Chapter IX

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

In this study, Chinese Communist union and labor policy has been divided into seven periods. It can also be analyzed in terms of three models.

The First Model

During three of the six periods up through the Cultural Revolution, Chinese unions have had several functions. Although production was at the center of their work, they were also engaged in transmission belt, political education, and administrative activities.

The first application of this model came during 1949-1952 when the regime was consolidating its victory. The unions were more independent of direct Party control and more versatile in the range of tasks performed than during any other period. But they experienced no early period of confusion and open debate on the relationship between Party and unions, as the Bolsheviks had. The Party came to power with an established organizational infrastructure relatively prepared to control the entire country politically, and with a pre-established policy of Party leadership over the unions. Political education during this period emphasized national integration, to wit, the necessity for active participation in production to transform China into an industrialized nation, respect for the working class as the "leading class" in society and the resulting responsibilities of the working class, reference to specific benefits accruing to the workers since the Party came to power, such as the labor insurance program, patriotism, especially in connection with the Korean War, characterization of the Party as the only leadership group capable of creating a strong industrialized China,
creation of a high degree of élan, a spirit of all working together to build the new China.

The unions were a transmission belt for Party policies and were used by the Party for attacks on capitalists during the san-fan wu-fan movement as well as for general overseeing of capitalist activities. As "schools of administration," the unions administered worker welfare programs and literacy education, organized new unions, and participated in the massive promotion of workers to cadre and industrial line-staff positions. To "defend workers' interests," they organized active, if controlled, worker participation in conferences and councils and organized the workers for "mass supervision" of management.

The second application of this model came during 1955-1957 with the reinstitution of collective leadership in Chinese factories. Emulation campaigns emphasizing political education returned to prominence. Workers' conferences were restored, and new efforts were made to increase the number and role of worker activists. Also, the wage reform of 1956 brought with it increased attention to welfare functions. It was overtly argued that successful political education depended on looking after the workers' welfare and livelihood.

From 1961 to 1963, the first model reappeared in a slightly different form. During the Great Leap Forward, the unions had been weakened organizationally by a reduction in union administrative tasks and by the performance of political education and production-mobilization tasks directly by the Party. In 1961 the unions began to rebuild, to "strengthen their organizational construction," and to resume their routine tasks, that is, the various tasks assigned to them during 1949-1952 and 1955-1957. The "three hard years" of 1960 to 1962 precluded a wage reform until finally a minor one was instituted in 1963. To compensate, new emphasis was placed on assisting the workers with their personal difficulties and being solicitous of workers' welfare. In this same direction, union
cadres were to work and live with the workers, creating a spirit of common effort.

**The Second Model**

The second model of trade union performance appeared during China's first five-year plan. Chinese factories copied the Soviet one-man management system, and union functions were curtailed as they had been in the Soviet Union under that system. While the various union functions were not entirely eliminated, union activity focused almost exclusively on production. Workers' conferences atrophied, and management control was strengthened for the application of strict labor discipline. In general, this model is comparable to the pattern of union performance in the Soviet Union under Stalin.

**The Third Model**

The Great Leap Forward introduced the third model which is characterized by extreme reliance on political education to increase production. Work rules and material incentives alike were downgraded as the application of political education was transformed into personal exhortation and "shock" mobilization in which the unions were largely bypassed in favor of direct Party contact with the workers. Both workers and cadres worked on the production floor, and both cadres and workers "managed" from the production floor. Political education, however, retained an "economistic" tint, by stressing that this was to be a Great Leap Forward to material abundance.

This model reappeared during the Cultural Revolution. Material incentives were downgraded, and even production was no longer the focus of factory and union life. Political education, now defined as Mao's thought, took command once again.

**Concluding Evaluation**

The Stalinist response to the problems of industrialization
under the second model has seemed inappropriate to China. It emphasized resources that the Chinese have not had, especially technical expertise, and negated China's major potential assets of labor power, the creative power of ideological or political mobilization, and the Party itself. While the Chinese have attempted to create a large body of technical experts, it has been a very slow process. This model also relies heavily on control and coercion and thus precludes voluntary participation and successful political education for most workers. Since it has been rejected by China's leaders since the mid-fifties, it need not detain us here.

