Chapter VIII

THE REAPPEARANCE OF THE TRADE UNIONS, 1973

Trade unions reappeared in Chinese factories only in 1973, well after the Party had resumed its primary role in China and months after the rehabilitation of the Communist Youth League. At the national level, the ACFTU had survived in name but had received virtually no mention for years; it has still not publicly reappeared, references having been limited to factory and provincial-level unions. Even the role of representing Chinese workers internationally has been played by Chinese Workers' Delegations rather than the ACFTU. Much of this chapter is, therefore, devoted to outlining the context of factory/labor policies in which the unions have reappeared.

The main provisions of the Anshan Constitution were listed in the previous chapter to indicate basic features of the Maoist line in industry: Party leadership, politics in command, mass movements, elimination of rules and regulations, interchangeability of tasks, technical innovation, and close cooperation among workers, technicians and cadres. Some of those policies could be realized only after the Cultural Revolution ended. Most important, of course, was the need to rebuild the Party and then to strengthen its leadership role. Others were modified or consolidated, beginning especially in 1970, by restoring "good" rules and regulations and strengthening the role of management and accounting in the factories, emphasizing the role of veteran workers toward younger workers, attending to product quality as well as quantity, and increasing the role of experts in technical innovation to reach a cooperative balance. Nevertheless, politics remained in command.

To facilitate analysis, the various characteristics of the
Anshan Constitution will be discussed in terms of the interrelations among political education, production, administrative education, and transmission belt—the four activities or functions around which earlier chapters have been organized.

Political Education and Production

In Chapter VII conflict over union policy was analyzed in terms of alternate approaches to political education. The policy of politics in command since the Cultural Revolution has meant the primacy of political education over production and worker amenities, with class struggle as the focus of political education. Production would follow automatically but could not be pursued successfully for its own sake:

Under socialist conditions, workers should of course work hard because engaging in production and developing the socialist economy with greater, faster, better and more economical results is very important for consolidating the dictatorship of the proletariat, defeating capitalism and supporting the world's people in their revolutionary struggles. But, the struggle for production cannot be isolated from class struggle in class society. If we bury ourselves in work to the neglect of political line and class struggle, production can never be run well.3

One must "grasp revolution, [to] promote production."

In terms of our earlier differentiation between nationalistic and communistic political education, however, Rensselear Lee has observed that those two themes have been combined in Chinese discussions about technology. The Chinese bourgeois expert relies on foreign technology and is therefore identified with foreign economic exploitation.4 The workers' self-reliance furthers the class struggle because it obviates relying on bourgeois experts, and it is patriotic because it is perforce indigenous.

Earlier in this study, incentive policy was discussed primarily in terms of material versus nonmaterial incentives. Politics in command means emphasizing political education over material
incentives, and the Chinese press has not emphasized wages in recent years. The exceptions have tended to stress the absence of large wage differentials in Chinese factories. Additionally, the Maoist line assumes that political education will replace external incentives, non-material as well as material, with internal or self-motivation.

The success of this effort is perhaps even more dependent on worker perceptions of their role in society and in the factories than the successful use of non-material external incentives, as discussed in the introductory chapter. In this sense, incentive policy reflects the interrelatedness of various aspects of the Maoist line. One factor in worker perceptions is the privileged position of workers in Chinese society. Even when material incentives are not emphasized, improvements in general living standards are not neglected. Moreover, although efforts to minimize the gap between urban and rural income have been more successful in China than in other countries, Chinese workers are materially better off than the peasants. Perhaps more significantly, the wage differential between workers and those in more lucrative vocations is far smaller than in other countries.

Wage differentials between workers and other factory personnel is most directly relevant to this argument. Visiting thirty-eight firms in 1966, Barry Richman found that "at a majority of the enterprises surveyed, the ratio between the top pay and average enterprise pay was less than 2.5 to 1." Riskin, after visiting some of the same firms in 1972, suggests that this ratio has probably been reduced even further. It is additionally significant that the average wages of workers are about the same as the average wages of technicians and cadres in the same factories.

