

living and working conditions in the communes were anything but good. The Central Committee took the trouble to lay down that working hours should in no case exceed twelve hours, which leads to the suspicion that this already high limit had been exceeded; that communal dining-halls should provide varied meals, and the nurseries and kindergartens should be of a standard "that the children are willing to stay in them and the parents willing to put them there". The injunction that "parents may decide whether all children need to board there, and may take them home any time they wish," again implies that in some communes at least the forced separation of families was in fact prevalent.

These concessions should not be taken to mean, however, that the Chinese communists are having second thoughts about the desirability of continuing with the communes system. They probably mean that for a time certain elements within the Party had attempted to proceed too fast, which made necessary an organizational readjustment of the communes, together with a theoretical re-evaluation of both the material conditions necessary to move to communism through socialism and the timing of such a step. The idea of a possible sudden leap to a communist organization of society was refuted by the Russians, who have always held that an industrial base must first be established before being able to satisfy consumer needs and to provide the material conditions for progress to communism. It is of significance that the Chinese now appear to have accepted this view and so eliminated one possibility of ideological disagreement with the Soviet Union. The communes will, however, continue to be developed as a new means of mobilizing China's vast labour reserves for the task of industrializing the country within a minimum space of time. The social upheaval associated with this attempt — the break-up of families, the collectivization of individual life — will be pushed through except where it meets serious resistances, as apparently was the case to a certain extent last autumn. The "retreat from the communes", which has received publicity recently, thus probably represents no more than a temporary and relatively minor withdrawal from some of the advanced positions on the road to communism which the Communist Party occupied last autumn.