get another day off.

In addition to holidays, some factories had provision for yearly vacations. Vacations in China relate to individual family needs and policies are fairly flexible. Generally, if you live a distance from your family, you receive about two weeks off work, with pay, to travel and visit. Travel expenses are paid by the factory. If your family is near by, there is no regularly scheduled vacation. Workers at the Wuhan Printing and Dyeing Factory told us they received fifteen days off each year to visit or to have their family come and visit them. This factory had a unique history. It was originally in Shanghai and

in 1957 moved to Wuhan, lock stock and barrel. The majority of workers moved with it, so most had relatives and families in Shanghai.

People Are the Most Precious*

How safe are jobs in China? What is done to prevent accidents? What is done to take care of someone when an accident occurs?

Comrade Ou Huei-ten, a member of the revolutionary committee at the Wuhan Iron and Steel Company, talked about safety: 'To prevent accidents we educate workers about safety; we tell them to listen to their shop leaders. We also supply safety equipment, like special masks and heavy clothing and we check to see if it needs to be repaired. For people who work in high places, we try to build fences and rails around their work area.' In other factories, similar measures were taken: heavy clothing, insulated shoes, or other special equipment are issued as a matter of course if the job requires it. If machinery needs repair it is not used until the repair work is done. Chinese workers don't have to argue with a foreman to get safety equipment or to have defective machinery repaired. There are no foremen: workers themselves see that the job gets done.

We did see shortcomings in the area of industrial safety. These were usually because workers were taking unnecessary risks themselves. For example, we saw spotwelders and lathe operators working without safety glasses, or workers treating a punch press more casually than such a potentially harmful machine deserves. When we asked about such things we found that safety equipment was available and issued but the individual workers had not bothered to use it. This, workers and cadres told us, was a shortcoming; but it was one to be solved through education, not by punishment or restrictive means. In a mine equipment manufacturing factory in Loyang work was arranged less care-

fully than in most factories we visited. Iron from the foundry and sharp metal scraps from lathes were left open and close to aisles where someone in a hurry—or with something else on his mind—could get a bad burn or cut.

Many accidents in Western factories occur when workers are forced to keep up with a fast moving line or to make high production for the day; speed results in taking chances. Not so in China. The pace of work there is itself a factor that promotes safety. Workers control the speed and rate of work, and therefore it is reasonable, not hectic; productive, but not back-breaking. A Western time-study man wouldn't like Chinese factories; there people come before production.

Accidents do happen. Our concern that some workers didn't wear safety glasses became real when we visited a hospital in Shihchiachuang. Among the patients was a young lathe worker who had been hit in the eye by a piece of flying metal.

There is an extensive apparatus of medical care set up to take care of workers, both for accidents and sickness. Each factory workshop or section has a 'barefoot doctor' who can help with first aid on the spot. Small clinics and first-aid stations are dotted throughout the factory workshops. Many factories have their own hospitals; others have special arrangements with city or district hospitals to provide medical care for both accidents and sickness.

Medical care for workers is free and is usually available to family members at half-cost. Costs are very low to begin with; for example, a hospital bed in a Wuhan factory was 5 *yuan* a day. However, if a family has any trouble meeting costs, special arrangements are made. We were given examples where medical costs were simply waived. Also, family members often get free medical care through other channels, like neighbourhood committees.

* 'Of all things in the world, people are the most precious.' Mao Tsetung, in *Bankruptcy of the Idealist Conception of History*, 1949.

schools, and army hospitals which give free treatment to all. There are a number of ways medical care is handled. The total picture is that neither workers nor their families lack care for reasons of money or availability.

On the Line

Work disputes and grievances are handled by the workers themselves. Grievances common in capitalist countries—complaints about unsafe working conditions, speed-up, overtime, unsafe equipment, docking of pay, suspension or firing—are simply not points of conflict in Chinese factories. Safety comes before production in determining working conditions and education, not punishment (like docking wages, suspensions or discharge), is used to solve problems.

But differences of opinion and conflicts of interest in work do come up. How are these handled? Generally, disputes are solved by discussion, investigation, and more discussion. Each shop has a group leader whose duties include mediating disputes that arise and initiating group discussion about problems.

A leading cadre of the Shenyang Transformer Factory described how a shop dispute was handled. They have a drying furnace that is used by two workshops within the factory. Both workshops were trying to overfulfil their production quota and each demanded first priority at the drying furnace. The leaders of the two workshops met and discussed the problem. They suggested that all the workers study Chairman Mao's article 'On Contradiction'. They then used ideas from that article to analyse their concrete situation. They looked at the production of the whole factory and identified when each workshop was key and when each was secondary to the total process of production. Through this method they determined a priority in the use of the furnace that satisfied everyone.

A young woman in the same factory

described a conflict about fans; some workers wanted fans on while they are working and others did not. Everyone affected discussed the question, even if it meant holding up production, and reached agreement before they turned the fans on. Fights among workers are pretty much unheard of.

Problems of lateness, absenteeism and poor work are dealt with by education, not by punishment. No one is fired; wages are not cut.

