1. Communist Neo-Traditionalism: An Introductory Essay

In the wake of the Chinese and Russian revolutions, the twentieth century has witnessed the birth and maturation of a distinctive kind of party-state, a new type of state-led industrialization, and a novel set of political relationships. Of all the varieties of modern authoritarianism, the communist state has been among the most stable, the most thoroughly organized, the most autonomous from organized interests, and the most complete in its reform of prior political and economic arrangements. These party-states have proven adept at implementing a wide variety of social and economic programs, extracting and mobilizing resources for rapid industrial growth, providing extensive social welfare at an early stage of development, and promoting national military strength. They have at the same time literally called a modern working class into being; and, out of this process of growth and transformation, they have developed, not entirely from conscious design, a distinctive tradition of labor relations.

This is a study of the Chinese industrial working class, its place in a communist political order, and the pattern of authority in which it lives and works. In the People's Republic of China, as in all countries, it is precisely in such organizations as industrial enterprises that social classes meet one another on a regular basis. In a communist state, it is precisely in the enterprise that workers come into contact with party and state officials. Authority relations in the Chinese factory are, therefore, a window on political relationships characteristic of this type of state and society. If one understands how compliance is secured in the workplace, one also understands an important foundation of the national political order. Although this is a study of authority relations in contemporary Chinese industry, and of how and why these relations are different from those

elsewhere, it is just as importantly an inquiry into the social foundations of a communist political order. I have labeled this pattern of authority *neo-traditional.*

The Neo-Traditional Image of Communist Society

The neo-traditional image of communist society differs fundamentally from two others that are often perceived as the only alternatives: the images of totalitarianism and group theory.

There has never been a clearer image of communist society than that of totalitarianism. In totalitarian society, the party recognizes no legal or moral constraints on its actions: it strives for total power, total submission, and total social transformation as prescribed by its ideology. Aided by secret police, informers, and a wide variety of institutions designed for political communication and control, the totalitarian party pursues its aims by terrorizing selected elements of the population and keeping the rest in a state of habitual submission bred by caution and fear (see Arendt 1951: chap. 3; Brzezinski 1956; Friedrich 1954; Wittfogel 1957: 137–48; 427–43; Wolfe 1956).

A totalitarian society has two distinguishing characteristics. The first is the nature of the tie between the totalitarian party and its active adherents: it is an impersonal, ideological one, based on an identification that grows out of psychological impulses as much as considered political commitment. It is the nature of totalitarian movements to appeal not to material interests, but to mass psychology: "Large numbers of people do not respond to totalitarian movements primarily from the standpoint of economic calculus; but instead, they respond to the nihilistic tone of totalitarian movements, as an expression of their feelings of resentment against the present" (Kornhauser 1959: 48). This fundamental ideological orientation continues after the movement comes to power: in its attempts to mobilize the population, people are forced into activism in the service of the party. But this adherence, however forced, often results in "hyper-attachments" to the totalitarian elite and its ideology; the overidentification of the true believer. The roots of this identification are psychological: "Since people are given no other choice as to objects of attachment, they must find psychological sustenance in this manner or do without it" (Kornhauser 1959: 62–63; see also Arendt 1951: 158–72).

The second feature is social atomization: the obliteration of social ties that are not directly harnessed to the party's aims. Totalitarian societies recognize no legitimate distinction between private and public spheres. Allegiances not subordinated to the party are potentially subversive to its aims. "The core of this imagery is the *atomized society* . . . a situation in which an aggregate of individuals are related to one another only by way of their relation to a common authority. . . . That is, individuals are not directly related to one another in a variety of independent groups" (Kornhauser 1959: 32; see also Friedrich 1954). A totalitarian regime requires "atomized masses" not only to keep power, by preventing alternative loyalties independent of the regime, but also to ensure that there are no obstacles to inhibit the total mobilization of the population that is characteristic of totalitarianism (Kornhauser 1959: 62; see also Brzezinski 1955). The terms *alienation*, *anomie*, and *loneliness* are regularly said to characterize this structure of social relations in pronounced forms (Gerth and Mills 1952: 405–59; Arendt 1951: 172–77; Wittfogel 1957: 149–60).

Virtually all contemporary writers, beginning with the originators of the totalitarian image, recognize that communist regimes gradually reduce their reliance on political terror to rule their populations and that they do not permanently attempt to keep their societies in a state of constant political mobilization (e.g., Arendt 1951: 90–113; Friedrich, Curtis, and Barber 1969). Although there have been countless explicit discussions of how the image of the totalitarian "political system" needs to be modified in light of this evolution (see Johnson 1970), it is less clear how much, and precisely in what ways, the image of totalitarian society needs to be altered. Some argue that the declining reliance on political terror and mass mobilization does not represent a fundamental change, but merely the greater refinement, "rationalization," and sophistication of the instruments of political control (Cocks 1970; Dallin and Breslauer 1970; Kassof 1964). The implication, not always drawn, is that communist society still reflects social atomization and impersonal ideological ties between the party and its adherents (see Zaslavsky 1982a).[1]

1. Although it is now widely agreed that the original totalitarian image *no longer* accurately describes communist regimes, there are those, like myself, who argue that it was never a valid analytical description of *social relations* at *any stage* in the development of communist societies. I take this to be the main thrust of recent social and

One alternative view of communist political systems, however, does project a clear image of a society quite different from the totalitarian one. Many studies of communist political systems insist that, as political terror and mass mobilization subside, there is an accompanying revival of genuine political competition within the framework of political controls—a competition that can be described as *pluralistic* (e.g., Hough 1977). Social groups emerge from the temporary atomization of earlier periods and begin to articulate and otherwise pursue their shared interests. This activity, to be sure, is not formally organized as is interest group activity in liberal regimes, but it is, however, based on group identities and interests (Skilling 1983; Skilling and Griffiths 1970). Although these writers often eschew claims of societal convergence (e.g., Skilling 1970), the concepts and comparisons employed, nonetheless, invite such speculation. Pluralist and totalitarian societies are placed at different ends of an implicit continuum. The more that a totalitarian system "liberalizes" and allows limited pluralistic competition, and the more group politics pervades bureaucratic institutions (one must logically conclude), the less pronounced become the differences between the societies of East and West.[2]

At the core of this image of communist society is an unspoken ontological commitment: "real" political activities are based on *groups* that share common interests, and these groups act through formal political institutions, which often mask the reality of group action. This stance is identical to that of the original group theories about pluralism from which it is derived: the "group" is assumed to be the basic element of politics and operates under the institutional

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political analyses of the Stalin era, e.g., Fitzpatrick (1978), Hough (1978), and Lewin (1977; 1978). Most research on Chinese society under Mao would, in my opinion, support this view.