With the exception of that period, Chinese trade union policy has alternated between the first and third models. Those alternations have mirrored broader political-economic conflicts between Mao and other Party leaders. It is tempting, therefore, to see one of them as the Maoist model. It is, however, more fruitful and, I think, more correct to see the first and third models in a dialectical relationship.

In the first place, there are limits to the degree of control a single leader or a group of leaders can exercise over an entire policy area. Beyond that, however, Mao has expected and attempted a pattern of political intensification and relaxation or a "leap forward" followed by consolidation at a higher level as changes occur, for example, in China's technology and the political consciousness of her leaders and people. It would also appear that Mao's own views on policies for industry and labor have changed with experience. In this sense, the third model can be viewed as a necessary but temporary application of extreme policies to correct imbalances. Moreover, some of the extremes of the Great Leap Forward can be attributed to inexperience, not only on the part of local cadres but also Mao himself, while some of the excesses of the Cultural Revolution can be attributed to the gravity of the overall situation as Mao perceived it.

In this perspective, the last few years can be seen as another
period of consolidation in a continuing process or as walking on two legs at a dialectically higher level. Trade unions have not been reestablished long enough to allow analytical perspective on this period. Looking primarily at the orientation of factory policy, however, it appears to fit the first model, with the major exception that to date, at least, political education continues to be emphasized over production.

As detailed in the previous chapter, this period seems characterized by a multi-functional policy that focuses on a kind of political education that combines ideological education with technical innovation, class struggle with national self-reliance, and class struggle with unity and cooperation. In addition, the Party is once more in command but presumably rectified by the Cultural Revolution and mass recruitment of workers for Party membership and into leading factory positions. The following evaluations should be informed by that perspective.

The extreme politics in command response to the problems of industrialization has had major limitations. The almost total abandonment of technology, regulations, and statistical control during the Great Leap Forward resulted in economic disaster, and although a major effort was made to avoid those errors during the Cultural Revolution, an inherent incompatibility is evident.

In terms of labor policy, an attempt to create Communist workers by short-term ideological exhortation seems unrealistic. Mobilization for common action is possible only when common interests are evident, necessitating a prolonged process of education and experience. Even over the long run, it has seemed to many observers that the industrialization process itself depends on the efficiency provided by a division of labor and routinization of role performance, in addition to technology, mechanization, and rationalization. This view, however, is no longer universally held even in the West.

Unmodified applications of the first model have also involved at least two problems. One is that successful implementation has
been difficult even when this model has been the official policy. The other is Mao's critique of what this model has led to in the past, even when it was successfully implemented. The two are closely related since a number of the practical difficulties seem to be inherent in the policy itself, at least in the China of the fifties and sixties.

In practice it involves a delicate balance of spontaneity and control that has been difficult to maintain with an unsophisticated work force, a very limited budget for consumption and incentive purposes, and cadres with tendencies toward self-entrenchment and concentration on their own prerequisites. The major threats to that balance have been posed by the Party's insistence on exercising effective power in all areas of Chinese life and by the fact that production has been at the center of union work.

The Party has consistently acted as a central elite allocating duties but no political power to other elite groups and organizations such as the unions. The ACFTU as an organization has played little if any role in China's central economic planning. Any effort by the unions towards organizational independence has met the Party's almost pathological fear of syndicalism. At lower decision-making levels the pattern has been similar. For example, during periods like the Great Leap Forward when workers' councils have been prominent, it has been the Party committees and not the workers that have actually been in control.

In performing the transmission belt function, union cadres have consistently been caught in the middle. Lack of union independence or leverage has made it extremely difficult for the unions to communicate up to the center. Carrying out directives from above to the neglect of representing the workers has caused union cadres to lose the workers' respect and thus inhibited their ability to communicate down effectively. In avoiding economism and its logical corollary, syndicalism, the unions have had a continuing problem with bureaucratism and with abject reliance on the Party and
general ineffectiveness.

Given China's economic situation, it has no doubt also been unavoidable that union performance has been evaluated primarily in terms of production output. This characteristic is shared with other developing countries. It has, nevertheless, forced the unions to neglect other duties such as educating the workers, maintaining safety rules, and upward communication. It has also led to professionalism at the expense of an orientation to political education. Union cadres have, of course, been led to professionalism by their own task orientation, but the professionalism of preferring techniques, skills and material incentives over political education to achieve the production quotas demanded from above has also reflected the practical realities of the industrializing process, reinforced by the economic disaster resulting from the Great Leap Forward.