Take the question of lateness. At the Wuhan Printing and Dyeing Factory about 30 per cent of the workers are women. We asked what happens if someone is late. They said that this didn't happen often, but when it did occur they tried to find out the reason. 'For example,' they said, 'if a woman is taking care of her children and getting them ready for school and she has problems and is therefore late, we understand. That's not a problem.' They respect each other and look for the cause of the lateness in objective factors—not subjective ones. If a person is often late they investigate and try to solve the concrete cause.

Absenteeism is handled similarly. One of the women working in the Chengchow No. 3 Textile Mill told us: 'Twenty-three of us work together in the spinning department—21 women and 2 men. The factory works three shifts and we rotate shifts each week; one week mornings, the next afternoons and the third week nights. One young woman in our group often asked for unpaid personal leave when it was our turn to work nights. She would be off two or three days in the week when we worked at night. We didn't know why she requested leave so often, so we talked to her friends and to other workers who knew her situation. We found out that she simply didn't like working nights. She was young; she and her husband had only one child and her husband worked. They didn't need much money. She told us she would rather have the time to herself than have the pay for the work. So

we went to one of the older workers and asked him to talk to her about the old conditions. This young woman herself was from a poor peasant family, but now she only wanted to enjoy her good life with her family. The old worker talked to her about conditions before Liberation; how we had worked twelve to twenty hours a day. We all talked to her to help her change her outlook. We said her work, and ours, is all part of the revolution. We don't work just for ourselves—we work to support people in other countries who have not yet made their revolution. Two out of three people in the

world today are still oppressed; they are our class brothers and we should all work to help them.' The workers reported that the young woman changed her attitude toward work and stopped requesting personal leave every time she came up for night shift.

The Chinese call this 'class education': it's used quite often to deal with problems of individual subjectiveness or selfishness. The young worker's absenteeism was not cause for punishment or reprimand but rather was regarded as a problem of political consciousness and accordingly approached through education.

Holding Up Half the Sky

We were discussing conditions in the United States with a group of workers and cadres at the Tientsin No. 1 Machinery Factory. Tsai Tsao-huai, a middle-aged man on the revolutionary committee, suddenly looked up, obviously startled at what we had just said. 'What? You mean a woman in the US might lose her job if she leaves to have a baby? But that's ridiculous!'

He then proudly reviewed the provisions for women in Chinese factories. Women in other factories had also described these for us. We learned that 'women get 56 days maternity leave, with pay.' 'And,' they often added with chuckles, '70 days for twins!' Mothers have two periods (usually 40 minutes

each) during the day to nurse infants. Factories have low-cost child-care facilities, nurseries, kindergartens and 'feeding rooms'. When a woman reaches the sixth or seventh month of pregnancy, she is given work that is 'suitable to her condition'. This usually meant lighter work and, if necessary, shorter hours.

These provisions are not regarded as a kind of special privilege given to women. They do not come from a masculine 'gallantry' which graciously bends the principle of equality between men and women. Rather, they are viewed as simple, sensible steps necessary to achieve equality. They are considered necessary for women to take their full place in society, insuring good health, safe conditions and equal participation.

Woman's Work Is Never Done

Before Liberation, a woman's place in China was summed up in the old saying: 'A woman works on three terraces: the *k'ang* (bed), the kitchen stove, and the millstone.' Tied to the home by oppressive feudal and family customs, there was no place for her in the work force.

The Chinese Communist Party has from its beginning urged women to participate in society. In 1955 Chairman Mao issued the call: 'Enable every woman who can work to take her place on the labour front, under the principle of equal pay for equal work'. What has happened in the past seventeen years? How well are women integrated into the work force? What is the attitude toward women working? What direction are things going?

Women entered the industrial work force in China through two gates. First, they joined the new expanding work force as factories were constructed and industry developed. Second, women organised their own neighbourhood factories, relying on their own efforts. We visited two such factories, one in Peking and one in Tientsin.

Both factories were built by groups of housewives. They received no capital investment from the State, but they did have help and encouragement from the All-China Women's Federation and from the Chinese Communist Party. This involved both ideological support and concrete aid in the form of nurseries and day-care centres for their children.

The Peking factory we visited is run by a street committee—the basic unit of local government in the city—and is owned collectively by the workers. Eighty per cent of the 362 workers are women, and half of the workers are ex-housewives who had never worked outside the home before Liberation. During the Great Leap Forward in 1958 many women wanted to promote production and help build socialism in their country. At first, twenty-two women in this District formed a production group. Their strength was their spirit of self-reliance. Their first obstacle was that they had no place to work. They built their factory literally from the ground up, using waste materials. They collected bricks and other materials left from construction of a large stadium in their district; they went to the old city wall and carried back old bricks; they took bamboo stalks, covered them with mud, and used these for walls. Many of these original buildings are still in use, standing as an example of their self-reliance and hard struggle.

Since 1958 they have progressed 'step by step.' At first their production was very simple: pokers for the fire, small parts for stoves and metal buckets. They went to state factories and salvage yards to buy equipment. Some machines were purchased 'by the pound' as scrap metal; they repaired them and put them into service in their factory. In 1964 they began production of metal chairs and stands for X-ray machines and charcoal-heated sterilisers for medical instruments. Now they produce, among other things, an electrically controlled high precision lathe.