2. Hough (1977: 14) takes the argument further than others:

> There may not be much difference between stating that the Soviet Union is basically a directed society with a number of pluralistic or semi-pluralistic elements and stating that the Soviet Union is a kind of pluralist society with certain types of restrictions. It is perhaps the difference between saying that the bottle is 55 percent full or that it is 55 percent empty: the difference in tone is greater than the difference in substance.

I am not interested here in the question of *how similar* these types of societies are, but in the logically prior question of whether or not one can gauge similarity or difference with a few scaled attributes (in this case, pluralistic competition).

cover of administrative agencies, courts, legislative bodies, and political parties. Just as the group image of politics in communist society has emerged as a conscious reaction against the totalitarian image, group theory originally was a reaction to earlier theories that stressed the formal institutions of liberal regimes: "[Group theory] was a sociological revolt against legal formalism: group interaction constituted the reality of political life operating behind the formal legal-institutional guises of society and the state" (Almond 1983: 245).[3] Research in this vein focuses on the classification and description of groups: their identity, boundaries, (presumed) shared interests, and opportunities to exercise influence on the making and implementation of policy. The distinctive communist institutions that serve to organize political activity—the Leninist party and its subordinate organizations—are not of interest except to the extent that they provide an opportunity for groups to pursue their interests.[4]

The neo-traditional image differs fundamentally from both of these. At the same time, it implies a pattern of genuine evolution that cannot be described as convergent. The neo-traditional image shares with the totalitarian one a focus on the distinctive communist institutions that foster organized political control, and it shares the premise that these forms of organization shape patterns of association and political behavior in distinctive ways. But the neo-traditional image departs from the totalitarian one, even its latter-day versions, in several crucial respects. First, though recognizing the constraints placed on citizen behavior by the system of sur-

3. I should note in passing that proponents of this image often conflate "pluralism" with "group politics." "Pluralism" signifies the fact of competition and conflict over political power, influence, public goods, or policy outcomes. "Group politics" implies that collectivities, united by common interests, are the most important, if not the only, political actors. Thus we find the heads of bureaucratic agencies, regional leaders, professional strata, and leadership factions all labeled "groups," despite wide differences in the nature of their mutual affiliation and the activities in which they engage. Janos (1970) provides one of the few sound efforts to bring some order to this conceptually chaotic field.

4. An outstanding example is Hough's (1977: 125–39) examination of the party, not as an instrument of organization and control, but as an institution in which group views are represented to the extent that group members are represented in the party membership. The nature of the party as an organization and its activities and aims, however (not to mention how it decides which workers and intellectuals will be admitted), are crucial in interpreting what membership means in this context. Chapters 3 through 5 present material that can be read as an extended critique of this approach.

veillance and political control, it stresses the positive incentives offered for compliance. Central to the concept of neo-traditionalism is the notion that, from the establishment of a communist regime, political loyalty is rewarded systematically with career opportunities, special distributions, and other favors that officials in communist societies are uniquely able to dispense. Where the totalitarian image places its emphasis on the disincentives and psychological states created by fear and inbred caution, the neo-traditional image places emphasis on the meshing of economic and political power—on the structured incentives offered by the party.[5]

Second, the neo-traditional image posits a paradox: communist parties do put forward impersonal ideological standards of behavior in their attempt to mobilize society, and these are stressed precisely during the period that the regime attempts to transform radically the existing social structure. But these impersonal standards dictate preferential treatment in return for loyalty and ideological adherence, and standard party leadership practices require the cultivation of stable networks of such activists in all social settings. The totalitarian image captures the ideological intentions and the party's formal hostility to personal ties, but it misses the unintended social consequences of the party's ideological orientation: party branches develop stable networks of loyal clients, who exchange their loyalty and support for preference in career opportunities and other rewards. The result is a highly institutionalized network of patron-client relations that is maintained by the party and is integral to its rule: a clientelist system in which public loyalty to the party and its ideology is mingled with personal loyalties between party branch officials and their clients.[6]

Third, instead of social atomization and the destruction of social ties not subordinated to the party's aims, the neo-traditional image posits a rich subculture of instrumental-personal ties through which individuals circumvent formal regulations to obtain official ap-

5. Research on Chinese society in the 1960s and 1970s has long stressed the positive incentives offered for compliance. A representative sampling is Oksenberg (1970), Shirk (1982), Unger (1982), and Oi (1985), all of whom offer analyses of communist institutions that stress competition for career opportunities, rewards, or public goods. The neo-traditional image is consistent with this work, although only Oi formulates arguments that bear directly on the image I am developing here.

6. This "corruption" of the official ideology and organization can eventually pervade and transform the entire structure of the party and government, as Jowitt (1983) argues in his analysis of the Soviet Union. My discussion is of the state-society relationship, not of the structure of the regime, though the two may well be linked.

provals, housing, and other public and private goods controlled by low-level officials. The party's ideology and organization have always been hostile to these "unprincipled" personal ties, which at one extreme shade into corruption. But the system of political and economic organization, which creates scarcity and leaves so many legal and distributional decisions to the discretion of lower-ranking officials, *structurally* encourages these ties. In sum, instead of the totalitarian image of impersonal mobilization and social atomization, the neo-traditional image stresses a formally organized particularism in the distribution of goods, income, and career opportunities, a network of patron-client relations maintained by the party, and a rich subculture of instrumental-personal ties independent of the party's control.

