
PERSONAL DATA

Age: 43

Sex: Male

Education: Technical college graduate (machinery)

Total Years Relevant Experience: 18

Last Year of Relevant Experience: 1979

Year Left China: 1979

Initial Immigration Status: Legal

Native Place/Overseas Connections: Cambodia OS, returned 1954

Class Background/Political Designation: OS

OCCUPATIONAL HISTORY SUMMARY

Positions Held: 1) Electrician, Wuxi Diesel Engine Factory, 1957-61

2) Lab assistant, biology research institute, Wuxi, 1961-62

3) Student, Peking Machinery Institute, 1962-67

4) Peking Precision Machine Tool Plant, 1967-79

a) Electrician, repair shop, 1967-70

b) Electrician, heat-treatment shop, 1970-73

c) Shop technician, electrical equipment shop, 1973-75

d) 'borrowed' by Peking Municipal Machinery Bureau to study electricity consumption in local industry, 1975-76

e) Staff technician, Technical Department, Head of electrical systems group, 1976-79

Administrative Level of Work Unit/(No. of employees):

1) unknown/(1000)

4) Ministry until 1973, then Municipal/(500)

Experience in Full-time Manual Labor (for non-worker occupations):

shop electrician, 1967-73

APPOINTMENTS: 4

TOTAL HOURS: 9.25

PAGES TEXT: 8

Occupational History (12/12/79, 2 hrs.)

The informant is an overseas Chinese, born in Pnomh Penh, Cambodia. In 1954, at the age of 15, he returned to China. He attended the Canton Remedial School for Overseas Chinese for a few months, then was assigned to a middle school in Wuxi, Jiangsu province. He graduated in 1957, and was assigned to a diesel engine factory in Wuxi as an apprentice worker. He did this for three years, then became a skilled worker--an electrician. In 1960 he was assigned to the electrical repairs shop of the factory. From 1961-2 he was borrowed by a research institute in the city to do experiments with food substitutes with a former biology teacher of his from middle school. The scientific research bureau selected him to participate in these experiments designed to alleviate the widespread hunger in the city as a result of agricultural failures of recent years. They experimented with various plant stalks and bark from trees. In 1962 he sat for the examination to enter technical college, and tested into the Peking Machinery College, and studied in the automatic control department. He graduated in 1967, after which he was assigned to a Precision Machine Tool Factory in Peking run by the No. 1 Machine Building Industry. Because it was government policy at the time, he worked as an electrician in a repair shop, and his work was to travel to other factories all over the country within the Ministry's system to repair precision machine tools. His plant in Peking was a special one. In 1970 he was transferred to a heat treatment shop (re chuli), where he worked on heat meters. In 1973 the entire plant was transferred to Peking Municipal administration. Shortly thereafter he was transferred to the electrical equipment shop, and he became a technician in the shop office, where he drew up plans and gave workers instruction. During 1975-76 he was lent to the Peking Municipal Machinery Bureau to study electricity needs in the city and the consumption of electricity at several plants. In 1976, after returning to his plant, he was promoted to the factory technical department, where he was the chief technician in charge of the plant's electrical system. In February 1979 he was given permission to come to Hong Kong.

Apprenticeship and Wages at Wuxi Diesel Engine Plant (12/18/79, 2 hrs.)

The plant had 1000 employees. They made spare parts and assembled diesel engines. Informant did repair work on machines, lathes, and solved problems with electrical systems. He also did installing work for electrical fixtures and wiring. He doesn't remember much about the organizational structure of the plant, it was long ago--before college.

