

Trade unions in Communist China: new problems, new challenges*

When Mao Zedong died in 1976 the Communist Party of China under Deng Xiopong introduced a programme of economic reform and 'market socialism'. ANNIE SMYTHE describes 'market socialism' in China and the new problems it has created for workers. The Chinese experience contributes to the debate about the role of trade unions in socialist development.

I have sung the song of socialism for several decades, and my hair has gone grey, and at the end we found we were singing the tune of 'primary stage of socialism' - this move backwards is very worrying.
- Wuhan railway worker

If the primary stage of socialism will take more than a hundred years, now I am thirty, I will have to live until I am over a hundred to see any sign of modern socialism.....that's not much fun, is it?
- young Chinese worker

* This article is based on the book 'Smashing the Iron Rice Pot' by Leung Wing-yue of the Asia Labour Monitor.

Workers in China started to organise a long time ago - at the beginning of this century. As struggles against the Emperor and western powers grew, so did the militance of workers. In 1921 the Chinese Communist Party (CPC) was formed. At first the CPC worked together with the nationalist Kuomintang. But in 1927 the nationalists turned on the communists and slaughtered them in their thousands.

Most communists left the cities. In the early 1930's, the majority of communists, under the leadership of Mao Zedong, went on the Long March, establishing themselves in the rural areas of China. Gradually they extended the area which they controlled. After the Second World War, fighting between the nationalists and communists became a full-scale civil war which the communists finally won in 1949.

The communist revolution brought great progress to the people of China:

- liberating peasants in the countryside from the oppression and exploitation of the feudal landlords;
- liberating China from the exploitation of foreign capitalists who had a stranglehold over industry in cities like Shanghai;
- opening the way to development of mining, industry and collective farming;
- replacing the starvation and misery of feudal China with food, housing, literacy, health care and



Party Chairman Mao Zedong announces the founding of the People's Republic of China in October, 1949

Photo: Smashing the Iron Rice Pot

education for all;

- making progress towards equality and dignity for all, especially for women.

But even while making this progress, Chinese communists have discussed and argued about the best way to build socialism. They all recognised that the majority of exploited were the peasants in the countryside, but they differed on who should form the vanguard of the revolution.

Although Mao (by then chairperson of the CPC) and his supporters proclaimed that the proletariat was the most progressive class, they argued that the key to building socialism in China lay in politicising and organising the peasants. Mao also argued that the party should 'put politics in com-

mand' - meaning that political consciousness and mobilisation of the masses was more important for building socialism than economic incentives or efficiency.

Other people like Liu Shaoqi said that socialism was the dictatorship of the working class. So China must build factories and modernise. Then China would have a big working class and money to pay for socialism. Liu and Deng Xioping argued that the party should 'put economics in command', stressing the importance of meeting the material needs of the people and developing an efficient economy.

Over the years, these differences resulted in deep struggles within the CPC. Nonetheless, for a long time China followed Mao's ideas on socialism. Most people worked for the Chinese government and most urban workers had one job for life. People called this guaranteed work from the government the 'iron rice pot'. On the other hand, the large number of migrant and contract workers did not have secure jobs.

Mao died in 1976, and this opened the way for his opponents, led by Deng, to establish their authority in the CPC. The Communist Party central committee announced reforms which they called 'The Four Modernisations'. Today Deng's government is smashing the iron rice pot. They say Mao's slogan "three people's rice shared by five people" has become "three people's work shared by five people". They say that there are too many workers in the factories, and

that they are not working hard enough. They say that the factories and industries of China are old and inefficient. They say that China is not moving forwards.

Deng's government believes that one of the main causes of these problems in China was that the state and the Communist Party directly controlled the whole economy. They decided it was necessary to introduce economic reform.

'The four modernisations'

The 'Four Modernisations' aimed to make the economy of China more modern and efficient. No longer would the central government and the party control everything.

'The four modernisations' is a programme which replaces mass mobilisation and politicisation with industrialisation and modernisation. To do this China needed 'market socialism' - where state-owned enterprises would compete with each other. Factories would have to cover costs and make a profit. Economist Huan Xiang said the policy was now a "a market economy led by a planned economy".

The state would continue to control and plan the economy overall - which is what distinguishes a socialist economy from a capitalist or 'market' economy. But the state would no longer try to plan and control the economy at every level as it had done before. The state would allow market forces such as competition, reward, profit and prices to determine more economic activity. Enterprises would

start to make decisions themselves.

