Chinese Society Survey Research

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Contents

Translator's Preface

The comrades at BANNEDTHOUGHT.NET - Struggling against the suppression of progressive ideas. posted the Chinese original of this document on their website.

The series of investigations into contemporary working life in China was an eye-opener in the richness of its detail and the revelations of the physical degradation and mental torture to which the Chinese proletariat, once the upright masters of their own class dictatorship, have been reduced by the monopoly bourgeoisie within and outside the so-called Communist Party of China.

This detail is needed by Communists outside China.

There is still a section of the Left that refuses to believe that capitalism has been restored in China. This is not only an obstacle to a genuinely grounded unity within the various working class movements outside China but also obstructs clarity around the rivalry between the imperialism of the US and its allies on the one hand, and the bloc forming around social-imperialist China and its allies. Imperialism exists and so does the danger of a massively destructive war.

 A word about my translation. I am not fluent in Chinese, but know enough to get around independently in that country. I use on-line translators as a short-cut, but they are best used slowly, a paragraph at a time, so that their own errors can be corrected, (one translates 脑力无产者 as "brainless proletarians" whereas the literal translation, and the one I've used, is "brainpower proletarians") and the various unfamiliar Chinese idioms, contemporary slang and new "internet" Chinese terms can be researched on the Chinese internet, and explanations added, as I have done, by way of footnotes.

I offer this series of investigations not only as studies that are valuable in their own right, but also as an encouragement to young Communists throughout the world to investigate deeply their own communities and workplaces so as to identify the openings for a more effective mass work.

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Preface

What exactly is the nature of society, what exactly are the social contradictions, and what exactly are the forces that drive social progress. These are the questions that every young person seeking progress must clarify. Without clarity on these questions, one will only be spinning in a whirlpool.

Research is the most important way to figure out these issues. Research cannot solve all problems, but research is the basis and necessary condition for solving all problems.

Theory is our tool to understand society, but only tools will not do, we also need to be aware of the material, where does this material come from, from research.

Questions such as whether entrepreneurs are capitalists, whether there are still class contradictions in Chinese society, what position class contradictions occupy in Chinese society, whether workers can accept Marxism, and so on, are not only theoretical questions, but also practical ones.

Workers on the assembly line work 12 hours a day and get only enough to reproduce their labour. In small and medium-sized companies, the brainiacs work overtime for no pay at all, and their efforts are just another Ferrari for their boss. The general workers of the monopoly capital are paid more, but they also have to "rent a single room of less than ten square metres, sharing a bathroom, kitchen and living room with two or three other people."

There is no qualitative difference between these employees, whether they are in large or small enterprises, state-owned or private (or foreign), they are just employees of capital (state-owned or non-state-owned), and their wages are only enough to reproduce their labour. When all enterprises in society operate as capital, and all workers in society are employees of capital, what will be the nature of this society, and its contradictions. These are the main points of this research, corresponding to parts one to five of the report.

Part VI of this report describes part of the emerging petty bourgeoisie and the traditional petty bourgeoisie.

Lenin had a classic definition of class: "A class is a group of people who have different positions in a certain system of social production in history, who have different relations to the means of production (which are for the most part legally defined), who have different roles in the organisation of social labour, and who therefore receive their share of the social wealth at their disposal in different ways and in different amounts. The way in which they receive their share of social wealth differs. A class, as it is called, is a number of such groups, one of which is able to appropriate the labour of another because of the different positions they occupy in a certain socio-economic structure."

In Lenin's time, the petty bourgeoisie were mainly subsistence farmers, small merchants, small workshop owners, etc., who held the means of production and used them mainly through their own labour and acquired money through commodity exchange. The petty bourgeoisie are not employed by capitalists and largely do not employ people (or very little), i.e. they do not take the surplus labour of others without compensation or have their surplus labour taken by others without compensation. They are oppressed by capital, yet they carry the dream of becoming rich, have an acre of land to hold on to, and are always wavering between resistance and compromise. This is the traditional petty bourgeoisie, which is slightly covered in Chapter 20 of this report.