The Red Flag Embroidery Factory in Tientsin is now housed in an old building near the centre of the city. The factory was established in 1953 by a small group of women who did the embroidery work at home while also continuing their regular housework. After a few years they were able to come together and set up central production. The leading body in their city district gave them their first 'factory': one room in the district offices.

The women brought their own equipment from home: foot-pedal sewing machines, scissors, needles and thread. They now have 240 workers with electric sewing machines, many electric embroidery machines for fancy work, motor-powered scissors, and their operations fill four floors of their building.

One of the women workers at this factory described her struggle to join in production:

'There was a struggle when I went out into society. The All-China Women's Federation in the district where I lived mobilised us; they said times were different and we should go out and work. We went to meetings of the federation, but when we came home our husbands would not agree to let us work. They said if we went to work, then who would look after them, who would care for our parents-in-law? But we persisted and argued with them. We said, "If we work, we'll earn money, and that will help our family." At the beginning, we got materials and did the work in our homes and also tended to our families. After a while our parents-in-law, who had feudal ideas, came to like the idea that we were working. They were convinced when they saw the money that we earned. But in my family we still had struggles. We fought ideologically and I held to my position. At one point, we were on the verge of getting a divorce.

'My husband did change his attitude, but only after struggle. At first he tried to stop me from working. But the leaders where he worked did educa-

tion with him, to teach him he was wrong to try to stop me. His attitude began to change then. But I still had problems; how was I to work and still care for my children? I decided to take the children from the house to a nursery run by the neighbourhood committee. I would take the children there in the morning and then go and work. In the evening I would bring the children home and then do the cooking and all the other work in the house. My husband was finally moved by my actions and he started to help with work in the house. Now things are much easier.'

The struggle for women to 'take their place on the labour front' meant a struggle on three fronts: ideology, practical problems, and leadership.

The first front was ideological. Old ideas about women had to be changed. Men's attitudes of superiority had to be challenged and women's views of themselves had to be changed. For example, women are guaranteed equality in work and pay by law, but that became a reality only when women demanded their rights and defied old ideas and customs. In some places the struggle to implement equal pay for equal work still continues.

Before Liberation, women were virtually slaves in the family. As one older woman said, 'If my husband said that something was one, I never dared to say it was two.' There were taboos and superstitions about women's work. If a woman came by when a well was dug, it would never have water; if a woman plowed the land, no crops would grow. These old prejudices were carried over into the cities and new ones emerged as industry developed. The All-China Women's Federation played an important role in mobilising women to fight against these old ideas; the Communist Party helped with education among both men and women. As Chairman Mao said, 'Times have changed, and today men and women are equal. Whatever men comrades can accomplish, women comrades

can too.' This is a long battle and is by no means finished; it continues today and will be fought again tomorrow.

The second front was that practical problems had to be solved. Steps had to be taken to make sure that productive work outside the home did not become a 'second job' for a woman. Nurseries and kindergartens were set up to help with child care; older people in the neighbourhoods were organised to start 'service centres' where mending, sewing and other kinds of housework could be done. Struggles went on within the family to get the husband to share in household tasks.

The third front was that women had to be involved in leadership. Usually this has been done by making sure that every leading body has at least one 'representative of women.' In many places there was also a conscious effort to involve women in leadership at every level in the factory. Also there was usually a leading woman cadre in charge of women's work in the factory. It is important that women participate in leadership, we were told, because only in this way would women be truly respected. 'Also, women know the physical conditions of women workers better than the men do,' a man on the revolutionary committee of a commune told us.

Today women in China are engaged in industry in all areas; every factory we visited had women workers, though the percentage varied. In most factories there seemed to be no division of jobs on sex lines. Men and women were often working in the same workshop; sometimes where a machine required several people for operation, the group would include both men and women. We saw women working in skilled or semi-skilled jobs—ones that in the United States are reserved for white men: welding, running lathes, operating cranes, driving fork-lift trucks. However, in two places we visited heavy jobs were done only by men: working underground in the Kairan Coal Mine and loading

crews on the Hsinking docks near Tientsin. Also, some very light jobs, like pasting on labels, were done mainly by women. Work with young children in kindergartens and nurseries was done by women. But women have broken many old taboos and do engage in some heavy work. In Canton we visited a commune which was digging a tunnel through a mountain for a water conservancy project. Eight teams had volunteered for this work; two were teams of women. The work was hard, tedious hand labour using sledge hammers, chisels and hand carts.

The principle of equal pay for equal work was generally followed in the factories we visited. Since seniority at work and political consciousness are important factors, we saw cases where someone doing heavy work was paid less than a person doing light work. There was also a clear understanding that each person's job was 'part of the revolution;' a woman pasting on labels had equal footing with a man pouring out molten iron.

Clearly the direction of change is toward greater integration of women into the work force. At many factories they said the number of women workers had increased since the Cultural Revolution. These new women workers are working alongside men in all kinds of jobs.