His apprenticeship: They got 18¥ per month the first year, and an increment of 2¥ per year for each of the next two years. It was a 3 year apprenticeship period. Their first week in the plant, the young workers were given introductory classes, were introduced to different work processes, and sent to the shops to see. Then they progressed according to their abilities. After 3 years, they had a simple, formalistic test. Then the masters (shifu) met with the leading cadres to decide who gets promoted. When you pass the test, you get a certificate. For dangerous or special work, you take a test at the Municipal Department (ke) level. After the tests, they have meetings between the masters and cadres, and then meetings with all the apprentices in attendance. If you have worked hard, and your political thought is good, then you pass. If you don't make any political errors, then you are assured of passing. Thereafter you become a grade 1 worker, and after the end of 2 more years, year 5 in the plant, you will be evaluated for raise to grade 2 .

Wage grades: First year apprentice, 18¥, second, 20¥, third, 22¥, grade 1 worker, 32¥, grade 2, 40.5¥, grade 3, 47¥, grade 4, 55¥, and grade 8, the highest for workers, was 108¥. Grade 8 workers can be given the title of engineer, but this is just honorary for old workers with good technical skills, and they are still grade 8 workers. For engineers, the highest wage was 320¥, and the lowest 90¥. For college graduate technicians, the first years' wage is 46¥, and the second year's 56¥. For middle-school level graduates, the first year wage is 37¥, and the second year's wage is 43¥. After the cultural revolution the system of raises and promotion for technicians changed, and people were promoted without raises--some people who were appointed engineer still made only 50¥.

The informant graduated in 1967 from the university, and did the work of a worker during his first year, but received the first year university graduate's wage of 46¥. After one year he was raised to 56¥. This was just part of the process of becoming a regular technician. In 1978, he was raised one grade to 62¥.

College level technicians tended to work in department offices, while the middle-school graduates tended to work in shops at actual technical repair and inspection work. In the department offices, there was also a division of labor between university level and middle-school level technicians. The univ.level ones tended to to planning, designing work, while the m.s. techs. tended to be assistants, helpers.

Raises were to be forthcoming once every two years, until after the cultural revolution began, when there were no more. When they had raises, the state would give each enterprise a percentage of the staff they could give raises to. Then the leaders would decide, set a list of names, and post them on a wall, call for opinions in meetings. Then a second list would be put up, sometimes revised as a result of masses opinions. In 1977, there was a readjustment, and there were two ways to get raises. First had to do with length of service. A person who had been in the factory since 1958, and was still grade two, would be raised a grade, except for about 2% who made political errors. Second was merit. Among those left over, 40% would be raised based on assessments of their work performance and also based somewhat on length of service and current wages. They still favored veteran workers with low wages here too. Each small group meets and discusses each workers' contribution, and draws up a name list to give to the shop. The whole process was accompanied by intensive political study for one month before and during the list-making and revising process. The lists go up through the different levels as names are sifted out, and finally to the wage committee of the entire plant which draws up a name list and posts on the board for mass opinions. The final decision is made by party and union cadres, and leading administrative cadres. In practice, the work groups tend to nominate too many workers, because it is hard to distinguish individual's performance. So the real job of weeding out names falls to the shop levels and above. As the list moves up each level, a certain number of names are weeded out. The shop leaders are able to weed out names because they know each worker and have their records.

During 1957-60, they had tests for workers once a year. They tested both technical abilities and knowledge. But lower wage people tended to take these tests more often. After 1967, and up until 1975 or so, there were no opportunities through tests, or through any other method, to get a raise. The readjustment in 1975 was separate from the one in 1978 (could he mean 77 and 79?--he is generally unclear on dates, and asking does not seem to help.

Bonuses (1/20/80, 3 hrs.)

Bonuses depended on the type of work. They are figured differently depending on how many products you make, things you install, etc. Before the Cultural Revolution, the highest bonus could be higher than one's monthly wage. There was no bonus, however, if you didn't meet the basic quota. Assessments for bonuses took place in the work groups. The smallest bonus was a few yuan. During and after the Cultural Revolution, they changed to a supplementary wage (fujia gongzi), where everyone got the same amount, about 4-6¥ per month. They had piece rates, but only for installing and similar work, and also in the collective factories--but only before the Cultural Revolution.

