

PERSONAL DATA

Age: 48

Sex: Male

Education: Normal college graduate

Total Years Relevant Experience: 6

Last Year of Relevant Experience: 1972 Year Left China: 1979

Initial Immigration Status: Legal

Native Place/Overseas Connections: Canton native/wife OS Chinese

Class Background/Political Designation: professional (father Univ. Prof.)

OCCUPATIONAL HISTORY SUMMARY

Positions Held:

- 1) Low-ranking officer in PLA
- 2) Electrician, Electric Cell Factory, Canton, 1958-60
- 3) University student, 1960-64
- 4) Teacher, middle school, 1964-70
- 5) Electrician, Sugar Factory, Shunde County, Guangdong, 1970-72
- 6) Teacher, middle school, 1972-79

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

2) probably Municipal/(2000)
5) County/(100 slack season, 400 busy season)

Occupational History (3/30/80, 2.25 hrs.)

The informant had a long a complex career in China. From the mid-1950s he was a low-ranking officer in the PLA. In 1958 he was demobilized and sent to work as an electrician in an electric battery factory in Canton. He worked here from 1958-60. In 1960, he was admitted to a university, where he studied from 1960-64. After graduation, he taught at a middle school until 1970. Then he was sent down to work as an electrician once again from 1970-72 at a sugar factory in Shunde County, Guangdong. The sugar factory was under county administration, while the electrical battery factory was under municipal administration. He taught once again in the middle school until 1979, when he emigrated to Hong Kong legally.

Wages

He was a demobilized soldier in 1958. There are two ways of leaving the army for officers, as in his case. First, you can be demobilized (fuyuan); second, you can 'change specialties' (zhuanye). In the second category, the officer is found work outside which fits with his army specialty. These people are often sent to Xinjiang, Mongolia, or other faraway places to accept higher offices. They are usually paid the same or a little less. If you are 'demobilized', you are given a year's pay, and not found a job. If you come from the countryside, you must return to the countryside. If you came from the city, they introduce you to a factory where you start from the bottom.

Since he studied radio technology in the army, he had experience in the electric cell field. When he started in the electric cell factory in Canton he was given a grade 2 worker status, since he earlier had some experience. The wage was 41¥.

There was no wage readjustment while he was in this factory from 1958-60. But there were raises on an individual basis. There were no tests for this. Usually the raise was based on a mix of 3 factors: work technical level, years of experience, relations and impression of each individual in the eyes of the leadership. This includes political showing (biaoxian), which in this period included not telling the truth about the Great Leap Forward and saying that it was a success.

Later, when he worked in a factory once again during 1971-72, there were no readjustments or individual raises of any sort. He remembers that there were wage readjustments in 1963 and in 1978, but he was not working in industry during these times. During his second period of employment, because he was a sent-down teacher, he was paid according to his teaching salary.

Bonuses

In 1958-60 they had a bonus--once--a special one at the end of 1958. They separated bonuses into three grades--30¥, 25¥, and 20¥. The reason for this was because during the year workers had been very tired because they worked day and night on steel production. In 1970-72 they did not have any fixed bonus system either.

Temporary and Contract Labor

During the Great Leap, they increased the number of workers greatly, and among them were both temporary and contract workers. Temporary workers got less labor insurance and sick leave. The labor department organized the introduction, while in the countryside, the commune arranges the introduction. But many temporary workers work for 10-20 years and are only temporary in name. The difference in wages for temporary workers is not too

great from regular workers. It depends on what they do. Most temporary workers did work of low technical level, like moving, sweeping the floors, hard physical labor.

The best temporary workers could be changed to permanent workers when the factory was allowed to enlarge the workforce. The biggest difference is in the type of work and in labor insurance, not in wages. In Shunde, the temporary labor system was arranged by the communes. They had both temporary and contract workers, but mostly temporary. The sugar factory was very seasonal work, so the temporaries were called 'seasonal workers' (jijie gong). These commune seasonal workers turned over the majority of their wages to the commune. There are two kinds of temporaries; peasants who come from production brigades, and residents (jumin) who come from the town (zhen) government, and are not under the jurisdiction of the communes. The peasant's grain comes from their communes, while the resident's grain rations come from the town government.