As social life has developed, so has the connotation of the concept of petty bourgeoisie. The emerging petty bourgeoisie is another important group that differs from the traditional petty

bourgeoisie. The emerging petty bourgeoisie is a group that emerged with the development of the economy. After the Second World War, as the economy became more complex and as the ownership and use of monopoly capital became separated, the middle management of large companies was born as an emerging group. They were a group of middle managers who carried out the will of the executives and specifically organised and coordinated labour. The people in this group are mainly departmental managers or people at the corresponding level in medium and large companies. They have the power to actually arrange labour in their department (this area of labour), can dictate the labour performed by their subordinates, have a certain say in the promotion, remuneration and bonuses of their subordinates, and their remuneration is significantly higher than that of the workers at the grassroots level. Such a group does not nominally control the means of production, but their position in the "social production system" is clearly superior to that of the grassroots workers, and their role in the "social organisation of labour" is more active than that of the grassroots workers, so they are also able to get higher salaries than grass-roots workers. For example, in some large traditional companies in second-tier cities, the salaries of department managers are in the hundreds of thousands of dollars. However, the main source of their remuneration is not the surplus value of the workers, but their own labour. Their class can therefore be likened to the traditional petty bourgeoisie, which we call the emerging petty bourgeoisie. Like the traditional petty bourgeoisie, this group, although also oppressed by big capital, has some altars to give up and the real possibility of a modicum of enrichment haunts them, constantly wavering between struggle and compromise. The women in the workplace of one company described in chapter 19 of this report belong to this group.

China's current literacy rate is far higher than at any other time in history, historical materialism (however emasculated) is far more widespread than in any other country today, and the internet is so widely available in China. This has led to the phenomenon that the first tool grasped by advanced workers, oppressed by capital and spontaneously thinking about the future and looking for a way out, is Marxism.

Engels was proud that German workers had inherited the theoretical literacy of the German nation, and Lenin described the Russian workers as they studied Das Kapital and claimed that they had inherited the German workers' self-consciousness about theory.

Undoubtedly, this trend is re-emerging in China today. The interest of China's advanced proletarians in Marxism has gradually increased in recent years, and this upward trend has accelerated further in the wake of the epidemic. Many young people look back on the changes in their thinking with reference to the epidemic as a watershed.

This trend is currently characterised by the following: (1) Although these people represent a very small proportion of the workforce, their absolute numbers are not insignificant and are increasing. (2) These people are predominantly young brain-power proletarians. (3) The reverence for Chairman Mao and the spontaneous study of his writings constitute a bridge to the transformation of many people's thinking.

These characteristics are dictated by reality.

The brain-power workers, who had graduated from at least high school, and most of them from college or university, had heard about "class", "exploitation", etc., during their school days. When they are actually "exploited" by a certain "class" and are exposed to these concepts again on the Internet (through new media such as Zhihu, Weibo, B-site and public websites), the vague concepts

naturally become clearer. They have more time, channels and knowledge reserves to think about and understand these contents, so they are the first workers to awaken.

The manual proletarians are mostly junior high school graduates, and most work six-day, 12-hour (or even longer) jobs. Life weighs them down to the point of exhaustion and they don't even have the time to understand the source of their suffering. They are so exhausted that they only want to be entertained to pass their few breaks, and the first thing they look at is ShakeYin, QuickTime and QQ, rather than the more knowledgeable Zhihu, Weibo, public websites and B-site. This leaves the main body of the proletariat still in a state of slumber, with very few manual proletarians still actively looking for a way out and recalling Marxism (the absolute number should be far less than the brain-power proletarians). But contradictions are becoming more acute and conflicts are growing, and manual proletarians looking for a way out are appearing, and the very few of them who are the sharpest and best have turned to Marxism.

The ideological transformation of the above-mentioned typical people is recorded in Part VII of this report.

Part I The proletariat in an industrial area

Chapter 1 Research on an industrial area

Editor's note: This article is a study of an industrial zone. By dissecting the sparrow, we can get a general idea of the current distribution, labour and consciousness of workers in coastal industrial zones, and get a general idea of the basic state of labour-management conflicts. It is a valuable research report and we recommend our friends to read it patiently.