Firings

This is usually only done as a legal measure, for someone who makes an error in political or social life. It is handled by the security section. People can also be demoted a grade or so for these kinds of errors. Stealing, having illicit relations with women, and other errors are the kinds of things you can be punished for. If you are fired, it is hard to get a permanent job assignment again because your past mistake is in your file. So usually you get temporary work. But this occurs only very rarely. It almost never happens because of bad work. The usual treatment for bad work is not to give raises or bonuses.

Temporary and Contract Labor

Contract workers tend to be people with some technical skills. They can sign contracts for as long as one or two years. Temporary workers are more short-term. There are two ways of finding these kind of workers. First you notify the labor bureau which notifies the street committee. Second, you can call a friend at a street committee office to arrange introductions and then call the labor bureau later for approval. There were very few temporary or contract laborers in his factories, at most 3%. About 10-20 were there all the time, and the rest were contract laborers who expanded in number as needed. There were no changes at all in this system of hiring, with the exception of the Cultural Revolution, when things were tighter, there were fewer jobs. Afterwards, so many intellectual youths wanted to work, so the system of temporary labor was more tightly restricted and controlled.

Temporary workers' wages were fairly high, but no fixed scale, no supplements, no sick pay, no labor insurance. So their wages were about 50-100% higher than regular workers. They also had political study sessions which were led by permanent workers. Contract workers were in the same situation--wages relatively high, few to no fringe benefits. Temporary laborers tended to do relatively bitter kinds of work, while contract workers, since they often had some technical skill, had better kinds of work.

For example, if a certain job was being done and was being handled slowly by permanent workers, then the leader will call over a temporary worker and will get the job done faster. The reason is that if the temporary worker goofs off, he's out of a job. But the permanent worker can take his time, can refuse to do certain kinds of jobs and there is nothing a cadre can do except raise a criticism. There was no basic change in the system--either in its frequency of use or in the treatment of workers--while the informant worked in China.

Three-in One Technical Innovation Groups

These groups worked well. Leading cadres, technicians, and workers participated. There was an advantage to having cadres in this group, because

then the group can get materials more easily. The leading cadres decide when to form these groups. I participated in one such group. An ionization furnace for heat treating metals worked too slowly, and was a 'key point' (guanjian) holding up the production process. A few cadres, the informant, and some old skilled workers cooperated and came up with a process to reduce the heating process from one week to 12 hours or so, but the leadership, in the final analysis, did not adopt the method because they were afraid that if it didn't work they would be criticized by the upper levels, so they let it go.

There are no fixed memberships for these groups. Their size and personnel change according to demands. People make their contributions and leave. I say this method is effective. Workers cooperated well and made valuable suggestions. They used work time to meet, and the size and membership of the group changed according to what they were doing. 1) They went to other places to visit and learn about new experiences, and they went to information bureaus (qingbao ju) to read foreign materials, and went to other plants and research institutes involved in the same sort of work. 2) They take things back to their unit to read. 3) They make plans, designs, and call in skilled workers to help fabricate the new equipment. The informant participated in these kinds of groups almost continuously. They used this form from the late 1950s onward, and it was very commonplace when one ran into a key problem they had to attack (gong guan). The basic method, in reality, is that the leading cadres do logistics (houqin) work for the group, providing it with what it needs. Workers act as assistants to the technicians, and as consultants. These cadres are important, because if a technician asks for materials there is no way he will get them from the stores, but if a cadre requests them, they comply immediately. The only difference in this form throughout this period was that during the Cultural Revolution, if any technician had a political problem then he wouldn't be picked to participate--this was something of a special honor.

