

Chinese Factories Are Exciting Places!

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(Continued from last issue)

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 sim-

ple, 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 Hsinkang 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 revo-

lution 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 hots" 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 Cheng-chow we visited a dining hall equipped to serve two thousand workers on each shift. The Kairan Coal Mine in Tang-shan 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.