The historic role of the All-China Women's Federation has been to encourage and mobilise women to join in work outside the home. Today most women are working and the task is no longer the struggle to join in labour, but to guarantee equality through continued struggle on the three fronts mentioned above. When we asked about the All-China Women's Federation's present status we were told it is in the process of 'struggle-criticism-transformation.' That is, the future and direction of the Women's Federation are presently being discussed deeply and this is undoubtedly related to the politics of the 'struggle between the two lines.'

Young and Old at Work

Education has been expanded, especially since the Cultural Revolution. Another new force is appearing among workers in Chinese factories: the 'educated youths.' In the past those who went through middle school usually went straight on to higher education or other technical work. Now increasing numbers of middle school graduates are taking part in productive work in the factories.

The educated youths have, as the Chinese say, 'strong points and weak points.' Their strong points include their literacy, technical skills, and a high spirit. Their weak points include an undue pride in their education, inflated egos, a corresponding disdain for repetitious or simple manual work, and tendencies toward spontaneity and impatience in political struggle. To draw on the strengths of each, old and young are often combined in one study group. The educated youths have the advantage of literacy; often they take the lead in studying articles and reading them aloud. Veteran workers have had great experience in both class struggle and the struggle for production; their own lives provide many examples of the theoretical points in the materials they study. The general trend seems to be to learn from the experience of the veterans and learn from the spirit of the young.

There is a great deal of respect for 'veteran workers.' This is quite different from the blind obedience to elders which was part of the old Confucian tradition. Veteran workers are respected because they have had long experience in class struggle, because they have had a proletarian life, and because they contribute greatly by way of their experience.

Old workers, even retired workers, are very much involved in the life of the factories. Since so much activity revolves around the workplace, some people do not retire when they reach retirement

age—60 for men, 55 for women. Health is often a more important factor than age in determining retirement. Poor health may necessitate earlier retirement while good health may mean workers choose to remain at their jobs. Workers at the Kairan Coal Mine described one veteran worker who reached retirement age and preferred to continue work. He said, 'I still want to do something for socialism.' He just wasn't ready to sit back and watch others work! He had heart trouble and couldn't do heavy work; he began cleaning up the grounds around the buildings and workshops, and mobilised other older workers to do the same thing.

Veteran workers are not kept around as 'museum pieces' or as 'quaint' reminders of how life used to be. They have an important role to play in the life of the factory; they help both with ideological education and with technical advice. Often, they take the lead in developing new methods of work and technical innovations. Everyone is encouraged to learn from their experience and from their perspective. They are respected as comrades, not 'venerated' as elders.

Town and Country

Efforts are being made to break down the old division between agricultural and industrial workers. One method is the development of small-scale industry in the countryside. The goal is for communes to become as self-sufficient as possible, so most industry in the countryside is geared to making products for rural areas. Many communes produce plows and other implements to pull behind tractors, electric milling machines to husk and grind grain, small 'hand tractors,' as well as smaller hand tools. Most communes we visited have small foundries and workshops to make farm tools. Other 'rural industry' we saw included fertiliser factories and food processing plants.

New industry is often built away from the major cities. New factories are built

in suburbs, away from the crowded centre of town. Some workers are from a peasant background; they continue to live in the countryside while they work in a factory in a near-by city. Usually other members of their households will be commune members working in agriculture. Thus, many factories include workers with a foot in each camp; they have direct experience with both agricultural and industrial work.

Many factories also engage in agricultural production. Some own farms where cadres and workers spend occasional periods in agricultural labour. Some factories also grow fruits and vegetables on land surrounding their building. Pigs are a common adjunct to dining halls, performing multi-purpose roles of garbage disposal, providing fertilisers, and then being 're-cycled' themselves on to the dining table!

Transforming a Spiritual Force Into a Material Force

Study is an important part of life in Chinese factories. Shop groups or work units in every factory we visited had set aside specific times each week for study. One factory had three evening periods a week of 1.5 hours each; another had two hours of study once a week; a third had one hour after work each day.

Study involves both political and technical subjects. Work groups discuss and solve their day-to-day problems. Workers told us they were reading Marxist-Leninist theoretical works, newspapers and magazines. The most common materials used were articles by Chairman Mao, especially the 'three Constantly Read Articles' (*Serve the People*, *In Memory of Norman Bethune*, and *The Foolish Old Man Who Removed the Mountains*) and the Five Philosophical Articles (*On Practice*, *On Contradiction*, *On the Correct Handling of Contradictions Among the People*, *Where Do Correct Ideas Come From*, and *Speech at the*

Chinese Communist Party's National Conference on Propaganda Work). *The Communist Manifesto* was also frequently mentioned.

A work group will usually study together; this helps tie study to practice. There is also a good deal of self-study in spare time. Workers we met gave many examples of their study and how it helped their work. Study is used in four general ways: to help workers understand their role in society; to combat selfishness and individualism; to promote technical innovations; and to solve contradictions among the workers. Work group study also promotes a unity which affects all aspects of life.