The neo-traditional image shares with the "group-pluralist" one the conviction that communist societies are pervaded by competition and conflict at all levels, and that people have a variety of means to pursue their interests. Yet it departs from the group-pluralist image in two fundamental ways. First, it does not share its ontology: that the "real" political and social forces are group forces, and that these shape formal political institutions and work through them. The neo-traditional image stresses the "reality" and priority of communist institutions designed to exercise political control: they not only shape political behavior and create a set of genuine political and personal loyalties, but in so doing they shape *social structure itself.* Second, it does not enshrine the "group" as the basic unit of political behavior or group ties as the basic element of social structure. The party organizes social institutions in a way that systematically diverts political activity and individual allegiances away from group identifications. It coopts a minority into networks whose allegiances rest with the party branch, and it implicitly tolerates a wide variety of individuated instrumental-personal ties, even those that border on corruption. Communist institutions exist in continuous tension with group allegiances and activities, but only a narrow spectrum of political behavior can be appropriately fitted to group concepts.[7] The neo-traditional image stresses the social network, not the group, as its main structural concept.

7. An adequate political sociology of communist states, and of their distinctive variety of "pluralism," would require an elaboration of the central tension between group politics and vertical loyalties, and it would involve a conceptual reordering that recognizes the distinction between the identity and interests of social aggregates

Finally, the neo-traditional image is at odds with the idea that communist societies evolve in a pattern that represents convergence with the advanced capitalist societies. Whether this convergence is measured on a continuum that contrasts particularism with universalism, ascription with achievement, tradition with modernity, or totalitarianism with pluralism, the effort to gauge degrees of difference is bound to mislead. None of these concepts adequately characterizes the distinctive social configuration of contemporary communism or allows us to interpret its pattern of change. Instead of an evolution, however partial, toward pluralistic competition and group allegiances and activities, there is an evolution toward a historically new system of institutionalized clientelism; a neo-traditional pattern of authority based on citizen dependence on social institutions and their leaders. Communist societies and economies are indeed "modernizing" in many respects, but as political communities they are becoming more "neo-traditional"; they are transformed *from within* by their patterns of economic organization and the ambiguities of their official ideology and political institutions (see Jowitt 1983). This evolution, moreover, is deeply rooted in the origins of communist institutions: there are no fundamental distinctions between "mobilization" and "postmobilization" stages of development, as far as these core features are concerned.[8] The description of factory authority offered in this book is an elaboration of this neo-traditional image of communist society and an analysis of its origins, stability, and evolution over the decades in the People's Republic of China.

Communist Neo-Traditionalism as a Type-Concept

Although *communist neo-traditionalism* is a term designed to convey an image of communist society, it is also a type-concept designed for the comparative study of authority relations in industry. The concept was not derived from any preexisting theory or ty-

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and how political activity is organized and the actors defined. Frey (1985) and Janos (1970) would undoubtedly be the place to begin such a task, but this is well beyond the scope of this book.

8. I suspect that I would root these patterns much earlier in the "mobilization stage" than does Jowitt (1983).

pology but was built from elements of the observed reality of institutions and behavior in Chinese industry and refined through comparisons with analogous aspects of labor relations in other communist states.[9] The type includes only those elements that I consider to be the defining ones. Wage policies and other labor relations practices have changed repeatedly in China over the past three decades; but, despite these policy changes, there has been a consistent and enduring set of institutions, structures, and orientations to authority. These *enduring elements* are the ones incorporated in the type. In a similar manner, I have compared these enduring Chinese elements with those apparent in the literature on Soviet labor relations in an effort to distinguish the Chinese from the generically communist. The resulting type is, therefore, stated at a level of generality that allows it to be used to distinguish the common and unique features of the Soviet, Chinese, and other communist patterns, while at the same time providing a framework for analyzing problems and patterns of change specific to China.

Before defining this type, one important caveat: the term *neo-traditional* is used in an analytical, rather than historical, sense. It is not intended to convey a proposition that is a virtual truism—that authority relations in contemporary industry reflect the influence of prerevolutionary cultural traditions. Because all modern societies represent a complex pattern of continuity and change with regard to their traditional social structures and the consequences of industrialization (Bendix 1964), all national patterns of industrial authority are in one sense neo-traditional. The question is why particular institutional and cultural patterns common to a wide variety of premodern and early modern settings (such as personal dependence in craft and early factory production) are incorporated in the modern institutions of some societies, but transformed in others. We cannot explain contemporary neo-traditionalism by referring to cultural traditions, for two reasons. First, a cultural tradition can-

9. Although my cast of mind is evidently Weberian, I do not view my task to be to extend or elaborate on Weber's own work, nor do I attempt a typology that covers all other varieties of industrial authority. I would rather have the subject of my research, rather than Weber's type concepts, be the focus of attention. The term "neo-traditionalism" was suggested to me by a reading of an early draft of Jowitt's (1983) interpretation of the Soviet Union. He offers it as a characterization of the communist party and its system of rule taken as a whole. Here I apply it to the "state-society relationship" alone and develop the concept further through research on a specific institutional setting.

not explain its own continuity (or lack thereof) without resorting to tautology: the continuity of culture itself must be explained by its relation to institutional structures that serve to perpetuate it (see Merton 1968a: 84–86; Stinchcombe 1968: 101–29). Second, we cannot safely assume that there is a "tradition" with which contemporary social institutions exhibit continuity. In China, as in Japan (Cole 1971; Gordon 1985), contemporary patterns of industrial authority that might appear at first glance to be traditional in fact have no precedent in the forms of industrial organization of earlier periods. The tradition in question did not crystallize in either country until after World War II. Communist neo-traditionalism is a *modern type* of industrial authority.[10]

The term *neo-traditional*, in other words, does not signify a social pattern that is not yet "modern." There is no implied universal scale of modernity. This position has been elaborated both in general terms (Bendix 1967; Gusfield 1967; Nisbet 1969) and in the study of individual developing societies (Rudolph and Rudolph 1964; Rustow 1965). These arguments need not be repeated here. Why, then, must we use the term neo-*traditional* at all? The answer is in the tradition of Western social science itself. In modern social science, which was born as an effort to understand the profound social changes in Western Europe during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, the term *tradition* has come to be associated with dependence, deference, and particularism, and the term *modern* with independence, contract, and universalism (Nisbet 1966). I have adopted the term *neo-traditional* in order to highlight the contrast with more familiar modern forms of industrial authority that are notable for their relative impersonality and anonymity, the relative political and economic independence of workers from management, and the resulting prominence of group conflict, bargaining, contract, and the relatively tight bureaucratic restriction of the personal discretion of immediate superiors. Out of common convention, the term *traditional* communicates these social attributes more concisely than any other.