I. Overview

According to public information, the number of workers in street F in district A is 300,000 and there are about 6,000 enterprises. There are more than 200 enterprises with more than 100 people and 30-40 enterprises with more than 500 people. The rest of the enterprises are small and micro enterprises with less than 100 people. According to public data from F Street, medium and large enterprises (over 300 people) account for only about 2% of the total, while employing nearly 60% of the workers.

The enterprises in street F can be divided into two types: small black factories and large factories, of which large factories can be divided into four sub-categories according to treatment, legality and severity of management.

Category I factories, those where overtime of up to 36 hours can meet the reproduction of the workforce (i.e. where the take-home pay exceeds 4,000 yuan).

Category II factories, those where 6 days of 10/11 hours can meet the reproduction of the workforce and where the management system is more standardised.

Category III plants, 6 days of 10/11 hours that can meet the reproduction of the workforce, but with an irregular management system.

Category IV plants, where 6 days of 10/11 hours can meet the reproduction of the workforce, but the management system is highly irregular and there are significant deductions from wages.
ii. category i and category ii large plants.

2. Large Category 1 and 2 factories

(i). General Information

The characteristics of Category 1 and 2 factories are similar, with a combined percentage of hired workers of about 20% (of all factory workers).

Capital characteristics. These two types of factories are mainly dominated by foreign-funded enterprises in Europe, America and Japan, with high-end products and a certain degree of monopoly formation and higher profit margins.

Relationship with the government. Category 1 and 2 factories are mostly subsidiaries of international group companies and are more lucrative. They are generally large local taxpayers and are also valued by the local government and are able to enjoy various government subsidies. On the whole,

they are more cooperative with local efforts and generally have a dedicated person internally responsible for government docking. They tend to participate in chambers of commerce/ industry associations and are vice-president units, council members, etc. To enhance the political affiliation of capitalists and their agents, localities pay particular attention to party building within the chambers of commerce.

The characteristics of industrial relations. On the one hand, the employer has enough profit to raise the wages and benefits of its employees; on the other hand, as its main clients are large international companies, which are mostly subject to certain international standards (such as SA8000, RBA, OHSAS), which are often arranged with labour treaties, the operation of category 1 and 2 factories is more standardised and there are meal allowances, housing allowances, in addition to wages The year-end bonus and other benefits. These two types of factories are less mobile, have more veteran employees, and workers can easily form their own social relationships, which helps to strengthen worker solidarity. Workers in these two types of factories are generally more aware of their rights. Workers are not only concerned about wages, but also about various conflicts in their daily work (canteens, dormitories, air conditioning, high-temperature subsidies, etc.), and the factories have corresponding formal channels for reflecting their opinions (such as the Sisterhood of Understanding team and staff communication meetings). The core conflict between labour and management is still wages, but workers in the factory tend to pursue more long-term benefits and do not easily fight at the expense of leaving the factory.

(ii) Overview of departmental production

The difference between Category 1 and 2 factories. The main difference between one and two types of factories is the salary of general workers. The basic salary (plus benefits) of general workers in one type of factory is higher and increases with the number of years of service. Generally speaking, a general worker in a category one factory can earn around RMB 4,000-6,000 for five days and eight hours, and can make a living without working a lot of overtime; whereas a general worker in a category two factory can earn less than RMB 3,000 for five days and eight hours, and must make a living by working a lot of overtime. The profits of the first and second category factories are both more lucrative and can support higher wages for general workers. The difference often lies in the fact that there have been collective actions by general workers in category 1 factories to force up wages. As a result, as the contrast between labour and management forces changes, category one and two factories often swap places, with category one factories falling into category two (where prices rise but wages do not) and category two factories moving up to category one (where basic wages rise sharply after collective action).

Because they are highly similar, we will focus on the characteristics of this type of factory below, using the category two factory as an example.

(iii) Wages and benefits for sub-groups

The personnel in large factories can be divided into physical proletarians (general workers, grass-roots team leaders, etc.), cerebral proletarians (ordinary clerical staff, technicians, ordinary engineers), petty bourgeoisie (department heads, department managers, etc., who have power over important matters such as production arrangements, raw material purchases, worker promotions and pay rises, and can decide on the use of finance within the department), and bourgeoisie (general managers, deputy general managers, etc.).