Tao Su-lun works as a cook in the dining hall of the East Is Red Auto Factory in Peking. 'I graduated from middle school in 1966 and came to work here in February 1968. When I went to work in the kitchen, I wasn't very happy. After all, I had studied for ten years; that work seemed too simple, too plain. I didn't like my job; I kept hoping that I would get to change it, to something with a more brilliant future. I wanted to work in the factory itself. The older cooks in the kitchen knew something was bothering me, and they asked me what was wrong. When I explained, they talked to me about their sufferings in the old society. They led me in studying the 'three Constantly Read Articles,' especially *Serve the People*. I was deeply moved by *Serve the People*, especially by Chang Szu-teh's boundless loyalty to the people. I compared my thinking with Chang Szu-teh's. I looked down on my job; he did not. This showed that I didn't really mean to serve the people whole-heartedly. So I took Chang Szu-teh as a model. I accepted the job assigned to me and I learned to love my work. Now I think that a job as a cook is a common job, but it is also a job that is part of the revolution. In my job I can give good food to the workers in the shop; they can then produce more and so we can all serve

the revolution in China and the revolution in the whole world.'

The problem that Tao Su-lun faced is common in capitalist countries; the very nature of the capitalist system produces and maintains alienation. There, most workers harbour a hope to some day get a job that has prestige, honour, high pay, or some other special reward. The crucial difference in China is that although Tao looked down on her work, no one else did. The problem was not the job; it was her attitude toward it. From the way she described her feelings, it was clear she had romanticised what it would be like to work in production in the factory. If she had simply changed her job without changing her attitude, she would probably still have been bored and dissatisfied. This is exactly what happened to another young woman of the same age at the Shenyang Transformer Factory:

'I first came to this factory in 1969, after graduating from middle school. At that time, my only thought was to get re-education from the older workers. Like the other new workers, I was in high spirits and I wanted to produce as much as possible. I started work doing grinding and at first I was happy with my job. But after a while, doing the same grinding every hour every day, I started to think that this work was too ordinary. I studied *Serve the People* and Chang Szu-teh was an example for me. He considered his job as part of the revolution. Then I read *In Memory of Norman Bethune*. There, Chairman Mao says that each person's capacity may be high or low but everyone is capable of having Comrade Bethune's spirit. I tried to learn from the spirit of Chang Szu-teh and Norman Bethune. I learned that every unit I make is a part of a transformer and these transformers are sent all over China and the rest of the world, too. I make my contribution by making my small pieces. Now I understand what I am working for, and I'm satisfied with my work.'

In the old society people who laboured for a living were looked down upon; manual work was despised. Work with the hands was considered lower than work with the head. In the new socialist society, workers are respected. It seems simple and obvious that in a workers' society, in socialism, work should be respected. But old ideas—as the above examples show—die hard; the Chinese understand that this is one way 'the class struggle continues.' And political study with work groups is one way they fight the struggle.

Also the nature of repetitive or boring work is transformed by the environment of a socialist system. People do not work merely for a pay cheque; they are working for something they believe in. Factories are not merely places where you endure work; they are centres for: production, politics, education, recreation, culture, and health and living facilities.

Hao Ching-chai is the chairman of the revolutionary committee at the Pottery Research Institute in Tangshan. He said that the study of Mao's works has helped their committee function better. 'In the past, we sometimes had problems. When a question came up, different people would have different opinions, but we didn't know how to handle our differences. We had lots of arguments; we never could reach unity. So we studied *On Contradiction* and we came to see that it is natural to have differences of opinion. That's normal; in fact, it's a good thing and we shouldn't be afraid of it. After we studied *On Contradiction*, we changed our approach. Now whenever an important question comes up, we call a mass meeting. We try to involve as many people as possible in the discussion. Everyone talks and there are always lots of different opinions and lots of disagreements. But we understand that we can learn from each other. We work out our differences through discussion and we now can get unity on the questions we face.'

Theoretical work is often applied in quite creative ways. A woman worker at a district-run factory in Peking gave us one example. When the factory decided to begin making electronic lathes, she was put in charge of the section that was to do electric wiring. 'But I had very little schooling; very few of us had much education at all. I was no technician; I couldn't even read blueprints. I just couldn't see where to start in learning to do wiring. I went to the Party branch in our factory and they encouraged me. They suggested that I study Chairman Mao's article *On Practice*. When I read it, I learned that skills do not come by nature. Every skill is learned through practice, no one is born a technician. My comrades encouraged me, too. They said: "Remember, illiterate workers have built high buildings in Peking!" I got a little more confidence and tried to do the work. It was hard for me to copy the blueprints; some of the workers in my section were middle school graduates. They used a compass to make circles, but I had never even seen such a thing before. I watched what they did and figured out my own methods. I got a round box and used that to draw circles. These workers encouraged me; they said my circles looked even better than theirs. But they used symbols on the blueprints that I didn't know—like "A", "B", "C". So I made symbols of my own; 'A' was like a ladder with something on it; 'B' was like a '3' with a line next to it; 'C' was half a pancake. I made my own copy of the blueprint; no one else could read my blueprints but they worked for me.