Great Leap Forward

There were a number of unreasonable changes in technical innovations, in production methods, and in the speed of production. At that time, the young and inexperienced often supported the policy--they wanted to build China fast and surpass England. But many intellectuals, technicians, and older workers had scientific knowledge and knew these methods wouldn't work. But during the Great Leap very few dared to speak up. They would be labelled conservative and criticized. But by the time of the Great Leap most of these types of people had already been intimidated by the Anti-Rightist movement of July to September 1957. During that period anyone who criticized the Party and its methods or line were not only labelled rightists and conservatives, but stripped of jobs, and had their children's futures jeopardized--from job assignments to university admissions.

Cultural Revolution

There were two factions in the (Peking) plant with outside alliances to other factions. At first, the conservative faction tended to be those with good class background (chushen). But later there were no clear differences between members, and people seemed to join those factions that had power. Cadres with historical problems were struggled every day, were made to do the 'airplane', were locked up and not allowed to return home. Some wore a heavy iron placard around their necks, and others were also paraded around the streets. They stood aside and were replaced by faction leaders. These people originally were ordinary workers. During the period where there were two factions, each faction leader could only give orders to his own people.

After a period of haggling unsuccessfully over the 'alliance group'

(lianhé zu), which was to unite several factions and resume production, army representatives came around 1968. Once the Revolutionary Committee was formed under army direction, there were nine members--1 army representative, 2 old cadres, and 6 representatives from the two factions (3 from each).

The establishment of the Revolutionary Committee didn't completely solve problems. They still had factional conflict for a while within the shops. Workers wouldn't listen to leaders from others factions. Since I didn't come to the plant until after college in 1967, he didn't join either faction. He was a member of the 'middle of the road' faction (zhong jian pai), which included about 10% of the workers.

Why were such a high proportion of workers aligned with one faction or another? For self-protection. It was a necessity. If you were a member, then the members of the group would protect you.

The army withdrew around 1972, after things were put in order. They didn't leave in some factories until 1976 or so. The two old cadres on the Revolutionary Committee were former party secretaries, and they initially were vice-heads of the RC. The other leading cadres--department heads, etc.--were appointed based on the relative strength of the factions. One department head would be the member of one faction, while the vice-head would be a member of the other faction. These people usually had no technical knowledge. They had elections in the aftermath of the Cultural Revolution, but they were formalities. The army representatives actually decided who would become leaders. They usually used a show of hands, but sometimes had a secret ballot. At this time there was no Party Committee. It was not revived until 1975 or so. This was handled internally, with no participation by non-Party members.

When forming the Revolutionary Committee, old cadres who had been criticized often were transferred to new plants to avoid embarrassment, and new ones came in from elsewhere. There was a lot of this at the time. These people would become leading cadres in their new units.

The new leaders promoted during the cultural revolution held their positions right up until 1977-78, when they were often made 'assistant' (fù) leading cadres at the same level, for example they would become vice shop directors or vice department heads, instead of directors or heads. The highest leaders of factories were often declared counter-revolutionary for their crimes, and became ordinary workers. The middle level cadres often kept their jobs.

Cultural Revolution changes in Administration

At one point about two thirds of the technical department cadres were sent down to the shops for manual labor or to work in shop offices. Before the CR almost all major technical problems were sent to the staff department to handle. After the Cultural Revolution, only a couple of people were left in the technical department. Gradually people were transferred back afterwards. For example, before the CR they had over 20 staff members of the department, but they reduced this to 5-6 at one point, and later abolished the department altogether and transferred all its personnel and functions to the shops. They did not re-establish the technical department until 1975.

The advantages to this reform was that it became easy to handle relatively simple technical problems much more quickly, since the experts were on the floor and there was no waiting while the department was notified and a response made. But the reform was disadvantageous for the all-sided development of production in the plant, since there was no overall coordination on larger questions. They also ended up with too many technicians in each shop to do the necessary technical work, when at most times 1 person would do. This made for inflexible use of technical personnel at the all-plant level. For example, if a major problem pops up in one shop requiring a

number of technicians, they couldn't all be dispatched there because they were tied down in the various shops. Those people left in the plant-level offices were unable to handle all the problems sent up to them--there were not enough people. So generally they didn't handle technical planning work well, nor did they do a good job of overall coordination. They could not do preparatory work and plan for the future. They could not coordinate overall technical repairs and renovation. They ended up having people in the shops fix things as they broke down.