In general, most general workers in category II factories are paid the local minimum wage (or slightly higher) when they first join the factory, and as their length of service grows, their base salary increases somewhat, but is very limited, with 10-year veterans earning a base salary of no more than 3,000 or so. Generally speaking, the overtime hours of the second-class factories are about 80-110 hours (plus 2-3 hours from Monday to Friday, and 10-11 hours on weekends), and the hand salary is about 5,000 yuan.

Shift leaders are paid slightly more than general workers, with a job allowance of a few hundred dollars. They are generally detached from manual labour and can decide on the staffing of a pull, overtime, etc. They have a certain right to arrange production, but it is very limited. In labour disputes, they often take the side of the general workers. Some shift leaders will also go to casual jobs after work in order to subsidise their families.

Clerical staff belong to the category of cerebral proletarians, who are paid very low salaries (4-5k), often on a monthly basis, with no overtime pay, mostly 8 hours in 5 days, and very little overtime.

Category 2 factories will generally have a more stable team of technicians (this is an important difference between Category 2 and Category 3), usually with a college or high school degree or higher. Technicians and engineers are paid a bit more than general workers, team leaders and clerks, often getting over 7 or 8k, or even 1w+[1]. They tend to work overtime (especially line technicians) and some companies have overtime pay, some do not. In factories where overtime is paid, technicians and engineers working with production lines are paid overtime and those based in the office are often not paid overtime either. Most overtime is calculated on the basis of the local minimum wage, and some people work overtime at an hourly rate that is even less than the hourly rate for normal work.

Employees at the level of department head and department manager are typical of the emerging petty bourgeoisie. Their salaries are often above 1.5w and they are able to hold a considerable degree of control over the use of the means of production in their department and to a certain extent enjoy the right to the income from them. Another possible source of income for them is grey income, such as from their own small factories. These people generally take the position of the employer in labour disputes. But they also participate in or take advantage of industrial conflicts when they are favourable to them. For example, in category 2 factories with unions, the unions are often held by the middle class, who will use them to mobilise ordinary workers to negotiate with the management. With the economic downturn in recent years, this segment has also become increasingly unstable, with some of the lower class petty bourgeoisie driving for *Didi*[2] after work to subsidise their families.

(iv) Other company information

Category 2 factories generally pay provident funds and social security, with most paying on the basis of actual wages and some paying on the basis of basic wages. Most of the benefits are good, and

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[1] One *wan* (1w) is equal to 10,000.
[2] *Didi Chuxing* is a one-stop service covering taxi[1], special car[2], Didi Express[3], rideshare[4], chauffeur[5] bus, freight[6] and other services. Users can make free reservations through the Xiaoju Car Rental App or Didi App.

some factories pay union funds in accordance with the law, and will issue holiday payments or relatively high standard benefits during the New Year and festivals. The company canteen is much better than other factories in terms of cleanliness, hygiene and the richness of the cuisine, but workers are not always particularly satisfied with the canteen, which suggests that workers tend to struggle on to new beginnings. The dormitories are usually air-conditioned and in good condition, but because there are many older employees in this type of factory, the older employees have families and prefer to rent rooms outside.

As they are bound by international clients regarding occupational safety and health, environmental protection, etc., and they also comply more with the laws and regulations regarding safety and production, departments with the same positions and functions are better in terms of working environment than category 3 factories and small black factories, but work injuries and occupational diseases are still inevitable or even high, and illegal matters can be seen from time to time. For example, there is a lot of noise in the stamping workshop of a Type II factory and employees often suffer from occupational injuries in terms of hearing. This Type II factory colluded with the medical examination unit in previous years to conceal the medical examination reports, allowing employees with hearing impairment to continue working in noisy positions.

(v) Staff life

Employment in Category II factories is more standardised and the management is relatively humane. This is reflected in the following aspects.

Leave of absence. In general, category II factories do not deduct employees' sick pay, maternity pay and annual leave, and ordinary employees are entitled to these leaves in accordance with the law. Labour communication. For example, a Type II factory conducts collective wage negotiations every year (in fact, the company already has a budget for wage increases, but formally it requires the union to negotiate with the management on behalf of the workers), and another Type II factory holds a communication meeting with staff representatives every six months.