This tendency toward professionalism has also been encouraged by the unions' administrative tasks. After production, welfare and other administrative tasks have been the most consistently observable activities of Chinese unions, despite limitations on the availability of welfare funds and despite periodic attacks on material incentives for ideological reasons. Administration of workers' insurance has always been entirely in the hands of the unions. They have assisted the Party in recruitment and promotion programs, especially during the early years of the regime, and union activist work has been a significant route for promotion into the Party and/or line-staff administrative positions. Chinese unions have also consistently been assigned a role in the administration of spare-time education and apprenticeship programs, and the number of workers participating in these programs has been extremely large.

For these reasons, union cadres have been ever present in the lives of the workers and have played a major role in urbanizing and integrating them into industrial society. But by demanding so much of their time, administrative tasks have also led the unions into bureaucratism and professionalism. This, in turn, has affected the
kind of political education the workers have received.

We have repeatedly noted that professionalization has conflicted with political education. Moreover, the function of political education has involved its own internal conflict between the two goals of socialization and communication. As used here and defined in Chapter I, socialization means political education designed to socialize the Chinese workers to an acceptance of the Communist regime and its nationalistic and industrialization goals and programs. Communization means political education designed to educate Chinese workers to an acceptance of the ideology or world view of Marxism-Leninism as interpreted by Mao Tse-tung. Before the Cultural Revolution, both socialization and communization were attempted simultaneously, with the emphasis on socialization except during the Great Leap Forward.

Theoretically these two goals are not inconsistent, and in practice they are interrelated in many ways. But the potential for conflict between them is also high. The attempt at socialization has been closely related to the question of worker amenities. A major basis for integration into the society has been the ability to demonstrate to the workers that the Communist regime and its programs are advantageous to the workers in a concrete way. Its effectiveness has been directly related to the professional orientation toward technical skills and material incentives that has seemed most successful in advancing Chinese industrialization in general and workers' welfare in particular. Communization, especially in its extreme Maoist form, depends on a reorientation of men's desires away from material benefits and is therefore antithetical to a system of material incentives.

The evaluation above is concerned principally with problems of implementing the labor policy designated here as the first model. The Maoist critique of that model has focused on its inherent limitations. At the concrete level this has meant political education rather than material incentives and concentration on production
skills, and Maoist ideology rather than political socialization.
That topic is discussed next, followed by a brief exploration of the
broader issues involved in the Maoist alternative.

The practical argument for a professional approach to increased
productivity would seem to be that increased productivity depends on
labor discipline. Labor discipline can be created by nonmaterial in-
centives. The effectiveness of contributive incentives, however, is
conditional and will depend in large measure on the workers' view
of their own position in society. Wage levels, the degree of tech-
nical skill and general education of the work force, and the degree
to which the workers are subjectively integrated into society will
all be relevant to that view. Thus, the effectiveness of contribu-
tive incentives will depend on effective socialization. This is an
argument for political education as socialization.

Finally, labor productivity is a function not only of labor
discipline or intensification of labor but also and even primarily
of industrial technology, mechanization, and rationalization. In-
sofar as this argument is correct, it also supports the professional
approach. This approach will also be pushed, of course, by those
with an interest in the establishment of professional or performance
criteria rather than political criteria to protect their own favored
positions.

The ideological objection to the professional approach has
already been simply stated: Communization depends on a reorienta-
tion of men's desires away from material benefits and is therefore
inhibited by reliance on material incentives and skill quotas. It
is also inhibited by professionalization in a broader sense. This
view assumes that the ultimate aim in China is concerned with re-
lationships among people. In order to maintain a Communist eco-
nomic structure, China must industrialize. But if the means of
achieving industrialization lead one on the revisionist path of
the Soviet Union, then achieving Communism will be precluded. If,
on the other hand, the means to industrialization can be communistic
then Communism can be achieved.

This objection to the professional approach has a positive side also. An effective policy of wage incentives depends on the availability of consumer goods without which monetary wages are not meaningful. At the same time, contributive incentives are most effective as marginal additions to an effective monetary incentive policy. The Maoist answer to this dilemma would seem to be that contributive incentives are indeed marginal and conditional. They are, in fact, inadequate to the tasks of industrialization without advances in technology and in the ability to simultaneously provide strong material incentives.