In less material terms, the workers are also lauded as the leading class in Chinese society, a theme reemphasized again after a period of Red Guard and army prominence during the Cultural Revolution. The workers' perception of their role in Chinese society
may also be influenced by the prominent pioneering role they have played in developing new small industries at the hsien level, emphasizing once again the themes of self-reliance and indigenous technology.12

The workers' perceptions of their position in the factory may be influenced by wage differentials within each factory, as noted above, and three policies relating to participation and involvement in factory life. One such policy during this period has been the effort to encourage collective cooperation in work groups rather than individual competition among workers.13 A second policy has been the general informality in Chinese factories, encouraging workers to interact freely with staff, discussing production problems, etc., without regard to hierarchical chains of command.

A third policy involves the issue of worker participation in technology and in management. Worker participation relates directly to the interaction between political education and production insofar as it actualizes the political ideology and creates self-motivation toward production. It is a form of political education.

Worker participation, however, has two additional purposes. One is to train successors, that is, to prepare the workers to administer industry and society. This is a traditional Communist goal similar to what Lenin meant when he called the trade unions schools of administration. The other is to realize Mao's assumption that tapping the wisdom of the people will produce better results. Not only will participation enhance worker consciousness and technical ability; workers already have sufficient political insight and practical wisdom to contribute substantially to both factory management and technology.

As indicated above, perspectives on this issue have shifted during the past four years away from the extremes of the Cultural Revolution to the view that experts as well as workers do have a role to play in technological innovation and that clear divisions of responsibility have a place in factory management. At the same
time, efforts to strengthen Party leadership have enhanced the role of Party committees in politically educating the workers. These shifts also mean more attention to formal efforts to educate workers for the tasks ahead. It is at this point that political education and administrative education come together, and the topic of actual worker participation will be deferred.

**Political Education and Administrative Education**

With politics in command, administrative education comes closer to political education than in other periods, since political consciousness is seen as the major prerequisite for successorship. During the past few years, great emphasis has been placed on training successors among Chinese workers. Technicians and veteran workers are being encouraged to share their technical knowledge with others. The major vehicle for technical education, however, has been the July 21 worker schools and colleges, instigated by a directive by Mao on July 21, 1968. While many of these schools are part-time, several of them offer full-time two-year programs.

The political aspects of administrative education have emphasized class struggle and have centered around three major movements or campaigns: (1) to study Marxism-Leninism-Mao Tse-tung Thought; (2) to criticize revisionism and rectify work style; and (3) to learn from the well-publicized model of the Tach'ing oil fields. Various policy aspects overlap in these campaigns. Organized as mass campaigns by the Party committees, the first two combine to emphasize class struggle through studying Mao and repudiating revisionism. The campaign to criticize revisionism and rectify work style predominated in 1973, one factory reporting fourteen large criticism meetings since 1972. This movement also linked class struggle and political education to production by mobilizing workers to rectify their own work style. The campaign to learn from Tach'ing extended this linkage to both production and factory relations by advocating the application of Mao's thought within an integrated model for industry, a model overtly representing the Maoist
line as opposed to the Liu Shao-ch'i line. In this way, the three campaigns complement one another and reflect Maoist priorities concerning the interrelationships among class struggle, intrafactory relations, and production.

In another sense, however, in the seventies the emphasis on class struggle has had unity as a major theme as well: "Unite, don't split." On the one hand, some role for experts in technology and management has been advocated. On the other hand, presumably increased technical knowledge and raised political consciousness would prepare the workers practically and psychologically to cooperate with technical, engineering, and managerial staff on an equal rather than subservient basis, thus facilitating cooperation. One manifestation of this possibility has been the so-called three-in-one combination of workers, technicians, and cadres into functional groups for such endeavors as technical innovation.

Worker Participation

The provisions of the Anshan Constitution assume that political education, technical innovation, factory management, and production should be integrated aspects of a single undertaking, with minimum role differentiation among workers, cadres, and technicians. In practice, worker participation in technology and management takes two forms: participation by the workers as a whole, and the selection and preparation of individual workers for promotion to technician or cadre status. The July 21 schools, discussed above, are designed to train workers to be technicians, and a significant number of workers have been promoted to technician status in recent years. Perhaps the major form of worker participation in technology, however, has been the three-way combinations involved in technical innovation.