10. This argument does not imply that one cannot talk of the impact of "cultural traditions" in a meaningful way; it simply means that the notion must be used carefully and in a well-defined fashion, and that it should not be invoked lightly to explain national differences for which one has no ready explanation. Nor does my insistence on the modernity of this type imply that it may not evolve in unforeseen ways in the future.

Communist neo-traditionalism is defined by the following elements. First, the employment relationship has several distinctive features, all of which revolve around the fact that employment is not primarily a market relationship, nor is the firm an economic enterprise in the capitalist sense. Labor has many of the features of fixed, rather than variable, capital in centrally planned industry. It is not a factor of production readily separable from the firm; employment does not fluctuate according to the firm's demand for labor, nor does the firm's demand fluctuate with changes in demand for its products. Wages and conditions of employment are not subject to formal bargaining; labor and management are not recognized as separate parties; and wage scales and conditions are set by higher agencies. Employment plays a welfare role: it is a value in itself, and many social services are delivered at the state workplace, so there is a systemic inhibition to minimizing the size of the labor force. But perhaps more directly relevant is a system of planning and budgeting that provides weak incentives to economize on costs of production, including labor. To be more efficient in labor utilization is to have labor budgets cut—to have labor cut is to risk shortfalls in the future. The management orientation to labor is, therefore, to retain it as a fixed element of production in excess of current needs. This provides the economic framework for the evolution of a distinctive set of authority relations in the factory.[11]

A second set of features pertain to the political and economic organization of the workplace. First, the enterprise is a focal point for the delivery of public goods, services, and other material and social advantages that are not readily available from other sources. Second, the party, with its auxiliary organizations in the workplace, strives to eliminate informal political association of workers outside of official auspices, and, because of its organized presence in workshops, it is able to do so under normal circumstances. Third, the discretion of supervisors, relatively unrestrained by enforceable regulations and contracts, is quite broad, and they have considerable ability to influence the promotions, raises, and, more importantly, the degree to which a worker and his or her family may enjoy the many nonwage benefits and advantages potentially supplied by the

11. Contrast Weber's account of the capitalist enterprise (1922: 63–211) with Kornai's (1980) and Berliner's (1957) of the socialist. A comparative analysis of the diverse forms of modern rationality could easily be developed from these materials.

enterprise. Each of these three elements reflects a relatively high degree of dependence, compared with other types of modern industrial relations: economic and social dependence on the enterprise; political dependence on the party and management; and personal dependence on supervisors.

These elements of workplace organization—generic features of modern communism—give rise to several other features of factory political life and authority relations that complete the definition of the type. Each of these elements may take varied forms, but they are all present in the communist factory. First, management attempts to control the workforce and elicit its active cooperation by fostering a stable relationship, clientelist in nature, with a minority of loyal and cooperative workers who are given preference not only in career opportunities and pay, but in access to the many other benefits and privileges available at the factory. Second, these vertical networks of loyalty are marked publicly on a regular basis—highlighting the split in the workforce—and serve to draw the antagonisms of the rank and file, otherwise reserved for management, onto these privileged and cooperative clients. Third, rank-and-file workers pursue their interests in the workplace through their participation in a vigorous subculture of private exchange and mutual support, which sometimes includes petty corruption, in which workers attempt to influence the decisions of individual supervisors and officials with discretionary power over factory benefits.

This type can accommodate wide variations in specific policies and practices designed to improve the performance of workers. Management may stress ideological indoctrination, group persuasion and mass mobilization as the primary tool of work motivation; it may use this tool in a ritual fashion; or it may explicitly reject this tool as a motivating mechanism. Management may stress "distribution according to work" or material reward for performance; it may give this principle no more than lip service; or it may reject it as a bourgeois principle. The state may enforce an austere wage policy designed to maximize accumulation at the expense of worker consumption; or it may switch to a policy designed to satisfy workers as consumers. Management may in some periods stress strict penalties for breaches of labor discipline and publicize their application as warnings; it may honor existing regulations in the breach; or it may explicitly reject such penalties.

Management may stress a clear division of labor and explicit job rules for individuals; or it may foster a group or "labor brigade"

orientation in which responsibility is collective. The state may allow or even encourage labor turnover, or it may place tight restrictions on it. The state may encourage enterprises to borrow and adapt foreign labor management techniques; or it may demand the development of nativist and politically pure techniques. The party may literally shove professional managers aside and commandeer the factory for political and production campaigns run according to Leninist precepts; or it may retreat into a cooperative and supportive stance, becoming partly "professional" in its own orientations. China itself has changed its policies and prescribed practices regularly over the past 30 years, and in these respects it has often been at odds with the Soviet Union and the rest of the Eastern bloc. Although state policies and management practices have come and gone, the core institutional features endure.

As an analytical type, communist neo-traditionalism guides comparisons of industrial authority by focusing attention not on these shifting policies and practices, but on two institutional features. The first is "organized dependence" or the extent to which, and ways in which, workers are dependent economically on their enterprises, politically on the party and management, and personally on supervisors. Existing economic and political arrangements and the internal organization of the factory are of relevance to the extent that they foster more or less dependence in each of these areas. The second feature is the "institutional culture" of the factory; the patterns of association between superior and subordinate, the patterns of association among workers, and the strategies employed by workers, given the opportunities provided by the setting, to advance their interests.

Although this book is a case study, it is explicitly comparative in its aims.[12] Communist neo-traditionalism is an analytical type that embodies a comparative argument: the "institutional culture" characteristic of a national tradition of industrial authority varies according to the configuration of dependence experienced by that nation's workforce.[13] In the course of elaborating the Chinese variant

12. Strictly speaking, a case study is by definition comparative, because it must be a case of some phenomenon of which there are theoretically analogous cases. The term has been debased in common usage by its application to studies that are simply descriptive rather than analytical.

13. Industrial sectors are far from homogeneous within nations, a fact suppressed, but not ignored, in cross-national comparisons. When I compare national types, I am referring, unless otherwise specified, to large, modern enterprises in all countries. In Japan and the U.S., they are the large, "primary sector" firms. In China

of neo-traditionalism and its evolution, I will make brief comparisons, primarily with historical and contemporary practices in Russia, Japan, and the United States. Behind the primary aim of these comparisons, which is to illuminate the distinctive features of industrial authority in communist countries, and the Chinese variant of this type, there is a second aim—to sketch the elements of a theory of national diversity in industrial authority.