'But I also had problems. One man in our group had been to school and was an electrical worker. At first he looked down on me; he said the wiring could only be done by a trained electrician. He told me I should study the blueprint more and I shouldn't try doing any wiring. He said I would only make mistakes. But the more I studied the blueprint, the more confused I got. I thought of what I had

read in *On Practice*. If I started to do the wiring, I thought I could learn as I worked. I went to the Party branch and told them what I thought. They supported me; they encouraged me to go ahead and they told the electrical worker he shouldn't make fun of me. Then I tried to wire up my first panel. When I got it done, everything was right except for one small wire. So I took it to the electrical worker and asked him to show me what was missing. He learned then not to make fun of me; he began to respect my spirit. Now I can do all the wiring on the panels. There are many other veteran workers like me who have never been to school. We sometimes find it difficult to learn new techniques. But we give priority to practice and we learn from each other.'

Study has other effects, too. Relations among workers were close and friendly. Work, recreation, education and cultural activities are drawn together through joint study. Workers help each other solve both personal and group problems. They are comrades, not competitors. Their spirit of cooperation is promoted both by common study and by the nature of the socialist system itself.

Study is closely tied to practice, applied in a creative and productive way. It is a living process that changes as the needs of production and society change.

The Creativity of the Masses

The Cultural Revolution drove home the truth of the statement made by Chairman Mao back in 1955: 'The masses have boundless creative power . . . they can concentrate on production in breadth and depth and create more and more undertakings for their own well-being.' At almost every factory we visited, we saw technical innovations developed during and since the Cultural Revolution. Production has increased greatly. Workers at the Wuhan Sewing Machine Factory said: 'The Cultural Revolution is a great revolution

ideologically and economically; as our consciousness increased, our production increased.'

Some technical innovations were relatively simple: at the sewing machine factory they showed us a multiple-head drilling machine which drills many holes at once instead of one at a time. On another machine one person is now needed instead of the former seventeen. Most innovations were developed by a 'three-in-one combination' of workers, cadres, and technicians. Sometimes these innovations changed the whole output of a factory. At the Shenyang Transformer Factory they said that 'in the Cultural Revolution, we criticised the Liu Shao-chi line of "run the factory by experts." We have built new transformers using a three-in-one combination and this new equipment is better than the old design: it is lighter in weight, it takes only half as long to make, and it costs 30 per cent less.'

Technical innovations have helped some factories become self-sufficient. Workers at the Tangshan Pottery Research Institute told us that in the past they imported all the colours for glazes on the pottery. During the Cultural Revolution many people joined the struggle for scientific experiment and now they produce twenty varieties of colours themselves. A woman engineer discovered a way to produce gold colouring from local materials; now they glaze to the whole province of Hopei.

At the East Is Red Auto Factory in Peking we saw an innovation which illustrated the fundamental difference between work in socialist China and work in a 'free enterprises' system. In Detroit, the automobile factory where Stu worked installed an automatic spotwelder about a year ago. Workers in that factory hated the machine, and with good reason. It sped up the line; they had to work harder to keep up. They also knew that it took away people's jobs and meant more unemployment, which is very high in the auto-industry to begin with. The new machine

was the enemy of the workers; they cheered when it broke down and sometimes they even 'helped' it break down. In Peking, at the East Is Red Auto Factory we saw a similar new automatic spotwelder. But the Peking spotwelder was built by workers themselves, together with technicians and cadres. Many had even stayed overtime to help build it. They regarded it with great pride and they knew it was to their benefit to make such innovations. Automation meant improved production but since workers were in control, it did not mean speed-up. It didn't throw anyone out of work because improved production in the socialist system meant rational planning and adjustments, not loss of jobs and dislocation. The machines in Detroit and Peking were similar; but in one setting it was the workers' enemy while in the other it was the workers' friend. In one system technical advancement meant unemployment lines for workers; in the other it was part of a rationally planned economy that benefited everyone.

Workers' Life

'Pay close attention to the well-being of the masses, from the problems of land and labour to those of fuel, rice, cooking oil and salt.' Chairman Mao issued this call in 1934; it has been used as a guideline ever since.

For example, the Wuhan Iron and Steel Works has an extensive system of workers' 'welfare.' This factory, in addition to iron and steel production, organises and supports: a college for workers and their families, housing and apartments, four middle schools, ten primary schools, nurseries, three theatres, a library, a cultural performance 'propaganda team,' a hospital with four hundred beds, several clinics, a rest sanatorium, medical teams, a farm, a militia group, sports and recreation facilities and also provides cheap transportation by bus from the city to the factory.

Workers and cadres at the Foreign Languages Printing House in Peking outlined the 'workers' welfare' activities which their plant supports: free medical care with half-cost for family members; kindergartens and nurseries; haircuts and a bath house; a retirement system; books and a library; sports and recreation facilities; cultural performances; films; a factory-subsidised cafeteria; and, they said, we have low rents, no taxes, no unemployment or lay-offs, and if someone has health needs for special food they can get extra money to cover the cost. They also grow apples, rice and grapes on factory farms and on the grounds around their buildings, and some of these products go directly to workers while some are sold to the State.