Foreign companies would be allowed to invest in China and make profits. The Chinese government hoped that they would bring new machinery, technology and job opportunities with them. Party cadres travelled the world, looking at management methods and organisation in Europe, the United States of America and Japan.

The reforms in China raise critical questions about socialist development and 'market socialism'. Most socialists now agree that there has to be a mixture of 'plan' and 'market'. But what is the right mix and how should it be managed? These issues are facing the Soviet Union, Poland, Hungary and other socialist countries. They are in fact the key issues facing the world socialist movement today.

Before the reforms

The iron rice pot - life long jobs for many

Before the reforms, government or party officials decided who worked where. With a job went wages, housing, medical benefits, political activity, family planning, education, and pensions. Once you had a job, it was a job for life.

This system had many benefits for workers. But the problem was that most factories and offices were over-

staffed. Management could not dismiss unnecessary workers or lazy workers. Of the 130 million people in employment, about 30 million were unnecessary to production. And migrant and contract workers did not have secure jobs or the benefits that went with them.

Management and ownership

Ownership in China is based on the principle of workers being 'the masters in the house'. In the mid-1950's all factories and enterprises were nationalised. Private ownership was forbidden. All factories were now owned by the state and controlled by the Communist Party.

The highest authority in the factory was the Communist Party committee, headed by the party secretary. Plant managers reported to the party committee, as did trade unionists and workers' congresses. In some factories 30% of the staff were unproductive officials. This bureaucracy was inefficient and factories were wasting money. Party and union cadres often used their positions for their own personal privilege. And although workers were supposed to be 'masters of the house', the reality was that they usually had very little say in the factory.

Wages

Wages were paid on the principle of 'to each according to their labour'. Wage grades were worked out by the central government. For example, a



After the revolution, the Party stressed that women were to enjoy equality with men and some important steps were taken in this direction

Photo: Smashing the Iron Rice Pot

nurse's labour was worth one and a half times a driver's labour. Wage increases were automatic. They depended on how long people had worked and on their level of skill - rather than how well or how hard they worked.

Women at work

After the Communist Party took power, they stressed that women must be free and treated as equals. They said that, like men, women must have the right to work. One slogan was "Whatever a man can do, a woman can do". To make it possible for women to work, there were well established maternity benefits. Women were allowed time off work for breast-

feeding and most factories had child-minding services.

In the cities women worked next to their men for the first time. They enjoyed a status and dignity that few women had had before. Despite this, they earned less than men and were generally solely responsible for domestic work.

Trade Unions

When the Communists gained control over the whole of China, the unions first acted as watchdogs over the bosses and landlords. But when all private property was nationalised in the mid-1950s, they no longer needed to do this. So the question arose -

were trade unions necessary in a socialist society?

Everyone agreed that there should be unions. But they disagreed about what the unions should do. Some people - Deng Xiaoping was one - felt that even in a communist society workers still need an organisation to look after their interests. They said that trade unions must be independent of the state and the Communist Party. The chairperson of the All-China Federation of Trade Unions (ACFTU) criticised unions for always siding with the party. He argued that "as an organisation of the masses a trade union must unfold its own independent activities."

Others, like Mao Zedong, felt that the unions must mobilise the workers. They said the unions must be under the control of the party and educate their members to work harder to build socialism. Unions should look to the long-term interests of the country rather than the immediate interests of the workers.

There was a struggle between these two positions in the late 1950s. Eventually those activists who said the unions should be independent were found guilty of 'economism' in 1957. They were purged from the party and the unions.

After this the unions became even less independent. They were controlled by the party. Leadership and officials were appointed from above rather than elected from below. Their main job was to look after the welfare of the workers, such as housing, pensions and education.

The struggle in the Party came into the open again in the mid-60's. Once again, 'economistic' unionists were purged and unions became very weak.

Changes in the factories

More responsibility for management

The most radical changes in Chinese industry are in the way factories and enterprises are managed. In the last five years, the government has suggested a number of different management schemes. All the schemes aim to give the managers of enterprises more decision-making power, in place of the party committees.

The reforms are aimed to make the managers responsible for running the factory, for keeping costs down and making a surplus or profit. They emphasise that managers should be trained professionals.