Day-to-day management. The management of the company is relatively humane and the grassroots management does not reprimand workers at every turn. If the grassroots management reprimands people unreasonably, the employees can solve the problem through some mechanism within the enterprise, such as going to the trade union, personnel or their superiors to complain.

Dispatched workers[3]. In order to ease recruitment difficulties and to facilitate management (no compensation is paid for the termination of labour contracts), these factories also use more dispatched workers, but they often choose to cooperate with creditable and larger labour dispatch companies, and dispatched workers can be converted to regular workers after working for a certain period of time. The main reason for using dispatched workers is flexibility, not cost-cutting through wage deduction, which is an important difference between Type II factories and small black factories using dispatched workers.

Corporate culture. Category II factories organise birthday parties, trips and various problematic activities to enrich the spare time of their employees, but the participation of general workers is not high. Type II factories try to instil a certain philosophy in this way, but the effect is very limited.

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[3] Workers under individual contracts. Workers sent out to third parties by labour hire companies.

Others. Type II factories focus more on employee involvement in company improvement, with particular emphasis on Japanese factories. This post-Ford management model was heavily inspired by the Anshan constitution[4], but with the added material incentives of capitalism. Japanese plants would use bonuses as an incentive to get technical staff to write proposals and make rationalisations.

(vi) Worker awareness situation

The awareness of workers in Category 2 factories is higher compared to those in Category 3 and below, but it still remains at the legal level. For example, many people who work in small black factories all year round are used to not paying social security, while an employee in a category 2 factory will know that it is illegal when he hears that a hometown does not have a social security provident fund. Some motivated employees will also encourage their hometown to ask for social security.

Category 2 factories have their own social connections and have their own social life due to the high number of older employees. In contrast, Category 3 factories with high mobility or small black factories have highly atomised employees who go home after work to play on their phones and have little social life.

Most workers in category 2 factories have no sense of association; a few do, but most are not organised at a high enough level to achieve the goal of association under the current confrontation between labour and management.

(vii) Analysis of contradictions

On the whole, workers in category 2 factories are more aware of their rights than in other factories. Under current conditions, the main conflict facing any worker is the issue of wages and working hours, and even in such "good factories", workers still need six days and ten hours or more to maintain labour reproduction. There are many older workers in category 2 factories and the financial pressure is greater than for younger people. The cost of living has increased dramatically in recent years, with rents rising year on year and the price of pork and vegetables rising rapidly, but the minimum wage has not been increased for several years, and in this situation, problems such as schooling for children and support for the elderly plague every middle-aged man.

In Category II factories, most people will work until the factory is relocated (where they can receive tens to hundreds of thousands of dollars in compensation), if there are no accidents, rather than fight at the cost of losing their jobs. As a result, conflicts over wages and working hours in category 2 factories generally unfold in a long-term but less violent manner. They are more concerned with the conflicts in everyday life, such as overtime, night shift allowances, improved working conditions, etc. Only general and huge benefits (e.g. financial compensation for relocation, etc.) can be and often are the trigger for violent protests. Workers in category II factories do not stop work easily, but when they do, the degree of organisation and struggle is higher than in other factories.

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[4] During the socialist era of Mao Zedong, the Anshan Iron and Steel Works produced a constitution which was characterised by working class participation in, and leadership of, management functions.

Chapter 3: Class analysis of Type 3 Factories

(i) Basic situation

Category III factories are the bulk of large factories, with the proportion of hired workers at roughly 40% (of all factory workers).

Capital characteristics. Type three factories are mainly domestic, Hong Kong and Taiwan-funded, and their capital scale is also larger, but they are in a relatively competitive industry, with low technological content, no monopoly advantage and relatively low profit margin. Most of them are foundries and do not have their own main brand, which is typical of labour-intensive enterprises. The products of type three factories are mainly components and low-end final consumer goods. Typical products of Type III factories include transformers, optical fibres, learning machines, household appliances, headphones, mobile phone accessories and so on. These products are characterised by their low technological content and can be produced by small companies after purchasing assembly lines and components. The competition for the type three factory is the scale, or the number of workers employed. Whether they can open one line or three, and whether they can employ ten or thirty people, is the key to their operation. They mainly rely on creating a scale effect to squeeze out the other competitors (mostly small black factories).

