

Background: (7/1/84, 3 hrs.)

The informant is a Shanghai middle school graduate who was sent down to the countryside with several other classmates to a commune near Nantong city, Jiangsu province, for tempering. He says they all thought it was a laughable policy. In 1975 he was hired as a worker at a large collective factory that wove color blended cloth, and employed about 500 people, in Nantong. In 1978 he took the college entrance exams and tested into medical school in Shanghai. After that time he had no contact with the factory.

Labor Policy

The factory hired peasants from the communes as permanent workers if they used their land to build the factory on. This was a written agreement between the factory and the commune. The commune gets to select the peasants for the job. They are not completely guding workers. These workers are under the collective, not the factory. They are transferred by the county labor bureau. Below them are the regular contract workers for fixed periods. Below that are the temporary workers who work for only a few days at a time. Contract workers can be very long term if the business is good and the workers biao xian is good. In China they emphasize renqing; you don't just fire someone because you don't need them. Its like a moral thing. The peasant permanent workers are called tudi gong.

Tudi gong are under the commune. They do not get state labor insurance. Their wages are figures by the factory, but their insurance, if you could say they had any at all, was the communes responsibility. They had the wubao hu. That's about all they had. They got no pensions. Tudi, hetong, and linshi gong all have the possibility of becoming a permanent worker according to the permission of the gongye ju. The tudi gong are not on the regular wage system. They are paid by the factory according to their years of service and their type of work. They don't get wage readjustments with everyone else.. Sometimes they used the piece rate system for these workers as well as the contract and temporary workers. Digging holes, repairing roads, moving goods--they are paid by the job. If their work isn't good, they can be returned to the commune in exchange for another. If they are really good, they can eventually become a permanent worker. In that case they got a grade and insurance and benefits, and their unit is the factory. But they still can't change their hukou to the city.

There are two ways to get rid of a worker: a punitive chuming, and an expulsion, or kaichu. Chuming is a little less serious as an administrative punishment, but you're still fired. For example, a young woman in our factory felt her life had no meaning, and took off wandering to Tibet, without bothering to ask for leave. She violated the factory rules, but didn't commit any serious offense, so they did not kaichu her, but instead, chuming.

Shop Management

The men didn't usually work in the knitting shops, but in the machinery shops. But he was sent to the knitting shop during his training period. They had a 3 shift, 24 hour system. They had a banzhang for each shift. Each shift had three group leaders. Each small group had about 10-20 workers, depending on the shop. They also had a shop director, who had 50-60 workers on each shift. They also had a repair shop where most of the men worked.

They had only a branch party committee in the factory. They had a small party group in each shop. The shop party group was led by a female worker from the countryside, uneducated. She was an old worker. The purpose of the party was to get the workers to obey the party rules and work hard, but the main reason was to keep an eye on the workers political thought. They would have political meetings in groups, and the leader would always report (huibao) the results. People didn't want to say much because the ears of these old workers belong to the party.

When an order came down, the factory party members discussed it, then everyone else in the factory did so. At that time they said the party leads everything, not just thought. This has changed very much in this respect. Shop directors often were party members, but not always. They also had to understand the shops production and had to have good relations with others. But you also had to be politically reliable. You don't necessarily have to be a party member to be reliable. You simply have to demonstrate that you listen to the party (obey would be a better translation of ting).

Every group met for 30 minutes before each shift. They also had a meeting after each shift for half an hour. They would talk about factory problems, or they would get talked to about them. Sometimes the shop director himself would talk to the workers. The small group leader was nominated by both the production working group and the political working group of the shop. The small group leader was chosen by the shop director after discussions among the group. The shop director is also selected from among the workers and appointed from the top. Group leaders can also be transferred around freely. Group leaders are not necessarily party members. These are workers who have stayed after the shift to do work on a volunteer basis, often young and good workers. They have their own work responsibilities.