Social and Economic Dependence on the Enterprise

All workers are dependent on their enterprises for the satisfaction of their needs. This is the material basis of industrial authority; it provides what Weber called "interests in obedience." But the employment relationship and the degree and type of the dependence it embodies vary widely from country to country and, indeed, change markedly in the course of industrial development. Two aspects of the employment relationship define the extent of worker dependence. The first is the proportion of the workers' needs satisfied (or potentially satisfied) at the workplace. This involves, at a bare minimum, the money wage. But, in a variety of contemporary and historical settings, this has also involved the satisfaction of other social and economic needs: health insurance, medical care, pensions, housing, loans, and education, to name only the most common.

The second aspect of dependence, just as important as the first, is the availability of alternative sources for the satisfaction of these needs. This can refer to the availability of employment elsewhere on comparable terms. "Availability" implies not only the existence of

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and the U.S.S.R., they are large and medium-sized state factories (usually more than 500 people), at the municipal level or higher. We should note that there is less variation in the labor practices in centrally planned economies, because of the uniformity of state regulation and ownership and the lack of differentiated product markets, which serve to make sectors more diverse in market economies. Within any single nation, I would expect aspects of an industrial sector's "institutional culture" to vary according to differences in the configuration of dependence experienced by that sector's workforce—though a more finely differentiated conception of dependence would have to be developed, and the discussion would have to be fashioned to fit a set of institutional realities common across sectors within the nation in question: labor market conditions, union structures, degree and type of government regulation, and so forth. The concept here is a rough one, designed only to differentiate the centrally planned economies from the market economies.

other jobs (something that depends on labor market conditions), but also the absence of legal or political barriers that close off these alternatives.[14] "Alternatives," moreover, need not refer only to employment alternatives; they may just as importantly refer to the availability of outside income or alternative sources for the satisfaction of nonwage needs: pensions, health insurance, housing, loans, and so forth. The greater the proportion of needs satisfied by the enterprise and the fewer the alternatives (either for employment or the satisfaction of needs), the more dependent is the labor force.

In arguing that industrial workers in communist societies are highly dependent on their enterprises, compared to their counterparts in modern industry elsewhere, I do not mean to suggest that a high degree of worker dependence is unique to communism. Such dependence has always been characteristic of industrial paternalism, company towns, and "welfare capitalism" in the American and British historical experiences.[15] Large enterprises in contemporary Japan provide a wide array of benefits for the permanent part of their work force: housing, health insurance, recreational activities, pensions, and so forth. Given the penchant of Japanese managers in this sector to hire these workers at the entry level and retain them for long periods, this makes the Japanese worker dependent on the firm in a way that contrasts with the American pattern.

Geographical isolation may also serve to close off alternatives to workers, both for employment and the satisfaction of nonwage needs, and the use of company stores, payment in company script, and company housing have been employed historically in railway construction, mining, and other industries to create a dependent and disciplined workforce. Perhaps the most common way in which employment alternatives are closed off to a workforce, or a segment

14. Readers of Stinchcombe's (1965) essay on social structure and organizations will recognize the source of the concept "organized dependency" and the way I have reshaped it in the present context. I have also benefitted from Blau's (1964: 118–25) analysis of dependence and power. Cole's (1979: 242–50) use of Stinchcombe's concept to explain some specific differences between Japanese and American labor relations practices spurred me to develop it as a tool for the comparative analysis of China.

15. For accounts of paternalism in eighteenth- and nineteenth-century England, I have relied on Joyce (1979), Pollard (1965), and Smelser (1959). Brandes (1976) describes the early twentieth-century American developments in "welfare capitalism," the dependence engendered by it, and worker resistance to it. Bendix (1956: 99–116) provides an account of paternalist ideology in nineteenth-century England. Burawoy (1983) outlines the lessening dependence of labor in advanced capitalist countries.

thereof, is through ethnic and racial discrimination that coincides with citizenship or other legal restrictions. Foreign migrant workers from impoverished regions provide a dependent labor force in selected occupations in northern Europe and North America (Thomas 1982). The most extreme form of this type of dependence is that of South Africa's system of apartheid, in which black workers are treated as foreigners in their own country, shackled with identity papers and internal passports, and repatriated to impoverished reservations when their employment is terminated.

In communist economies workers are highly dependent on their enterprises, but in a different way. Despite the many nonwage benefits that may come with employment in some industrial sectors in market economies, the employment relation there is primarily a labor market relationship: a specific contractual exchange of efforts and skills for money and other compensation. In a communist economy, employment in the state enterprise is not primarily a market relationship. It is a position that establishes the worker's social identity and rights to specific distributions and welfare entitlements provided by the state. Moreover, the enterprise exercises authority not only over one highly specialized role, but over the whole person: the state factory is a branch of government and, through the factory's party branch, exerts a measure of the state's political rule over the worker as a citizen.

State-owned enterprises not only provide complete health insurance and pensions, they also provide direct medical care in their own facilities or in an attached hospital; they are the main source for housing; they provide loans, subsidies, child care, meal services, and, sometimes, education; and they are an important source for the procurement of certain consumer goods. People who are not employed in the state sector are not entitled to such a generous array of benefits, and not all state enterprises can provide as wide an array—the specific mix varies by enterprise. The enterprise is also a source of certain sociopolitical services peculiar to the communist setting: obtaining official certificates of permission to travel, to take another job, to get local residence registration for a relative or spouse; or interventions with public agencies for housing, for higher quality medical care or medications, or to lessen the punishment for a criminal offense—to give only some common examples.

Along with this broad range of needs satisfied at the workplace goes a corresponding scarcity of alternatives. In some periods in

many communist states, changing jobs without official authorization has been effectively restricted (this includes China for most of the period studied here). Even in those countries where the freedom to change jobs is widely established, residence barriers continue to restrict alternatives to certain areas or regions: a resident of Beijing or Moscow may freely get permission to work in the hinterlands (in the rare case that they would desire to), but someone from the hinterlands cannot readily get permission to reside in a large, "closed" city. Alternatives are also few in a second respect: communist economies invest according to planners' preferences, not consumers' preferences. Investment in consumer goods and housing production is assigned a relatively low priority. This scarcity makes the provisions of the workplace even more important. (This is an important contrast with Japan where, even though large enterprises often provide housing and other benefits, consumer markets are fully developed and not characterized by shortages.) For many of the other needs satisfied at the workplace, there are few reasonable alternatives.