Labour relations. The basic wage for general workers in these factories is low (usually the local minimum wage) and general workers have to work a lot of overtime to make ends meet. There are many irregularities in the management of these factories, for example, social security and provident funds are generally paid on the basis of basic wages rather than actual wages, and rest and leave and daily management are often illegal (general workers are not entitled to maternity leave or sick leave according to the law).

Relations with the government. These bosses usually have some local connections, are familiar with the loopholes in the labour laws and are able to understand some of the subtle rules at the local level (especially the labour department) at the enforcement level, violating various labour laws and regulations at every turn and squeezing workers in various ways. Their regional chambers of commerce, Taiwanese chambers of commerce and other organisations also invite arbitrators and other legal experts to train corporate personnel on how to avoid legal risks.

(ii) Wage and working hours

The wages in this type of factory are similar to those in the second type of factory. The basic salary of general workers is the local minimum wage and overtime is often related to the low and high seasons, with more overtime in the high season, close to 11 hours in 6 days, or about 100-110 hours per month, and 8 or 10 hours in 5 days in the low season. General workers can arrive at a salary of 4,000-5,000 yuan per month by working a lot of overtime.

Vacation. Type three factories have deductions in sick pay, maternity pay, annual leave For example, maternity leave, ordinary civilian staff can take maternity leave but will be deducted from maternity leave wages. For example, according to the regulations, the maximum value of maternity allowance and the salary that should be paid in peacetime is the highest value, but the factory actually pays it according to the local minimum wage; non-civilian employees do not have maternity leave to take,

and after ordinary pregnancies, workers will be squeezed by the factory in various ways to force a dismissal.

Allowances. If a general worker asks for payment, the employer will try to get away with all sorts of tricks, and even if he eventually agrees to pay, he will still try all sorts of tricks. For example, if the temperature in the workplace can be kept below 33 degrees Celsius according to the law, no heat allowance will be paid, and the employer will put a thermometer at the air outlet of the air conditioner to measure the temperature.

Social security and provident funds. Most of the factories in this category pay social security according to the local minimum wage and do not pay a housing fund.

Other benefits package. There are basically no benefits beyond the salary. Some factories claim to cover food and accommodation, but employees have to pay a certain amount for accommodation, water and electricity. And canteens are often outsourced and will only provide a percentage of the meal allowance.

Staff other than general workers. Clerical staff receive a monthly salary with no overtime pay, and usually no overtime is required, with wages of around 4,000-5,000. There is not much difference between the wages of engineers, technicians and general workers in such factories. For example, the wages of technicians in a category 3 factory are almost the same as those of general workers, and the difference between them and general workers is that the work is relatively easy and there is a lot of time for touching fish[5].

(iii) Working environment and labour intensity

Most of the factories in this category are assembly line production, and the overall labour intensity is high.

The working environment differs greatly from factory to factory. For example, some factories have air-conditioning, while others do not. Whether or not to install air conditioning does not depend on whether the heat is unbearable for the employees, but rather on whether the temperature will have an impact on production. For example, electronics factories are usually air-conditioned for fear that staff will drip sweat and damage components, while many equipment manufacturers do not install air conditioning. On one occasion an employee in an electroplating workshop said, "In the eyes of the boss, we are no better than a machine. When electronic equipment gets sweaty, he gets heartbroken, while we, hot and with our pants all wet, he doesn't even ask."

On occupational diseases. The government requires all factories to report their occupational health hazards to the competent authorities every year, and also requires them to undergo annual occupational health checks. However, as the competent authority is the Health and Welfare Commission, which is far away from the production area, and enforcement is inadequate, it is difficult to keep track of the occupational disease hazards in each factory, so there are many irregularities in occupational safety and health in the type three factories. Many workers suffer from chronic poisoning by organic solvents, resulting in physical and mental disabilities, and are often swept out of the factory.