The emphasis in factories is now on producing efficiently and covering costs. Instead of lifelong appointments managers can be fired for doing a bad job. Most managers are appointed by the state, but in 3,000 state owned enterprises managers are subject to reappointment by workers' congresses every four years.

Other schemes which increase the power and responsibility of managers are sub-contracted management and

leased enterprises. These allow the manager to rent the factory, or to take a contract to manage the factory. In both cases it is up to him to produce a surplus or profit. The factory and machines remain the property of the state.

In the last few years there has also been an increase in private ownership in China. At the moment 2% of national industrial output is from privately owned factories. China aims to allow this to increase to 10%, employing 36 million people.

The CPC general secretary explains this policy: "Public ownership

should remain predominant in the primary stages of socialist society.

However, other sectors of the economy that are not owned by the whole people such as co-operative, individual and private sectors should be encouraged to expand. Practice has proved that a certain degree of development of the private sector promotes production, stimulates the market, provides employment and helps in many ways to meet the people's needs."

But with the carrot comes the stick. The state is using the threat of bankruptcy for the first time since the



Under management reforms, all factories are encouraged to be profitable, but at what cost to jobs and workers? This plant made a profit after three years under new management.

Photo: Smashing the Iron Rice Pot

Communists took over. In 1986 warnings were issued to three factories which were making losses. They were given a year to stop losing money. With state help two of the factories were able to do this. The third was closed down and workers lost their jobs. This is likely to happen more often as efficiency and productivity become the priority.

Criticisms of the management reforms

The reforms give managers more power and responsibility. But what about the workers? People say that companies' financial progress is being put before workers' well being. They say that the reforms are undermining the principle of workers being the 'masters of the house'. The reforms allow managers to behave in a dictatorial way. People say the reforms will only work if managers use them democratically - otherwise there will be much conflict.

Already workers are unhappy about the way in which management contracts and factory leases are given. They say that people with good 'guan-xi' - connections - are enriching themselves as they always get the contracts and leases. They say that workers are not consulted although the law says they must be.

A worker at a shipyard threatened with bankruptcy comments: "Owners of private enterprise in Wenzhou are getting rich while we workers lead a life on the margins, with just enough to eat and wear. Our fate is closely

linked to the fate of the enterprise. I have no capital nor any social connections to help me start a new career."

However, workers in other factories, such as in the city of Wuhan, are gaining many benefits from the reforms. (see box on page 124)

Employment reforms

The state has made big changes in employment policies. Now enterprises can choose their own workforce and they may retrench unproductive workers. Managers in state enterprises are afraid of a backlash so as yet very few people are retrenched.

Workers are very unhappy about the employment reforms as they have introduced job insecurity and competition for work. Before the reforms job security was seen as a basic human right for urban workers.

Wage reforms

Wage reforms have started a debate over what "to each according to their labour" means. According to Zhao Zhiyang the main problem is "the practice of allowing everyone to 'eat from the big rice pot', egalitarianism and jealousy of other's higher incomes."

Government policy is to reward hard work and good work through bonuses and piece-rates, and to encourage greater wage differentials. Reformists believe this will increase productivity and efficiency. Now for the first time, enterprises can set their own wages - but the government in-

sists that wage increases are linked to the performance of the enterprise.

Wages are beginning to vary greatly. There is a big difference between state and private enterprise. For example, a state owned factory worker can earn 120 yuan while a taxi driver in Shenzhen SEZ earns 1,000 yuan a month. Factory managers earn even more. Inequalities are becoming greater.

Women

The reforms have had a disastrous effect on the position of women in China. By law managers must still give women the same support as before - maternity leave, creches, breast-feeding time. But managers say this pushes up their costs so they don't want to employ women.

Now that managers and bosses can choose their workforce, managers are either employing men, or young girls before they have babies. Since the reforms women are complaining about discrimination, unfair dismissals, lack of training, demotion, and wage cuts during maternity leave or breast-feeding time.

The All Chinese Women's Federation is worried: "There is a small number of people in our society calling for women to return to the family. We cannot agree to this. It has not been easy for women to get out of their families, to work and contribute to the causes of revolution and socialist reconstruction. Women must maintain their dignity and self respect by striving to improve their abilities

and status. Furthermore society must do more for the emancipation of women such as opening more creches, nursery schools and canteens, developing instant foods and promoting the socialisation of household chores in order to lighten the burden of the Chinese women."