Communist countries do vary in the degree of worker dependence on the enterprise, and there are also variations between sectors. Through the late 1970s China was a case of rather extreme dependence: movement between enterprises was tightly restricted; residence controls were strictly enforced; housing and consumer goods were in extremely short supply; and common consumer items and even basic foodstuffs were rationed through the workplace. These shortages and controls have eased in the 1980s, and China's pattern of dependence has moved toward less severe Eastern European norms. Despite these variations, the communist pattern contrasts with that in large Japanese enterprises and, more sharply, with those in the United States.

Political Dependence on Management

A second feature that distinguishes the communist pattern of authority is the political dependence of workers on management. This aspect is defined by organization: by the independent capacity of workers to collectively resist management initiatives in an organized way; and by the capacity of management to resist such worker initiatives in an organized fashion and organize workers' political

activity on their own terms. In this respect, the communist pattern differs not only from that of liberal-democratic regimes, but from most other varieties of modern authoritarianism as well.

Standard theories of collective action stress organization among members of a group as the key determinant of that group's ability to enforce its interests. These theories stress geographical proximity and ability to communicate; the homogeneity of group interests; the ability of a group to develop and protect competent leadership; and its ability, given the existing legal order, to organize and communicate freely with one another in the pursuit of group aims (e.g., Tilly 1978). When examining differences in workers' collective strength in different industrial sectors or in different Western nations, such a perspective leads to consideration of the extent to which enterprises are small, geographically dispersed, or isolated; whether workers are divided by differences in their conditions of employment or by ethnic, racial, and linguistic barriers; whether their organizing efforts are hindered by lack of literacy or reinforced by community patterns and common craft traditions; and whether workers have political rights to organize that are respected in practice.[16]

"Repression" is an important concept in these theories. It affects virtually all organizing activity; the ability to communicate and organize freely, and to protect leaders. Yet the concept has two meanings that are not often clearly distinguished. It refers, first, to a political stance, the willingness of the authorities to use a high *quantity of force*, which raises the "cost" (in terms of lives and resources spent) of collective action. In this meaning of the term, repression has a deterrent effect and influences the calculative behavior of subordinate groups. Repression can refer, second, to an *organized pattern of activity* that makes collective action difficult to undertake in the first place and that diverts it into other forms. These two aspects have quite different implications for political dependence. A state or an elite that must use a large amount of force to repress emerging or ongoing collective action exercises less effective control than a state or elite that is able regularly to prevent organized group action in the first place. The most brutal and vio-

16. A broad stream of research on early modern European social history stresses the importance of craft organization and community solidarity: Aminzade (1981), Thompson (1966), Sewell (1980), Dawley (1976), Liebman (1980), Hanagan (1980), and Shorter and Tilly (1974).

lent regimes are not necessarily the most effective at imposing political control; their brutality and violence is often a mark of a poorly organized and ineffective effort to stem collective action. A workforce that is able to fight collectively for its interests, no matter how unsuccessfully, is less dependent than a workforce that is unable to do so and that must accept the political forms dictated by their superiors.

Communist regimes do not differ from other authoritarian ones in their willingness to use force to repress workers' collective action. Although they have shown little hesitancy in this regard when faced with organized opposition, real or imagined, it is hard to argue that their willingness to use force against organized workers is greater than that of other contemporary authoritarian regimes or even most liberal regimes in past eras.[17] They do differ in their extraordinary ability to prevent organized political activity even from reaching the stage of collective action. The difference is in the political organization of the workplace. The communist factory is laced with overlapping political organizations that serve both to prevent organized opposition and to recruit and coopt members of the workforce. The party organization itself has branches organized in every workshop. It recruits and rewards activists, often through an auxiliary youth organization, to keep the party informed of workers' dispositions. The state security bureau also maintains a branch office, usually staffed by former military personnel, in every state factory of any consequence, and these offices maintain a network of informers in shops. The security office keeps records on suspect workers, but the personnel department keeps its own political dossiers on every worker, and these records move with the worker if he or she changes jobs. A worker who engages in independent political activity, if not imprisoned, will be unable to find work elsewhere, except in marginal sectors. As representatives of the state, communist managers are extraordinarily unified and well organized.

Communist regimes, more importantly, are effective not only in preventing independent organization and activity: they use their

17. The phenomenon that Burawoy (1984) has referred to as the "company state" in Czarist Russia was also partially reflected in some American practices: the hiring of company spies and private police forces by large companies and the virtual identity of territorial governments and militias with large mining and industrial interests in the Western United States in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

organization of the workplace and their control of rewards to pull workers into political activity that they organize. Any political activity in the workplace must take place within the approved meetings organized by the party and management. Management, in fact, strives to organize all the available political space to preempt independent activity. Loyal citizens are to avail themselves of the opportunities for expression of grievances granted by the state and party; workers must bring up their suggestions and demands as individuals, within this framework. Those who deny this opportunity are literally forced into "conspiratorial" activity and become vulnerable to the legal charge of participating in a counterrevolutionary organization. In this situation, workers are politically dependent on management to a considerable degree. Party and management organize political activity and set the terms and even the vocabulary of political discourse. The extent to which workers' requirements are satisfied depends mainly on the largess of management and the state, not on the collective initiative of workers.[18] Workers can engage in political activity designed to further their interests, either through individual accommodation and cooptation or through an informal pattern of "bargaining"—the "give and take" between management and labor in each factory over the degree of workers' cooperation and the enforcement and interpretation of factory rules. This kind of hidden bargaining is typical of dependent groups that are unable to pursue their aims collectively.[19]

Personal Dependence on Superiors

There is a final aspect of dependence: the extent to which workers are dependent on their supervisors *personally* for the satisfaction of their needs. When supervisors have the ability to hire and fire or manipulate rewards for individuals under them, workers are personally dependent on them to a high degree. When the ability of individual supervisors to hire or fire or manipulate rewards for individuals has been restrained by collective agreements or bureaucratic regulations, the degree of personal dependence is attenuated; pat-

18. The conditions that determine management largess are a separate matter. It can be influenced by the stage of industrial growth, by fiscal and budgetary realities, by the state of international relations, and by efforts of state officials to remedy poor worker motivation.