The group leaders don't really have any special responsibility. They have technical responsibilities. If a problem appears in the material, the group leader is responsible for fixing it. He helps workers solve problems. If you have anything you want to bring up you do it with the group leader. If you have to go nurse your baby you ask the group leader. The group leader arranges the replacement for a while. But the shift head is responsible for giving permission for leave. Most of the power is the shift head's. The shift head appoints the group leaders as their helpers. It is like military command relationships; each level takes orders from the above.

### Benefits

In their large collective factory they got free medicine, retirement pensions, cool drink fee in summer, relief payments and subsidies, and the workers themselves had a collective gongji jin, to help out workers in times of troubles. They had a dormitory, but it was very small and only for a small number of the night shift workers. When he visited in 1980 they had built bigger dorms for the night shift to sleep in before the shift. They also had a single person's dorm. About 10% of the workers lived in these residences initially, later about 50%. If you live outside the factory they gave you a subsidy. Very few workers lived in their own apartments.

The union handed out industrial coupons according to who registered to line up for them. I very rarely heard of people getting things this way, through registration. This is just a formality. People usually got these things only through siren guanxi with people in the union. You can apply

for these things, but it is really distributed through siren guanxi. This was the power of the union group head in the factory. He had no real powers of office but he did have control over these things. The union also passes out tickets for movies, and that's about all the activities they arranged. Sometimes they visited sick workers, organized swimming outings. The union organized non-political activities.

The youth league was not much, mainly was organized in schools, beginning in middle school. But the influence of the youth league was small. Not many workers in the factory were of the proper age. Every shop had a league small group head. They had fixed schedules of political meetings for members. They engaged in political study and studied production problems. Why would workers want to join? It is advantageous for your political future. So beginning from school, they want to join. Young workers want to join, because it goes in your dang'an. Then you get better chances at promotion in the future. This is not a fixed regulation, it just increases your chances.

#### Distributions

To apply for things, the worker writes a report to the shop secretary. The shop leaders discuss it together, then they give their opinion; whether they agree to the request or not. Then they send it to the plant office. In fact the political work group handled that and gave the final approval. The relief payments were divided into 3 levels, given out quarterly. Actually it was very easy to get relief money because the factory wanted to spend all its funds because they lost them if they didn't spend them by the end of the period. The main consideration in reality was renqing, not how hard you worked. There was no fixed regulation. The shop director discusses the matter of relief with the entire shop. Usually all they do is say "We're going to give Wu some relief!" and all the workers say "Hao-a!" That's about the extent of the discussion.

Renqing, this is a non-legal method, a custom of doing things. There are no fixed rules. But if you violate it, you will suffer. People will oppose you, block you. Workers can slow down if you don't treat them with renqing. During the readjustment of the factory, they laid down very strict rules for coming to work, fines, job responsibilities, and so forth. But you can't enforce it strictly, or you violate renqing. In our factory we were supposed to stay at our work posts until 5:30. But we'd go in a big group to get our bikes about 5:15, line our bikes up right at the white line at the factory gate, and when the whistle finally blows they take off like a race. Why do they let them do this? If you made them stay right to the last minute, you would violate renqing and workers wouldn't like you. In Japanese factories, he hears, they don't talk about renqing at all, so life in factories there is not so comfortable. They use the collective spirit to oppress the workers. They turn people into strictly regulated beings--singing the factory song, wearing the same clothes outside of work. Very strict. Workers are treated like machines in Japan. If the manager says something in the meeting, they all say "Hai!" in unison. Chinese factories are much more comfortable.

Ganqing is different, it is between two people. But renqing is a general way of treating people as human beings in society. To satisfy the demands of ganqing you might sometimes have to violate renqing. Ganqing will be to the advantage of the individual, not to all in general. Ganqing refers to

your personal matters. If you violate renqing you will have trouble getting things done.

Guanxi: if I have a wife who sells meat in a store, I can get good meat for the shift head and then can use guanxi to get relief payments or industrial coupons. But this doesn't necessarily mean we have ganqing. Ganqing might strengthen the guanxi, but you can have guanxi without it. But sometimes the exchange involved in guanxi is more powerful than simple ganqing, because you don't actually receive anything with ganqing.