'Before Liberation, I had never even seen a hospital run by a factory. Now we have our own hospital and the doctors and nurses come to the workshops to see the condition of the workers and to give us treatment.' This is what a Chengchow factory worker told us. His factory looked after workers' health through a three level system of medical care: 'barefoot doctors' in each shop; clinics in each section; a hospital for the factory as a whole. As mentioned earlier, medical care is provided free to workers and at half-cost for their families. But this rule is flexible; the individual's situation is considered. Workers at the Wuhan Printing and Dyeing Factory gave us one example of this flexibility. A few years back, the wife of one of their workers became very ill. She was hospitalised for two years and the cost of her medical care was nine thousand *yuan*. Half-rate for families cut that down to 'only' four thousand five hundred *yuan*. The man who worked earned 'between sixty and seventy *yuan* a month—obviously there was no way they could pay the bill. The leaders of the hospital and the factory discussed the situation; the circumstances were investigated and they simply dropped payment. The woman received all

the medical care she needed, though she couldn't pay for it. They also told us that in other cases the State has picked up the bill.

Sick leave with pay is standard policy in the factories we visited. The Tung Feng Watch Factory has a policy of six months sick leave with full pay and after that 60 per cent of pay. Workers at the Chengchow Textile Equipment Manufacturing Factory described a woman who had become seriously ill with heart disease and was absent from work for four years. All her treatment was covered, including being sent to Shanghai for special care. She received 70 per cent of her wages plus the regular increases given during her illness. She had commented to her fellow workers that 'before Liberation, I would have died with such an illness.'

Most factories have built low-rent housing for workers. We visited several families in such factory-built apartments. Rents for two rooms plus kitchen and bath usually ran between four and six *yuan* a month. Sometimes utilities were extra. Some factories in the north provided a wage supplement in the winter months to pay for fuel. Factories also have dormitories for single workers; rents in these are very low. In some places it was 50 cents a month; in others, new workers paid nothing for dormitory rooms.

Workers choose where they want to live; the percentage of workers who live in factory owned housing differs from place to place. Many families live in State owned apartments or houses and some people own the homes they live in. In cases where two members of a family work at different factories they can choose between housing provided by either one.

Some very small factories, such as the district-run factory we visited in Peking, do not provide housing. Most workers were women who lived in the neighbourhood and many lived in housing owned by the factory where their husband worked.

There is variety in the type of housing that factories provide. The newest housing is often four- or five-storey buildings; in some places they have built smaller one-storey houses that are similar to the style of peasant homes. Details change with the times. The Kairan Coal Mine in Tangshan began to build housing for their workers in the mid-1950's and the workers bought their houses from the mine in instalments without interest. We visited one neighbourhood there where every family owned their own home. Housing built in more recent years is rented from the mines. Thirty-five per cent of the workers in these mines live in housing provided by the mine. The percentage varied in other factories.

Factories provide feeding rooms for mothers to nurse infants; they also run nurseries and kindergartens. Parents decide whether their children attend a nursery. Often children remain at home and grandparents or great-grandparents look after them. Nurseries do much more than 'baby-sit.' They are bright and lively places with lots of activities for the children. Even the smallest ones go on outings; they learn to sing and dance. We visited several nurseries where the children were eager to perform samples of Peking opera for us. In Shenyang we saw a group of five-year-olds learning to write characters.

Nurseries provide for child-care during the working day; some also care for children all week long. Parents drop their children off at the start of their work week and pick them up on the sixth day, so the family spends its holiday together. Both day care and week-long care are voluntary. Charges for nursery or kindergarten care are low, with nursery costs subsidised by the factory. One kindergarten in Chengchow charged six *yuan* a month for all-week care and 1.5 *yuan* a month for day care; this did not include the cost of food. The nursery run by the East Is Red Auto Factory in Peking charges eleven and a half *yuan* a month

for day care, but this includes three hot meals and two snacks a day for all children. The State also helps subsidise nurseries and kindergartens since the actual operation costs are higher than the total fees that parents pay.

Children begin primary school at age seven (age six using Western style of determining age). School is free. Many factories have their own primary and middle schools. Elsewhere children go to schools run by their city district or street committee.

'Rice, cooking oil, and salt' are also attended to by the factories. Every factory we visited, large and small, had dining halls for their workers. Small ones had a kitchen which could turn out hot meals or heat up food that workers brought from home. The larger dining halls provided a very wide variety of appetising dishes and at nominal cost. In Wuhan, workers said, 'we have told our cooks to provide a choice of "three hot" for every meal: hot soup, hot rice, hot main dish.' The cost ranged from a low of 4 cents to a high of 15 cents for a meal, depending on choice. In Chengchow we visited a dining hall equipped to serve two thousand workers on each shift. The Kairan Coal Mine in Tangshan has a dining hall for above-ground workers and hot food is taken to underground workers during lunch break.

Cultural and recreational activities help make Chinese factories lively and exciting places. Emphasis is on participation, not just observing, and workers typically jump into these spare-time pursuits with great zest.