Electric Cell Factory, 1958-60

The electric cell factory in Canton had about 2000 workers. Electricians mainly did machine repair work, but during the Great Leap he was transferred to a shop which had begun producing radios as a new product for the GLF. The great leap was an extremely disorganized affair. They pushed for an increase of output, the production of new products, like radios. They didn't have the personnel to start up a new production shop, and they didn't have the technical level or machinery to produce radios. They established this new shop and produced radios for about a half year and then gave up. They didn't have the expertise to produce these things. There was an engineer in the plant who had previously been labelled a rightist in 1957. In 1958-59 when they asked him if he could handle radio production, he didn't dare say no, so he said he could and he would. But really he couldn't so later he was defeated.

Also, they lacked crucial spare parts and materials. They had people doing jobs they were not trained for. They also established a new products department which was in charge of designing and arranging for the production of radio parts. They could buy equipment and other things needed. But they didn't have concrete technical knowledge about processing, forging temperatures, etc.

Supplies: Normally the supplies department handled the supply of materials and parts. But during the great leap forward this changed. The amount of parts and materials, and variety needed increased greatly during the GLF, and supply departments couldn't get them through their normal channels. But since everyone increased their output at one leap, there was a big shortage in lots of key materials--like the silver and zinc needed to produce radios. Also hydrochloric acid. There was just none to be had through normal channels. So since the unified distribution system was of no use, each shop and department was given the job of procuring their own. These units went through the party committee offices, and the responsibilities of the party increased greatly. Previously only the supply departments arranged and approved procurement and expenditures, but now the party committee offices had to approve all of this. Also, since procurement no longer was done by the supply department, each unit--the production shop or new products department--had their own procurement personnel, either one or 2 people. This means that any staff member might be sent out to get materials, and there were no specialists for this purpose.

Also, production time was increased, and there was almost always overtime, and sometimes they went for days without sleep. This started around June of 1958, and lasted until September or October 1958, and then they started

getting orders from above to produce X amounts of steel every month. The actual implementation of this was really laughable. They grabbed any piece of spare iron, pulled off window frames, pots, door knobs. They had a blower, coal, etc. But although they did a lot of refining of iron, none of this was really steel. But they called it steel. It did not really meet standards for steel. During this period, when building the furnace, smelting iron, and looking for spare iron, they often worked three days at a stretch without sleep.

Industrial accidents increased greatly. Absolutely no precautions for safety, and no safety equipment was installed on the furnace. People were tired, and worked fast. Also, they had a lot of cadres from the offices who were sent down to the shops who weren't accustomed to this kind of work. So there were a lot of accidents. They did this for 2-3 months. The reasons for stopping with the steel was the same as the reason for starting--orders from above.

After this, they gradually discovered problem after problem, despite the initial obvious ones. For example, there were quality problems, and no one wanted to buy their products. The newly opened shops in the factories closed down, and plants returned to their original products. Bit by bit, normal production was restored. The realization of defeat in the great leap was slow in coming because they would read in the paper a false report or an exaggerated one, and lots of successes in other plants. So for a while they still thought the great leap was a success, and that it was possible despite the problems they experienced themselves. Everyone was exaggerating and falsifying, and this made things worse.

(4/3/80, 1.75 hrs.)

Organization of battery plant: I was an electrician, and worked in the repair group (weixiu zu). There were also turners (che gong) and machinists (jixie gong) in his group. There were five of them in all, and one was the group leader. Their job was to repair machinery, equipment, in the plant. If a problem popped up, someone from the concerned shop would come and ask their services. They were under the leadership of the production department (shengchang ke). The group was not dispersed during the GLF, it was just that he personally was sent to a shop as a transfer.

Xiafang of Cadres during the Great Leap

The proportion of cadres going down depended on political climate (zhengzhi qihou). When the party committee raises slogans, and promises the upper levels to send X% to the front lines of production, they will ship up a movement to send comparatively more down. The more the party secretary sends down, the better he was judged by the upper levels. But also they would send down 20 and bring back 7 after a short period, but still report that they had sent down 20.

Why did they send down so many cadres? There really were too many staff people for the little work that they had to do. They had 4-5 people doing only office work--calling on the phone, making reports, adding together a few numbers. So when you send down a large number it doesn't always influence the ability to complete the work in the departments. Cadres really didn't always work that hard. This is a universal problem in China. Wages are guaranteed by the state, so there is no incentive.