Peking Precision Machine Tool Plant (3/18/80, 2.25 hrs.)

The main work of the plant was to 1) accept machinery for major repairs from other plants, 2) send out technical workers and technicians to other places to conduct repairs and inspections. They had shops, departments, and were organized just like any other factory. They were directly under the leadership of the No. 1 Machine Building Ministry--which handled cars, agricultural machinery, machine tools. There were eight bureaus under it. His plant was under the Machine Tools Bureau (ji chuang ju), and it handled the most serious kinds of machinery breakdowns in that bureau system, but sometimes helped other ministries if they had approval from the bureau. They were the only such repair plant in the bureau.

The plant had about 500 in its staff of employees. About 10% were administrative cadres, and about 80% workers. They had gone over the desired number of non-production (tuochan) staff in the plant. When I first went there, he did 3 years of work in the shops as an electrician (this was during the Cultural Revolution, 1967-70), then later was sent back to office work. In 1971 he was sent to be a shop technical cadre in the equipment and power shop (shebei, dongli). He was in charge of installing monitoring and repairing the plant's equipment, and making sure that power systems worked. He would dispatch workers to do the needed work. There were four technicians, and 5 people to do administrative work. This was not a production shop but a 'service' (fuwu) shop.

He was assigned to the plant technical department in 1974, and handled electrical power systems for the entire plant. He also did some designing and planning work, and also checked plans for technical innovations, technical processes, to approve that they were rational from the standpoint of electrical supply.

Politics and Administration

They were criticized commonly before the Gang of 4 fell, and had 2 factions within the plant. Where did the factions come from? They began during the Cultural Revolution. At first, the two factions could be distinguished according to class background (chushen). People with good backgrounds were 'royalists' (baohuang pai), while people with bad backgrounds were rebels (zaofan pai). Later, because the large number of people in the middle wanted to protect themselves, they joined different factions, and then there was no basic difference in the membership of the 2 factions.

Later, during the 1970s, they still had factions in ideology (sixiang), but no organizations. They also had friendships and connections which built up, and also some animosities, gaps between people. This tended to influence the positions that people were promoted to, and whether or not they were promoted to leading positions. Also, sometimes engineers would refuse transfers into departments because they harbored animosities toward the department head who was a member of the opposing faction during the CR. This one particular department head had been a rebel faction leader, and had been promoted afterwards to department head, where before he had been an ordinary staff member.

These kinds of factional relations showed up during the 1970s in

virtually everything, and it continues up to the present. It becomes manifest in work assignments, in work groups, in assessments for raises and bonuses. Also in the top leadership, it involves promoting your own people, and pulling them up with you. You can't really say these factions are defined by political viewpoints, but that they're defined by bonds of mutual interest (liyi guanxi). In his own group this problem was especially serious. His department head and vice-head were in different factions, and there was constant preferential treatment in work assignments and promotions by the head. I was lucky to have been on the good end of all this.

Technical cadres were afraid to take risks, since they were in danger of being criticized. They didn't want to commit to a decision unless they were sure of its success. They didn't commit themselves 100% to their work, and tried to get out of responsibility if they could. There was no gain to be had by doing a good job--there were no bonuses, no raises, no promotions--and there would always be the danger of being criticized for making mistakes by people in the other faction. Generally speaking, many technicians held animosity toward those who criticized them for flimsy reasons, and who were less qualified than they were. This influenced their work attitudes.