The state and the unions have tried to fight discrimination against women. The state has made it an offence to fire a woman during maternity leave or breastfeeding, or to reduce wages. The unions have called for women's committees to be formed in every factory. But neither the managers nor union branches follow all directives.

Workers congresses

The reforms have also reactivated and strengthened the workers' congresses in order to "extend socialist democracy and socialist rule of law". The workers congress is a council of representatives in each workplace. The representatives are elected from each section of the enterprise. Technical staff and management are also represented, but there is a majority of workers. The worker congresses have been given more powers, which casts some doubt on the role of trade unions.

The tasks of the congresses are to safeguard and develop the rights of unions and workers, discuss key decisions, and monitor management (see page 122). Unlike trade unions, congresses are independent of the party and have real grassroots structures.

But in many cases the congresses

have power on paper only. A congress chairperson at one factory was transferred and lost pay because he had criticised management. Workers commented: "Talk about democracy all day long, but we can't even speak the truth at our workers' congress." However, in areas such as Wuhan, congresses and unions are very strong (see box).

The trade unions

The reforms have created a situation where there is an increasing conflict of interests between managers, who are pushing for higher

productivity and harder work, and workers.

This raises a question for trade unions: will they take up and defend workers' interests where necessary? The party expects the unions to support the reforms. But in many ways the economic reforms make life for union members more difficult. In China people can choose wherever to belong to a union or not. But every enterprise or factory must have a union.

Up until now the unions have looked after the welfare of their members - they make sure there are breastfeeding and child care facilities for women; that old people get their

The workers' congresses

Government regulations set out the rights and responsibilities of the workers' congresses:

The workers congress can discuss and adopt resolutions about the long-term and annual plans of the enterprise, about new technology and machines, about on-the-job training, and about investment.

It has the right to discuss and approve pay scales, bonuses, disciplinary action and other management regulations, and also the way management organises production.

It can decide on major issues affecting workers' welfare, including the use of the enterprises' welfare and housing funds.

It can examine and supervise the performance of management personnel, and make recommendations about their reward, punishment, appointment and removal.

It can recommend candidates for directors or managers, or elect them. ☆



Union officials from a factory of the Wuhan Steelworks

Photo: Smashing the Iron Rice Pot

pensions and that the disabled are looked after.

At the moment unions are under great pressure to change both from above and below. The chairperson of the Chinese union federation said in self-criticism: "Our trade unions are not seen by the majority of workers as really their own organisations representing their own interests... we did not really defend the workers interests by speaking or working for them. Thus the trade unions have become only an organisation propagandising and mobilising workers..."

The new reforms have seen a big increase in the number of labour disputes. Most disputes are about wage

and bonus issues, housing, overtime, health and safety or abuse of power by management.

In 1982 the ACFTU said strikes were unnecessary as there was no class conflict in China, so most strikes are unreported wildcat strikes. A year later the ACFTU leadership conceded that work stoppages were permitted in the face of danger at work. But generally strikes are frowned upon.

The party and state are discussing changes that cover how union representatives are chosen. There is talk that elections will be more open and that trade union officials must be accountable.

From the factory floor workers

have criticised trade union officials. They say officials are bureaucratic and officious. They want trade unionists to be more democratic. Workers want the right to nominate people for positions in the union movement. They want chairpeople and vice-chairs to be chosen by the rank and

file rather than by the Communist Party. Workers also want the right to fire trade union officials when necessary.

So far the trade unions have had no right to bargain with management. But in 1988 a new law gave trade unions the right to represent em-

Wuhan and economic reform

Wuhan is a big industrial city in the middle of China. Wuhan has a long history of strong union organisation. The government is using Wuhan to test out the reforms. The unions in Wuhan have played an active role in discussing and putting the reforms into practice.

The unions in Wuhan see their role as disciplining and educating workers in socialist principles. They safeguard the democratic and economic rights of workers and they represent workers in dealings with the state and the party. Workers elect reform delegations who advise the government and the party on reform.

But the unions also see their job as educating factory managers to accept reform. Since 1984 the workers' congresses have elected 2,000 factory managers. The unions also watch management and department heads to make sure that they behave democratically.