19. Sabel and Stark (1982), Pravda (1981), and I (Walder 1987a) describe this kind of grassroots bargaining, which Weber (1922: 929) calls "amorphous social action."

terns of dependence are more impersonal ("bureaucratic"). This feature determines the extent to which existing levels of worker dependence on the enterprise promote personal dependence within the enterprise.

Early craft-industrial organization is often characterized by a high degree of personal dependence in precisely this respect. In many trades, journeymen and apprentices were dependent on master craftsmen for their jobs and sometimes for their room and board as well (Aminzade 1981). In later eras, even in many "modern" factories, such personal patterns of dependence were to be found in contracting systems dominated by foremen who controlled the production process in the shops and who had wide personal discretion over hiring, firing, and levels of compensation. This "foreman's empire," as Nelson (1975) calls it, eroded steadily in the first decades of this century in the United States under the twin impact of the labor movement and employers' efforts to wrest control over the production process away from the foremen (see Edwards 1979; Stone 1975; Montgomery 1979: 1–31; Nelson 1975: 48–54). The progressive bureaucratization of labor relations resulted in complex regulations and collective agreements governing compensation at specific skill levels, tasks, and grades of seniority, as well as the hiring and firing of workers. The degree of personal discretion that supervisors had in these matters in earlier eras has shrunk to a bare minimum in many large, unionized plants. Instead, one finds a kind of impersonal rule in which complex patterns of pay, promotion, and internal governance are almost entirely shaped by bureaucratic regulation and enforced by factory unions and staff.[20]

In communist regimes, contemporary shop organization did not evolve out of a history of collective conflict and bargaining, nor is it the outcome of management's efforts to wrest control over the production process from foremen-contractors. Instead, industrialization proceeded from centralized state investment and organization, with a new, politically dependent working class being created in the process and with staff management enjoying uncontested control of

20. One might be tempted to object that the image projected by the "paternalism" of large Japanese enterprises (and its associated practices) makes Japan an exception to this statement. A closer reading of materials on Japanese shop organization shows that Japanese foremen are subject to staff regulation just as their American counterparts are, even though these staff regulations often embody different principles.

production and personnel policies. As a result, despite the formal similarity of communist shop organization with that elsewhere—especially in the technical organization of production—shop foremen and other supervisors maintain considerable discretion in personnel matters and in many other aspects of the factory's system of reward and punishment. The communist factory's distinctive pattern of internal political organization also serves to add to the discretion of shop leaders. The workshop is coterminous with the party branch, and each branch secretary and foreman has wide political and administrative powers in their area of the factory. Shop officials, relatively free of interference from above and not shackled by enforceable collective agreements, are in effect brokers that mediate between staff management and workers. Although they by no means enjoy the wide control over production and personnel decisions that turn-of-the-century foremen-contractors did in the United States, the balance of power between staff office and shop floor, in many areas, tips in favor of the latter.

The "broker" role of shop supervisors is enhanced by another factor: there are many other distributions, applications, and approvals in the daily life of the communist factory. Shop officials act as brokers between the factory administration and the workers, releasing staff offices of much of the enormous day-to-day burden of making these decisions. Shop officials screen requests for factory housing and special distributions of consumer items. They review and approve requests for benefits under state labor insurance guidelines: vacations, annual home leave, personal leave, visits to sanatoria, special medications, and welfare and loan payments. Shop supervisors are also responsible for writing character reports, relaying information to the party and security apparatus, securing permission for workers to travel, and deciding on the application of fines and other punishments for breaches of factory rules. Shop officials have broad discretionary powers over these matters—things that are simply not a part of American and Japanese factory life. The wide discretion lodged in the communist workshop personalizes industrial authority to a comparatively high degree.

The Institutional Culture of Authority

A high degree of worker dependence in each of these three respects defines a configuration characteristic of modern commu-

nism. Industries in other countries may exhibit a high degree of dependence in any one of these areas, but rarely to such an extent in all three. Large Japanese enterprises often provide for a broad array of workers' needs, but the range is not so broad as in a communist economy: the Japanese enterprise plays no role in providing sociopolitical services, and free markets for housing and commodities in Japan provide alternative sources of supply, even if not always on attractive terms. Authoritarian regimes may be successful in suppressing independent political activity among workers and in channeling them into officially controlled unions, but they do not organize and penetrate the workplace so thoroughly. Individual enterprises, or specific industrial sectors in certain historical and geographic settings, may reflect a high degree of dependence in two or even three of these areas, but no modern industrial sector does. This general configuration of dependence is characteristic of communism because each of the three aspects of dependence is the result of a generic feature of communist political and economic organization: the role of the enterprise in delivering public goods and services in a poorly developed consumer market; the political organization of the workplace and its role in national governance; and the discretion exercised by shop management and party officials in factory administration.

Interpretive comparisons of "types" of authority inevitably return to Weber's preliminary statements. All forms of authority, according to Weber, involve specific normative or ideological claims made by superiors, "ideal" and material interests in obedience, and a characteristic form of conflict shaped by the pattern of authority. These qualities—normative and ideological claims, motives for obedience, and forms of contention—begin to describe what I mean by an institutional culture of authority. But there are other facets to these cultures that Weber's broadly comparative work does not even begin to describe.[21]

The central puzzle of any type of authority is an elusive, ambiguous condition of "consent": an element of voluntary and habitual compliance. Every type of authority involves an element of tacit consent that shades into normative acceptance. Analysts of authority are often split between those who see consent simply as ha-

21. Bendix's (1956) classic study of managerial ideology explores the normative and ideological claims of superiors. This is an important aspect of an institutional culture; one that I will not address here, except indirectly.

bituation to power and those who stress the normative acceptance of the claims of authority. I view consent as a less unitary concept. It is a pattern that emerges from a socially structured and highly differentiated pattern of active cooperation, habituation, calculated conformity, and normative acceptance. In other words, people's orientations vary, and it is the structure of these differences and the social relations between people with different orientations that give the pattern of authority whatever stability it may possess. I refer to these patterns as an institutional culture of authority—a summary concept of the conditions that define the structure of consent.