Cadres were sent to some of the less arduous shops. Leading cadres in the departments tended to be sent down to do basic level leadership work--to help shop directors, and vice-directors. This was also the case for people from the party committee. Regular staff members tended to be sent down to do manual labor, but always in less dirty, less arduous shops.

The length of time varied, this was usually only for a few months, but some labored for over a year. This was for full-time labor. Some of the cadres from the higher levels had wives who worked in staff jobs, and they tended to be sent to easier kinds of labor. Some of this refers to municipal and provincial level cadres, who were also sent down into factories. This was on a larger scale than the internal xiafang of department people in factories. A larger % of these people from bureaus were sent down because they were non-production organs and could do without personnel, and there was more waste up there. The people in the factory departments were usually quite busy, so they couldn't be sent down in such large numbers.

Many of these cadres sent down from state organs were like 'guests', and had no real ability or interest in this kind of labor. The workers and the local cadres ignored these types, they were useless. But the cadres from inside the plant knew more about production and performed better because they would have to face these people later. So they tended to work better. Also the cadres sent down from above tended to form into their own groups, were separate from others, and were not too interested in production. They acted like 'guests' (keren). Of course there were exceptions, but most of them were like this.

Xiafang of Powers during the Great Leap

You can look at some of the increased responsibilities of the lower levels as xiafang of powers, but there is also an aspect to it of having the higher levels decide. Like the example of supply procurement mentioned in the previous interview. Different shops searched for their own materials which the supply department could not get, but also everything had to be arranged and approved by the party committee, a level higher than the department. So power was also transferred upward as well as downward.

Worker participation in management--he does not remember this as being a Great Leap policy. It was emphasized more in the cultural revolution. But he's not too sure about this. His impression of the Great Leap was that it was a production drive, and this was emphasized. It was during the CR that they emphasized the problems of management, who held power, not during the Great Leap so much.

He does not remember worker 'yuan' being selected in the small group to help with management jobs. But he is not entirely clear that his experience was typical on this, since he did not work in a production group but in a repair group. But he adds that his impression is in part so unclear because this was such a chaotic period and it is really hard to say what was going on in the groups.

Shunde County Sugar Factory

The factory had 400 workers during the busy season, and 100 during the slack season. The revolutionary committee had already been established when he arrived in 1970. The members of the RC were the military deputy, who was the head, a cadre from the county industrial bureau, who was the vice-head, 3 former leading cadres, including the previous plant director and one man who had been transferred in after the CR, and 3 mass representatives. All of these people were party members. The chairman of the RC was also the party secretary--the party committee had already been rebuilt.

In actuality, the Military Representative did not really manage anything. He had the most power but he didn't do any concrete work. The others divided up responsibility for the various departments. Some ran labor and wages, some supplies, some technology. They met often, and had a large

number of meetings. Not all of these meetings had to do with production. Lots of them were for disseminating documents of the ninth party congress, etc. When he left the plant in 1972 the PLA deputy was still there.

He was in the plant as part of the xiafang of teachers from Canton middle schools to do labor in rural areas. Also, a worker propaganda team went to his school. This time, it was he who was a 'guest' just like the others they didn't like in his factory during the GLF. He was given electrician's work to do. He had no fixed responsibility, just did work as he was inclined. All his documents, wages, records, and connections were still at his old middle school.

Generally speaking, the Party Secretary was the one-man leader of the plant. He held all the power. In form, it was the party committee, but the secretary was the real boss, and everyone went out of their way to be nice to him and agree with him.

Seasonal Workers

Since work was so seasonal in nature, they hired a lot of temporary workers. There were two sources, the town (zhen) and the commune peasants. These people were quite happy to get these jobs. They were considered pretty good. Monthly wage was over 30¥ per month. The peasants had to give a portion of their wages (about 60%) back to the production brigade. But they still really increased their income by 10-20¥ per month apiece. But peasants lost work points unless they paid money to the brigade. But this was not 'buying out' of the brigade, since the brigade arranged this employment. This was a right given by the brigade.

But when a brigade member was able to find work as a casual laborer (san gong), one of either two things happened. First, the brigade would refuse to let him go. Or second, the brigade would allow him to go if he paid X amount of money into the brigade coffers. This was a sort of 'racket' (qiao zhu gang). But this was different from the temporary labor system arranged by relations between factory, resident's committees, and communes. The plant's busy season was for 3 months, and began in November.