The unions in Wuhan say that retrenchments cannot be made without union approval; that after 15 years of contract work, a worker must be given permanent status; that all employees must get state insurance, a pension and other welfare rights - not just permanent workers.

Wuhan unions are encouraging workers to participate in reform. In the Wuhan Steelworks the union circulated 20,000 questionnaires about new wage policies. Using the answers on the questionnaires, the union then worked out a wage system which was acceptable to the workers. This was discussed in worker congresses and then submitted to management. Most of the union proposals were accepted.

A group of 600 workers have offered to watch price increases and the quality of goods on the market in an effort to limit inflation.

The unions in Wuhan have used the economic reforms. The reforms have given workers much more say and control over their lives. But is this possible in other areas where the unions have not always been so strong? ☆

employees and to sign collective agreements. Although at the moment this only applies to privately-owned factories, it gives the unions a chance to fight for better working conditions for their members - something which opens a potential new role for unions in China.

'Market socialism'

The reforms of 'market socialism' in China show some of the complex problems facing any people which chooses the socialist path of development. On the one hand the 'iron rice pot' protected workers and gave them dignity and many benefits. On the other hand, rigid control of the economy by the party and the state was not efficient. Development was slow, and the country remained poor.

With the death of Mao the reformists decided to smash the 'iron rice pot' and introduce 'market socialism'. While this may bring economic growth, higher wages and more goods in the shops, it also brings inflation and increases the problems for workers. They have to work harder, and they can lose their jobs. Groups such as women, the elderly and the unemployed become more vulnerable. Although economic development may benefit everyone, there are increasing inequalities of wealth.

In many factories workers lose their dignity and have to submit to dictatorial management. Conditions are worst in the SEZ, as the Sanyo strike shows (see page). In other areas such as Wuhan the reforms have streng-

thened the position of workers and their lives have improved.

'Market socialism' has brought both benefits and problems to China. The CCP leadership says that this is necessary, because China is still in the 'primary stage' of socialism, and it is a long road to 'modern' socialism. Many workers fear that this is simply an excuse to introduce capitalist policies.

These experiences will deepen the debate about socialist development. The reforms also raise important issues about democracy and socialism. Under Mao there was very little democracy, but generally the party protected the interests of workers. But the reforms mean the Communist Party is withdrawing from too much control over the workplace and the economy. This can mean that workers lack protection from management. But it can also mean that the unions and congresses are more independent and they can organise themselves better.

The power of management has increased, but the potential power of the workers congresses and the unions has also increased. There are contradictory forces in the workplace and the economy: market socialism has liberated forces for more democracy in the workplace, as well as forces for less democracy. The forces for workplace democracy are only likely to dominate if the party and the state encourage congresses and unions to build powerful grassroots democracy so that they can represent the masses.

These are some of the problems

which are facing unions in China today. How the unions, the party and the state tackle these problems is not just important for China. It is important to working people throughout the world. It is important for our understanding of what socialism is, and what it can be. ☆

Special Economic Zones (SEZs) and foreign investment

"I don't understand why we have to enter into joint-ventures with bosses, and why the masters of our country, the workers, have to work for capitalists. Are we really that poor that we can't even have that dignity? Goddamn it, I've worked for thirty years and still have to serve dishes to capitalists. But then again it's true that in these several years all my colleagues' and my living has got much better. Now everybody's got TVs, fridges, hi-fis and washing machines. It is all the result of joint ventures. But it is bloody depressing to think that we have worked for several decades to come back to, 'Mutual benefits between capitalists and the proletariat!' But then again if we wait for state invest-

ment only, when will we ever have these luxuries? It's a difficult question isn't it?"

(Restuarant worker, Shenzhen Special economic Zone, 1987)

Special economic zones (SEZs) were started in 1978 when China opened the door to foreign business for the first time since the fifties. China, said the leaders, needed western technology and foreign exchange.

The SEZs in China are similar to other export processing zones in Taiwan, Korea, Malaysia and the Phillipines. Foreign companies are offered free land and building equipment, cheap labour, and no import duties on raw materials and equipment. They can operate tax-free for the first two to four years and thereafter the taxation is low.

Shenzhen, on the coast, is the biggest SEZ. The industrial output of Shenzhen has increased a lot. Wages have also increased but Shenzhen has the highest inflation rate in China. The inflation eats up a large part of the wage increases.