An institutional culture is not simply a shorthand term for patterns of behavior; nor is it a "superorganic" sphere of cultural norms, perceptions, and expectations. Moreover, this concept is not the equivalent of the dependent variables of comparative research on labor relations, for example, permanent employment, loyalty to the firm, lifetime employment, or small group management. Nor is it reducible to a cluster of such variables. It is, rather, a concept fashioned for the comparative (and necessarily interpretive) analysis of factory authority. My comparisons are not of management practices and formal organizational properties, but of the characteristics of everyday life in factory settings that are most often reported by field researchers and social historians.

Stated generally, the four characteristics that define a culture of authority are the structure of social relations in the enterprise; the content and "ethic" of these relations; the practical and ideological claims of authority; and the "give and take" through which managers and workers try to reshape the terms of the tacit agreement that governs labor-management relations. Stated concretely, the communist pattern, of which China's is a variant, is one in which the party cultivates a network of patron-client ties in workshops (social ties that bind a loyal minority to shop officials); in which these vertical ties serve to divide the workforce socially and politically; and in which a subculture of instrumental-personal ties serves as the avenue through which workers pursue their interests as individuals.

Party-Clientelism

The central feature of this institutional culture is a network of patron-client relations that links the party organization and shop management to a minority of loyal workers on the shop floor. These

clientelist ties are not purely instances of "informal organization" or personal networks: if they were only this, they would not be of comparative interest. Cliques, factions, and other kinds of personal networks are a ubiquitous phenomenon; they have been described in every imaginable setting, including American and Japanese factories (Dalton 1959; Blau 1954; Eisenstadt and Roniger 1984; Cole 1971). Party-clientelism is not comprised of personal ties that exist separately from the formal organization of relationships and roles: it emerges from standard party recruitment and leadership practices—indeed, it is created by them. The party and management seek to control the workforce and elicit its active cooperation by developing stable ties with a minority of loyal and cooperative workers. Formally speaking, the relationship is impersonal, a form of "principled particularism": the party itself rewards and promotes people preferentially according to the loyalty and service they render to management and party. The networks that result are "objectively" clientelist in structure: they are vertical, between superior and subordinate, relatively stable, and involve an exchange of mutual benefit between the parties involved. Personal loyalties and affectivity between specific leaders and followers do naturally arise in this setting, become mingled with the public, official loyalties, and often result in more privileges and favors than the party prescribes. Yet this personal dimension is not the significant feature of these ties. Party-clientelism is created "from above"; it is an institutionally prescribed clientelist network that has both formal and informal, impersonal and personal, aspects.

This mixed character of party-clientelism is distinctively neotraditional. It represents a mixture of ideological commitments and impersonal loyalties demanded by the modern Leninist party and the role expectations of modern industrial organization with the personal loyalties characteristic of traditional authority and patrimonialism. It is, therefore, distinct from traditional patron-client ties, built upon personal loyalties, and it is also distinct from cliques and factions that exist separately from the formal organization of roles. (In fact, cliques and factions do often exist within these official networks, and these cliques are aspects of the informal organization of the Chinese factory.) The factions and personal networks described in American and Japanese factories are a different phenomenon from party-clientelism: they are personal, informal, and not a central instrument of labor relations.

The Divided Workforce as a Social Fact

A split between the party's loyal clients and the rank and file is a direct consequence of these vertical loyalties. The distinction between loyal activists and other workers results in the social isolation of, and antagonism toward, activists, something that splits the workforce and binds activists more closely to the party. Activists serve as a lightning rod for dissatisfaction: they receive any resentment that workers have toward management. Although workers the world over show scorn for members who break rank in this fashion, nowhere else are such mutual antagonisms so permanently institutionalized in routine labor relations. The communist approach to group relations is therefore not, as is often said of Japan (Rohlen 1975), to promote group loyalty and solidarity, but to divide work groups with these cross-cutting loyalties. These cross-cutting loyalties, further, have structural consequences: they define a social boundary just as real as any other category according to which groups may be defined.

Networks of Instrumental-Personal Ties

The last feature is a subculture of social relations that are at the same time personal and instrumental. These social relations—involving the exchange of favors or a reliance on personal connections or petty corruption to obtain a public or private good—substitute for impersonal market transactions in a setting where such markets are restricted and scarcity prevails. They are also the product of a system of distribution in the workplace that is bureaucratic, but one in which officials have wide personal discretion in the application of rules. In communist societies these networks of personal exchange spread far beyond the workplace and pervade every social setting in which the worker may have dealings. Within the factory, workers commonly cultivate connections with factory officials in a position to bend rules in their favor or give them preference in the distribution of housing or other goods. This instrumental orientation in personal relations, referred to as *blat* in Russian, and *guanxi* in Chinese, is not an ethic peculiar to the communist setting. It has predominated in a wide variety of premodern, especially peasant, settings. Networks of instrumental-personal ties thrive in the modern communist enterprise because of the social

and economic resources they control, the scarcity that characterizes the consumer economy, and the wide discretion that officials have in interpreting the rules and distributing resources. These instrumental-personal ties are an important avenue through which workers as individuals may pursue their private interests within the factory.

Précis of the Analysis

In the chapters that follow, I describe and analyze the characteristics of neo-traditionalism in Chinese factories. I also specify the ways that the Chinese variant has diverged from the Soviet. Because my purpose is to analyze an institutional framework that has characterized the past 30 years in the People's Republic of China (despite frequent changes in government policy), the approach is analytical and thematic, rather than chronological and topical. Surveys of Chinese labor and management policy abound (e.g., Andors 1977; Hoffmann 1967, 1974), but these surveys are relevant to the central concerns of this book only insofar as they bear on the institutional features I have just described.

Management policies have changed often in China. The First Five-Year Plan (1953–1957), the Great Leap Forward (1958–1960), the period of "readjustment" (1961–1965), the Cultural Revolution decade (1966–1976), and the period of restoration and reform after Mao's death (1977 to this writing) have each brought significant changes from the preceding period. Two of these periods, the Cultural Revolution and the post-Mao reforms, receive detailed attention because they represent opposing tendencies within the framework of neo-traditionalism. Both periods are analyzed not as distinctive bundles of policy (which they are), but as variations on the central institutional themes analyzed in this book.