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[5] A euphemism for laziness, for not being on task, eg checking social media during work time.

(iv) Employment management

Category III factories do not have as many large international customers, or are separated from them by two or three layers, and are not subject to various international standards, which make them more severe in terms of management and oppression.

General workers in category III factories are not skilled in any way and can be put to work with a little training. For the employers, new employees are cheaper than old ones. New employees are mainly young people in their twenties, who are not married, do not have much financial pressure, are highly atomised socially and have lower requirements for social security provident funds, accommodation and air conditioning (e.g. one category 3 factory stipulates that only employees who have worked for one year are given provident funds). It is therefore in the interests of the employer to maintain a high level of employee mobility. Such factories have developed the phenomenon of line managers scolding people on the production line every day and driving workers away from the factory, while the personnel department struggles to recruit workers every day. This is the result of both factory connivance and capital's drive for profit.

Because of the low wages, the unskilled and intense work and the brutal management, general workers are very mobile. Generally speaking, general workers in the type three factories rarely have more than one year's service. Clerical workers are not very mobile because they are paid for five days and eight hours to meet their needs and the work is not very intensive.

Dispatched workers. Category 3 factories use a large number of dispatched workers because the flexibility of employment allows for significant savings in compensation for dismissal by the employer. Category 3 factories are very different from Category 1 and 2 factories in terms of dispatched workers. Category 1 and 2 factories require dispatching companies to purchase a housing fund for dispatched workers at the same rate as regular workers, whereas Category 3 factories do not. The dispatching companies they work with are often not standard dispatching companies and usually do not have social security provident funds or standard labour contracts. For example, a Type 3 factory signs two contracts with its dispatchers, one for the traditional base salary + overtime, and the other for the actual hourly rate (the former method will result in a lower salary, and when the dispatcher wants to defend his rights they will threaten the employee with the former contract).

Category 3 factories also use a large number of daily and hourly workers in violation of the law. The law stipulates that daily and hourly workers should not work more than four hours a day, but the working hours of daily and hourly workers in category 3 factories are the same as those of regular workers, often 11 hours a day. And category 3 factories will not pay the hourly wage at the rate set by law. For example, the law in one place stipulates that the hourly wage must not be less than 20 yuan per hour, but category three factories will adjust the wage according to supply and demand, and only in rare cases will the hourly wage be at or above the legal standard.

(v) The situation of workers' awareness

Most of the general workers of the types three factory workers are young people in their twenties, with no long-term planning or intention, and often do not come back after the New Year. Their social relations are highly atomised, poorly organised and their awareness of rights and interests is weak; it

is sufficient that the factory does not default on wages, and there are generally no further demands. The awareness of technicians in category three factories is similar to that of general workers.
The clerical staff in category 3 factories are even weaker compared to category 1 and 2 factories, because the general workers in this factory have no power of action, they do not see the power and often see no point in taking action to defend their rights.

At the level of line supervisors, foremen and section leaders in Category 3 factories, there will generally be some older employees with more stable social connections and a greater awareness of their rights.

There are also some less mobile departments in category 3 factories. These are often departments with a poorer environment (high odour, heat, dust, etc.) and the employees in these departments are mostly in their 40s, who have difficulty finding other jobs after leaving the factory and therefore do not move easily. These older employees will be more aware of their rights and will often take positive action to defend them.

The three types of factory department heads and managers basically belong to the upper echelons of the emerging petty bourgeoisie, who stand on the side of the capitalists and generally consider issues from the opposite side of the workers in their struggle, becoming the lapdogs of the bourgeoisie.

(vi) Analysis of contradictions

The main contradiction in the type three factories is still the wage issue, but the manifestation is that young employees vote with their feet and resign themselves, while old employees may take the fight for social security provident fund as a breakthrough.

In a category three factory, an old employee left the company and found that the company had not paid the provident fund as required. His basic salary was around 2,000 and his average monthly salary after overtime was around 5,000, and the company paid the provident fund according to the base of 2,000 and 5% (the law stipulates that it should be paid according to the actual salary, i.e. 5,000), which is 150 yuan less per month, and 3,600 yuan less in two years. After the employee complained to the Housing Provident Fund Management Centre, he successfully recovered RMB 3,600 from the provident fund. Word got out that more than 200 employees of the type three factories had complained about the factory one after another, leading to the factory's commitment to pay back the provident fund to the entire workforce.