Almost every factory has a spare-time 'propaganda team' which performs Chinese songs and dances and scenes from the new revolutionary Peking operas. Part of their purpose is 'to make life more lively,' and the ones we saw certainly did a good job of it! They provide both entertainment and education, using songs and dances of China's national minorities, selections from Peking opera, and scenes

from the life of their own factory. Sometimes the propaganda team will give performances to praise the merits or good behavior of individual people or work groups in their factory. The artistic level of these troupes is quite high; their enthusiasm infects all who come into contact with them. The timeliness and relevancy of their material make them very popular. They are voluntary, spare-time groups. Factories often provide funds for elaborate costumes, instruments, music and other equipment.

Sports are popular. Basketball courts, ping-pong tables and volleyball courts were common throughout all the factories we visited. Some had soccer fields, sports grounds and even swimming pools or small stadiums. Track meets, tug-of-wars and other games are often organised. Teams are organised in different sections of the factory but there is also considerable informal activity and 'pick-up' games. Both men and women are active in sports.

Factories also provide reading rooms, libraries, TV rooms and game rooms. Many cities have a 'workers' cultural centre' where workers' groups from different factories can put on performances or hold sports events. We visited a 'cultural park' which serves the whole city of Canton. The activities there were numerous: two outdoor theatres; two stages with cultural performances going on; six exhibition halls; a library and reading room; amusements and rides for small children; and sports facilities where we watched a basketball game between teams from a sugar mill and another factory and a ping-pong match between a shipyard worker and a machinist.

Red is the colour of happiness in China; the factories are 'doubly red,' politically and culturally!

One Divides Into Two

The Chinese are the first to admit they have shortcomings. They are generally

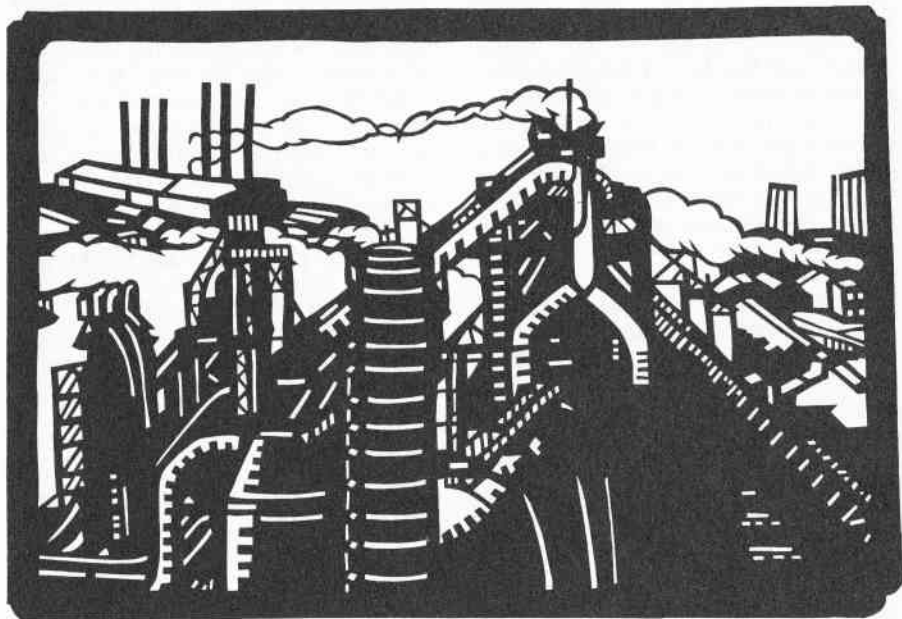
quite frank in discussing them: 'Our leadership sometimes can't cope with production problems and sometimes we get confused,' said some Peking workers. 'Our assembly is not always done in a practical way for such a large factory; this is a reflection of our practice when we were small,' said a cadre in Tientsin. The most common shortcomings mentioned to us were that too much work is done by hand, and problems in administrative work. But they are trying to solve these problems. A movement for technical innovation is encouraged to reduce the amount of hand labour needed. They say administrative problems will be solved over time as workers gain experience in running factories. 'After all,' people in Wuhan said, 'we know how to smash the old system, but we are still learning how to build up the new.'

We have already mentioned two areas where we felt improvement is necessary: workers concern for their own safety (protective glasses, etc.) and maintaining close relations between workers and cadres. The Chinese maintain that the class struggle continues under socialism, and thus shortcomings are bound to appear. The

proper attitude, they assert, is to be vigilant and determined in continuing to struggle against these weaknesses or wrong ideas. Their appearance does not reflect inherent flaws of socialism as a system. Rather, socialism allows and encourages masses of workers to struggle and actually solve such problems. -

'The socialist countries are states of an entirely new type in which the exploiting classes have been overthrown and the working people are in power.' Chairman Mao said this in 1957. The 'New China' illustrates just how different this 'new socialist country' can be from the old capitalist society. The interests of the whole people come first; decisions are based on people's needs, not on profits.

Socialism is based upon people—working people. In China human needs come first. State policies are a means to that end; written policies are applied with a flexibility impossible in a profit system. Factories are only part of Chinese society, but they are a key to the future. Moreover, they are now the people's factories and that is what makes them *really* exciting.



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