Many people question the economic success of the SEZs. They say they are not bringing much foreign exchange or technology into China.

There are also big social problems in the SEZs. Prostitution and black marketeering have spread. But the biggest problem is the way in which workers are treated. People will choose to work in foreign owned enterprise because the wages are higher. But workers do not like the way in which managers behave. Workers feel



1985 - Finnish and Chinese representatives discuss business - part of China's opening up to foreign investment

Photo: Smashing the Iron Rice Pot

that they have no dignity at work, they are not the 'masters of the house' as they are in state-owned factories.

Often people are forced to work overtime. In 1986 Shenzhen workers complained that "workers in some factories work overtime of six to eight hours. Some have fainted as a result while others were injured by the machines."

Foreign firms complain that there is too much welfare, while workers complain that too many concessions are being given to foreign business. The government tries to get foreign business to contribute to various social security insurance schemes. There are also many temporary workers in

Shenzhen - people say there are about 190,000 migrant workers.

The state treads lightly with foreign business - they do not want to upset foreign investors. The unions take the lead from the state. They try to keep the peace between workers and foreign bosses, rather than helping workers.

The chairman of the Shenzhen Municipal Federation of Trade Unions spells out how he sees the role of unions: "Foreign investors do not understand the role of our trade unions. We have to convince them that trade unions in China are to unite workers to contribute to the well-being of the enterprise, unlike those in foreign

countries which aim at defeating their bosses."

In the SEZs the unions try to avoid strikes by smoothing over disputes before the workers stop work. But the number of wildcat strikes are growing as workers fight against bad working conditions.

A short strike in Shekou

Shekou is the industrial area of the Shenzhen SEZ. This story is based on an article in a magazine which was later closed down for 'bourgeois liberalism'.

A cream-coloured minibus stopped outside the workers' dormitories of the Sanyo-Semiconductors Factory. Most of the workers were at work. A few, who were off-duty, were busy minding their own business.

In the Sanyo workers' dormitories, there were 8,000 workers from all over the country aged between 16 and 23. In order to work here they had to leave home. Life was boring here - workers soon discovered that such boredom was worse than death.

The cream-coloured minibus was here to take two workers away - they were fired and were about to be returned from where they came. To be fired was something strange to most people who did not work in SEZs. But to workers here it was part of the routine. Unfortunately workers who were fired had nowhere else to find work. From here they were sent back to their home towns and never given another job.

The two workers on the minibus

were Zheng Chengjun, a man, and Chen Qiongqi, a woman. Both were 22 years old. They were contract workers and they had worked in the factory for less than ten months. They envied those working in state-owned factories. As a Japanese-owned capitalist company, Sanyo's sole interest was to make a high profit.

To the workers the boss was someone who drove you at work, regarded you as part of the conveyor belt. When Zheng and Chen were recruited, they were told they would get wage increases after three months. After ten months they still had not got an increase, so they decided it was time to do something.

That night Chen sat up and together with 21 other people, they wrote a letter to management.

The next day, when the workers stopped for breakfast, they went to their dormitories and refused to return to the factory. The manager called the union and party committee who went to the dormitories to do 'ideological work'. The cadres asked the workers over and over, "Why don't you go to work?"

A group of silent workers faced the cadres. At first they refused to open their mouths and speak. But after an hour the workers agreed to go back to work.

