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Joel Andreas,

Disenfranchised: The Rise and Fall of Industrial Citizenship in China, Oxford University Press: Oxford, 2019; 312 pp.: ISBN 9780190052607, £64.00 (hbk), 9780190052614, US\$27.67 (pbk)

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Disenfranchised offers a compellingly detailed account of the rise and fall of industrial citizenship over the past seven decades in the People's Republic of China. Compared to other emergent socialist regimes and the capitalist economies after the two world wars, workers in Mao's China enjoyed far more job security than their global counterparts. Drawing insights from Robert Dahl's and TH Marshall's political theories, Joel Andreas looks specifically into the urban industrial setting to study the workplace relations, focusing on political incorporation and activism. He argues that 'strong citizenship rights and autonomy are necessary conditions' for democratic management and worker participation (p. 17). As permanent members of the enterprise, workers and staff experienced not only stability at work but also engagement with the state in successive mass political campaigns during the 1950s through the 1970s. When China opened to foreign investment beginning in 1978, the older and younger generations of workers witnessed yet another radical transformation of their working lives. The book meticulously narrates the long history from the formation of 'participatory paternalism' in Maoist China to the rise of 'market despotism' in the late 1980s and early 1990s, which left the state sector workforce widely unemployed and disenfranchised.

The nine chapters are organized in chronological order with a clear thesis on assessing industrial democracy, citizenship, and autonomy of Chinese workers. To begin with, Andreas constructs a useful typology to examine the changing labor relations after 1949. With the state promise of full employment, urban residents were assigned to the *danwei* (work unit) system under central planning. Production and social reproduction were integrated in the all-encompassing workspace, where there were manufacturing facilities, housing, schools, clinics, and other basic social services. As 'masters of the factory,'

workers were motivated and mobilized to contribute to their factory community as 'home' (p. 62). They were also recognized as 'legitimate stakeholders,' who had political prerogatives and labor protection such as the right to grievance resolution. Under these circumstances, apart from temporary and contract laborers, a newly enfranchised working class was made in New China.

Through 128 interviews from over 50 different industrial enterprises and an extensive review of the political economic policies of the Chinese Communist Party, Andreas brings alive the pride and pain of factory labor. As industrial citizens, rather than hired hands, workers gained some power in shop-floor self-management. They held their leaders accountable from within the party-state apparatus of 'Democratic Management.' Staff and workers congresses, for example, were regularly convened in big and small factories, with workers' participation in these decision-making assemblies guided and led by cadres. Worker representatives frequently expressed their concerns through these participatory and paternalist institutions. Their autonomous collective action for greater control over factory administration, however, remains severely constrained.

Andreas raises the critical challenge to democratizing industrial governance in Mao's factory regime: workers had little autonomy. Despite the managerial responsibility and delegation to small production teams, the possibilities for team leaders to really have substantial power at work were limited. In the 1957 Party Rectification campaign, aggrieved workers and technicians were emboldened to criticize their cadres, especially those who had isolated themselves from the masses. In less than six weeks, the party leaders struck back; worse, they punished workers who had made complaints and led strikes.

Political contention was increasingly dependent on Mao's personal authority. Mao defined 'Big Democracy' as 'mass political action outside of institutional channels – disturbances, rebellions, and revolutions' (p. 100). During the early years of the Cultural Revolution, between 1966 and 1969, party committees and local government formed rebel groups to seize power and overthrow their superiors. Young workers and supporting student activists likewise joined rebel factions to condemn bureaucratism among party officials. But precisely when these worker-initiated independent activities gained strength, Mao could not tolerate them. Even when Mao initially supported the 'revolutionary committees' (born outside of the party structure), as widespread disruptions and civil disorders spread across cities and rural areas, he moved to suppress them. In this light, Andreas interprets the historical events as failed experiments in allowing autonomous criticism. Workers lacked power to form a constituency to lead, although they possessed robust citizenship rights for several decades through the 1980s.

The limited scope of agenda-setting and decision-making that workers enjoyed in the first decades after liberation was further diminished under the auspices of reformist leaders in post-Mao China. In state-guided globalization and market competition, the primary business goal is profit-maximization. Factory directors are the bosses in restructured, shareholding state firms. In the past, trade union cadres and workers were similarly attacked for 'economism' and subjected to 're-education' when they demanded a wage raise. Today, workers who are deemed troublemaking are often fired right away. Cost control is the imperative. Informalization of labor is an unmistakable trend. The balance of power between labor and management, in staff and workers congresses or other

committees, where these institutions still exist, is highly uneven. While disgruntled workers sometimes protest to make their claims, most often they are disillusioned and remain silent.

This is an essential book on Chinese labor politics across two epochs. Andreas skillfully interweaves a wealth of first-hand data and documentary materials. On reflection, how should we make sense of the entitlement of citizenship rights for workers under Mao's governance? In Chinese state socialism, the extraction and accumulation of surplus value to fuel the planned economy were largely made possible by restricting workers' fundamental freedom to change or quit jobs. Intense political study sessions, coupled with numerous meetings and activities on and off work, were deployed to cultivate commitment and loyalty to the party. As a result, workers enjoyed the 'iron rice bowl' tenure but only by trading away their liberty and choice. This contradiction in the very foundation of state-centric citizenship meant that it was destined to fail. After Mao's death in 1976, the once-hailed lifetime membership rights – the attachment of workers to the polity of their own workplace, the exceptionally high levels of responsibility and engagement in production tasks and political activities, and the collectivist ethos – were gradually eroded. The Chinese party-state lives on, in a globalized market economy, by shedding tens of millions of 'less competitive' workers.

What will it take to revitalize the labor movement in this age of neoliberalism? The expansion of democratic citizenship rights at work will necessarily involve effective 'mass supervision' from above and below, and the continuous struggle of the working people, including the Chinese working masses. Deliberations and elections by workers, as vividly recounted by Andreas, are fascinating practices. Hard-won victories by workers, such as the removal of corrupt leaders, greater equality in redistribution of housing and bonuses, and stronger employment protection by law, to name only a few examples, are truly inspiring. The nurturing of popular associational power to contest the alliance of capitalists and the state can only be grounded in workers' autonomy and their conquest of political power.

Author biography

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