Communication, on the other hand, does not depend on a concurrent system of effective material incentives. Labor discipline is achieved because of successful communization, and the communist man is impervious to the absence of material incentives. It will include, for example, internal or self-motivation. At the same time, communization in the broader sense, represented by the attack on the Party and the professionals during the Cultural Revolution, will improve social and political conditions for successful political education by sweeping away an entrenched bureaucracy. This act will itself change the workers' view of their role in the society by resolving or at least continuing to deal effectively with the distinctions between top and bottom and between bureaucrats and workers. Thus, in addition to its superiority in achieving the goal of a communist society, communization may also be more effective in achieving an industrialized society.

At a broader level, this is part of Mao's resistance to the assumption that industrialization depends on a sharp division of labor, role distinctiveness, and routinization and that industrialized societies must be integrated on that basis. According to the Maoist view, those characteristics will in fact lead to differentiation between leaders and followers and, in the factories, between managers and workers, with major consequences for personal relations
and perceptions. Managers and cadres, on the one hand, and workers, on the other hand, will be unable to relate as communist or socialist brothers. Contradictions between top and bottom will intensify and become entrenched. Different groups will also perceive differently the stakes of what should be a common undertaking. Managers will seek highest output at lowest cost, filling and overfilling quotas with least interference and least expenditure of energy and personal risk. The workers will attempt to maximize their pay and minimize their work effort. Under a piece wage system, for example, they will sacrifice quality to quantity, and with standard wages they will cut corners to minimize their own work regardless of consequences to the products or overall production except to meet formal or informal minimum standards. These examples are from the factory but have their homologues in the national political arena.

As an alternative, Mao has insisted on integration through ideological unity. To achieve that unity he has looked to common struggle and to interchanging role performance, both reminiscent of the practical necessities of the Yenan period. The common enemy to be struggled against has been either ideologically defined class enemies or economic bottlenecks, and the military terminology during production campaigns has been deliberate. Interchanging role performance aims at common understanding and assumes that perceptions are conditioned by role assignment. The tasks that a person is responsible for in a society or enterprise, program, or process will strongly condition his perceptions and orientation to that institution or activity. The worker-peasant system, the factory policy of having cadres share in productive labor and workers participate in technology, and the hsia-fang program are all attempts to eliminate rigid role differentiation and encourage common understanding.

In a similar way, a case can be made for Mao's general industrialization strategy on both political and economic grounds. The major characteristic of that strategy has been geographically dispersed enterprises under a system of bureaucratically decentralized
economic planning and emphasizing intra-factory self-reliance. Bureaucratic decentralization of planning is an approach to resolving problems of information gathering and processing in a complex economy that seems appropriate to China's priorities and present stage of development. Intra-factory self-reliance is not simply a necessary concomitant to geographical dispersal. It also facilitates active worker participation in technical innovation, decreases the need for capital intensity in major portions of the industrial sector, and potentially introduces all factory personnel to modern technology in a more profound way than importing techniques and equipment from abroad.

The potential advantages of geographical dispersal are also more inclusive than the publicized military pose involved in regional self-sufficiency. Building industrial plants in the interior, close to raw materials, may or may not be less economical than transporting materials to established industrial complexes on the coast. Many of the small industries primarily involved in this dispersal, however, directly serve agriculture, and there is, therefore, value in locating them in rural areas. Moreover, it serves the political goal of breaking down the differences between urban and rural areas by introducing the peasants to industrial culture as well as facilitating part-time use of peasants in small industries during off-seasons. Finally, this latter advantage can be realized without the debilitating effects of an excessive rate of urbanization or population migration to urban centers.

The Cultural Revolution is now over although its effects will be felt in China for years to come. A new effort is underway to find a labor policy that will integrate both technology and worker initiative, that will accelerate industrialization without the revisionist side effects that for Mao characterize Soviet experience, and that will integrate "the three revolutionary movements of class struggle, production struggle, and scientific experiment." It may be that Mao's attempt to create and maintain ideological unity is a populist dream, inappropriate to industrialized society, but thus
far he has been unwilling to give up either goal, ideological unity or industrialization.