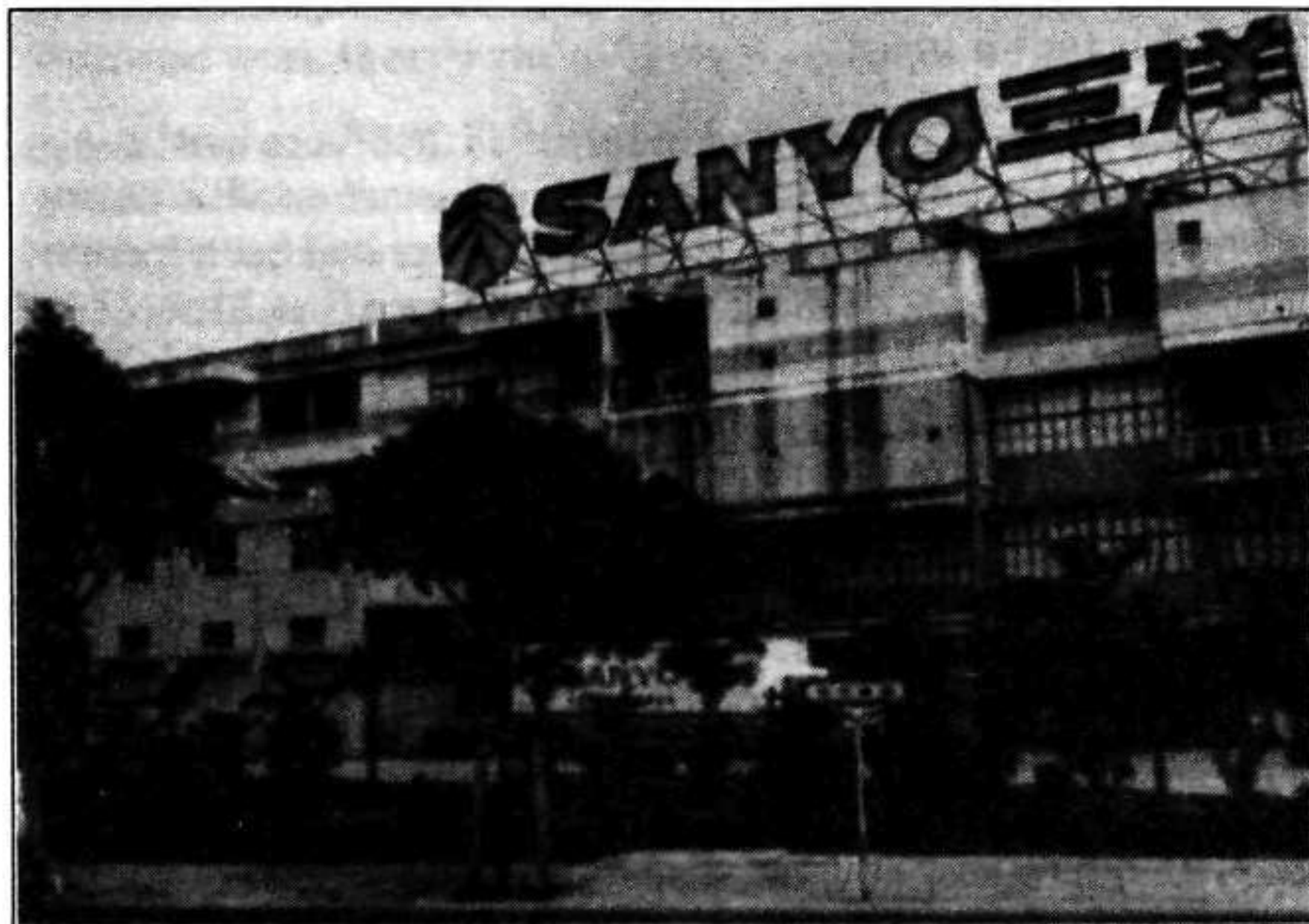
As they were leaving the dormitories, Zheng suddenly said, "If anyone can beat me arm-wrestling, they can go back to work." Everyone knew they would lose as Zheng was big and strong. So they all started to laugh and went back into their dormi-

tories.

The cadres were angry. They had to start their 'ideological work' all over again. At 7 that evening they went home for dinner and come back shortly. At last the workers agreed to go back to work. The strike had lasted over ten hours.

other workers were each fined 60 yuan for taking part in the strike

Sometime later there was a seminar for young cadres at the Party Committee Offices. During a heated discussion, one young man asked why the Sanyo strike was not reported in the newspaper. The other people at



The SANYO plant in the Shenzhen Special Economic Zone

Photo: Smashing the Iron Rice Pot

Sanyo invited the union to dine at the Chinese Villa - a fancy restaurant. The atmosphere was friendly.

The day after the strike Chen Qiongqi got up as usual and went to work. Until midday she and Zheng Chengjun did not know they had been fired. They were fired, not by Sanyo, but by the Chinese. And so they got on the cream-coloured minibus and were taken back to Raoping. The

the seminar did not know what this cadre wanted. The strike was a small incident, caused by young and immature workers. And anyway, according to the zone regulations strikes were forbidden.

The people at the seminar went back to discussing what the central force in Shekou was and whether enterprises should follow Japan and have slogans and uniforms. ☆