First introduced in 1965, the three-in-one approach has gone through three stages. Initially, technicians seem to have played the major if underpublicized role. During the Cultural Revolution, emphasis on worker initiative and self-reliance accompanied
class struggle against experts and professionals. During the seventies the role of experts has reemerged. The present line is summarized by Hung Ch'i as follows: Technical innovation must continue to rely on the masses and on worker initiative through the three-way combinations to 'wipe out the pernicious influence of operation of factory by experts.' Technicians must participate, but they will need guidance to avoid conservatism: 'Technicians must be encouraged to engage in technical innovation and scientific experimentation boldly...[they must be used and] asked to transform themselves at the same time.' Like many of the policies discussed in this chapter, the three-way combinations for technical innovation combine the themes of class struggle and national integration, political education and intra-factory cooperation.

The emphasis has been the reverse with respect to worker participation in management, with promotion of workers to cadre status predominating over direct participation in management by the workers as a whole. As evinced throughout this study, no sustained efforts have been made to institutionalize direct worker participation in management. As Paul Harper has also argued, breaking down the boundaries between workers and staff has been achieved primarily by cadres and technicians spending time in the workshops participating in productive labor.

The period since the Cultural Revolution has been characterized, however, by a major campaign to recruit workers into cadre positions, comparable in scope perhaps to the time shortly after 1949. In major industrial cities like Shanghai, Peking and Tientsin, twenty to forty thousand promotions since the Cultural Revolution have been reported, while similar figures have been reported for some provinces. These figures are not broken down and presumably include promotions to technician status. Many of them seem to be promotions to membership on factory Revolutionary Committees and, more recently, factory Party and trade union committees. Within factories, the theme that workers are now the masters of their own enterprises has meant that now most officials are also production workers or
ex-workers.

There has also been a corresponding increase in recruitment of workers for Party membership. At the highest level, the numbers of production workers or ex-workers elected to the Party's Central Committee seems to have increased along with the decrease in military representation from the Ninth to the Tenth Party Congresses. Most significant, and publicized, was the appointment of Wang Hung-wen as a vice-chairman of the Political Bureau and major figure among the top leadership. Two additional workers, Wu Kuei-hsien and Ni Chih-fu were elected alternate Political Bureau members. The list of new provincial trade union chairmen elected in 1973 includes a very high proportion of Central Committee members, most of whom seem to have emerged during the Cultural Revolution. The new union committees at local levels seem also largely staffed by workers.

**Party-Trade Union Relations and Trade Union Tasks**

Trade unions have reemerged in a context of Party committee leadership in Chinese factories. The Party committees make major decisions concerning political line, ideology, and production. The Revolutionary Committee in each factory is responsible for day-to-day administration of policy. In the absence of trade unions, Workers Representative Congresses had assisted the Party committees organize and mobilize the workers for study, discussion about production, recreation and welfare activities, and working with female workers. The reconstituted unions are inheriting these tasks.

Party committees organized the elections of the renewed unions and carried out preparatory rectification and education programs. The reports from the conferences at which various provincial union committees were elected all stressed the need for strengthened Party leadership over the unions and the role of unions as assistants to the Party, providing an organizational link between Party and workers. The new unions are being admonished not to repeat past errors such as neglecting class struggle and emphasizing livelihood
and production over ideological work. Under Party leadership they are to organize and unite the workers to carry out class struggle.

Under this general heading and in this general spirit or overall orientation, more specific union tasks are emerging. Political education is the key, especially the organization of workers to study Marxism-Leninism-Mao Tse-tung Thought and criticize revisionism. Still more specifically, the unions are assuming a role in training successors like running factory schools and participating in worker promotion, that had previously been assigned to Party committees.

In addition to education, the unions are also resuming their major role in the administration of workers' welfare, including decisions about welfare distribution, women's work, visiting workers to demonstrate their solicitude, and recreational activities. They are also to see that production work is done well, organizing the workers to exercise self-reliance and hard work, and to grasp revolution and promote production. Finally, they are to participate in supervising cadres to follow the Party line and Party policies.

In summary, the unions have reemerged to perform a relatively balanced functional role under close Party leadership, albeit with ideological work rather than production or welfare still publicized as the key. Possibly the reemergence of the unions at this time is itself indicative of the more balanced orientation in Chinese factories during the past few years which seems to reflect a reconsolidation of the Maoist line after the ideological surge of the Cultural Revolution.