What kinds of things were they criticized for? For being bourgeois intellectuals, not being as good as the laboring masses, etc. Even if they didn't make a mistake, technicians would have to make up something for a self-criticism to head off others. Generally, criticisms were not that serious unless you had a historical problem. Then these people with bad family connections, rightist, etc., would be interrogated by the security department of the plant, kept without food, sleep for days, and put in isolation. This happened to 3 people in his plant who were accused of participating in the April 5 Tiananmen incident in 1976. They also had criticisms of Lin Biao, Confucius.

When orders came down to criticize a certain type of person, it just didn't do to claim that the plant had no such sort of people. So they had to select somebody for criticisms, and this usually ended up being the people with the suspicious class backgrounds. They also had to criticize people after the Gang of 4 fell. One political work cadre was criticized and removed, because he had expressed doubts about whether or not Hua Guofeng would last very long as premier. Not an awful lot of people were demoted during this time--they just lost power, were no longer given work to do, and became 'vice' head of whatever unit they were leading. Or they were transferred to another department, especially if they were being protected by somebody above. This tended to increase the number of department heads (counting the new heads and new vice-heads).

Generally speaking, people in leading positions who had no committed serious errors were not demoted. During this period there were also a very small number of people restored to leading positions who had earlier stood up to the Gang of 4.

After the Gang of Four

First they had criticisms of former followers of the gang--2 types. First were the former murderers and ringleaders during the cultural revolution. The criminals were punished and sometimes removed from the plant. Second, the 'helicopters' of the CR who rose up quickly without qualifications. These kinds were taken out of leadership positions (but they kept their wages) and became regular workers or technicians. The people taking their places were old cadres, or youth who dared oppose the gang of 4, some of whom were intellectuals.

There was some resistance to this policy. People would get together

informally to hide their former complicity. There was some resistance among leaders in units, who didn't really carry through the policy because it would endanger themselves and their own 'people', so often they would send a work team or a powerful person from above to help carry through the policy. Sometimes people would escape being rooted out and would instead be transferred, simply because they would have friends at the upper level. Generally speaking, all gradually carried out this policy because the upper levels would eventually find out, but the policy was slowed down.

In his plant during 1977-78, they removed about 10% of the total leaders in the plant from leadership positions. But in other cases, when someone above was watching out for someone, then they got transferred. But in other cases, young Gang-of-4-following leaders would only be demoted to the 'vice' position, meaning that when the old cadre would come back as the head, there would be an increase in the number of leaders.

Elections

At about the time he left, they were in the midst of democratic elections to select new cadres. They started with small groups and went up to the level of shop director. They used secret ballots, and had more than one candidate for the office. During that period they studied the Yugoslav experience in their study groups. He is familiar with the Yugoslav system--the management committees, the election of shop directors, etc., so it is obvious he has studied it. People working in departments elected their heads. Workers also had the power to select a new plant director if he was not doing a good job, if there were poor profits, low bonuses.

They were also planning to establish a workers' committee (gongren weiyuanhui), along Yugoslav lines. They had already set a schedule for implementing this in their plant, which was an 'experimental plot' in late 1978. It is unclear whether this meant the workers' congress, or another body that was to supervise top management, but according to the Yugoslav experience this would be the later. He is generally vague about these future plans for elections and committees.

He left before the results of the elections. They had only just begun the assessments in small groups when he left. A document had just come down saying that they should implement these things. The process went slowly. The Party committee still had the power to cancel the results of elections.

Bonuses

They began again after the Gang of 4 fell. The plant as a whole was given an amount of money to split up. Each month, also yearly. At the beginning, cadres were afraid to use bonuses, so they bought pots and other household items to give workers. Later they gave out money, and divided the awards into 3 grades--3¥, 5¥, 7¥. This was assessed in each work group. The criteria--work contribution, attendance, no political criteria. In his unit, everybody was polite, and used a rotating system to make sure that everybody would get a chance at a high bonus. But workers fought over every dollar. There were no bonuses during the Great Leap Forward earlier when he worked in Wuxi.