Chapter Four, the small black factory and type four factories

Almost all enterprises below 300 are small black factories, mainly electronic factories, mainly producing electronic components, such as circuit boards, Pcb boards, remote controls, mobile phone cases, electronic cigarettes, and so on.

Small black factories have small capital and tight cash flow, so they try to "reduce expenses" in every way possible.
(i) Wages and working hours

The basic wage in a small black factory is generally the minimum wage, and on the coast, for example, the basic wage is between RMB 1,500 and 2,200. Workers are unable to reproduce their labour at the minimum wage and are therefore forced to work overtime voluntarily.

Overtime hours in small black factories are generally in the range of 100-110 hours a month (3 hours overtime Monday to Friday and 11 hours overtime on weekends), with some companies working more. Most small black factories have single breaks, but some factories will cancel breaks during peak seasons.

In terms of overtime pay, most small black factories are able to pay at the legal standard, while a few are below the legal standard. For example, if a worker works 100 hours of overtime in a month, he or she will receive a salary of around RMB 4,000.

Small factories often use other methods to deduct wages, such as fines, forcing workers to leave, and illegal abuse of comprehensive working hours. In addition, small factories generally do not pay social security and provident funds.

Managers at the level of department heads in small factories can earn wages of 7k-10k, which are significantly higher than those of general workers, but often do not reach the social wage in the local area.

(ii) Employment and management

The employment of workers in small black factories is highly irregular, which is reflected in the following three aspects.

First, no contract is signed. Many small black factories do not sign labour contracts, or sign them and take them away. Because small black factories often break the law, the capitalists of small black factories even use illegal squeezing as one of the important sources of their profits, so they will make it more difficult for workers to defend their rights by not signing contracts.

Secondly, illegal use of labour. Small black factories are mostly electronic factories and have small capital volumes, so orders have extremely strong seasonal attributes. The demand for labour varies greatly between the low season in the first half of the year and the high season in the second half. A small black factory may need 100 people in the second half of this year, and only 30 people in the first half of next year. In order to avoid the obligation to compensate for the termination of labour contracts, small black factories often violate the law and abuse a large number of hourly and dispatched workers.

Thirdly, the management is harsh. Small black factories have a large number of penalty clauses, and money is deducted from the factory at every turn. In addition, it is almost impossible to take sick leave and maternity leave in a small black factory in accordance with the law. Those who can take maternity leave in a small black factory are managers, and workers who become pregnant are thrown out.

(iii) Analysis of contradictions
Small black factories offer low wages, do not pay social security and provident funds, have harsh management and many illegal matters, so workers are highly mobile. Few general workers in small

black factories have more than one year's service. Because of the high mobility of workers, it is difficult to settle down and form their own social relationships, so the sense of solidarity and organisation among workers in small black factories is the weakest.

Under these circumstances, the management violates the rights of employees more seriously. Indiscriminate payments and non-payment of social security are the most common matters. Other matters such as illegal wage suppression (paying last month's salary at the end of this month, or paying last month's salary), colluding with intermediaries to deduct wages, and forcing self-employment to deduct wages, are also common.

As workers are highly mobile, it is difficult to form an organised force and they can only fight against capital individually. Many people feel that they do not have much money and that it is too much trouble to defend their rights, so they give up fighting for them.

On the whole, the awareness of employees in small black factories is weaker than in large factories. Most of the problems they encounter are reactive, i.e. they defend their rights after their rights have been violated (large factories are currently also predominantly reactive, but more proactive). Rights issues in small black factories mainly revolve around wages, workplace injuries and compensation for relocation, and rarely involve improvements in labour conditions (e.g. installation of air conditioning in workshops, etc.), and there are few proactive attacks on wage increases. However, as small black factories break the law frequently, there are not infrequent outbreaks of employee rights in small black factories, and from time to time, there are incidents of rights violations due to non-payment of wages.

The fourth type of factory is the small black factory whose scale has reached the standard of a large factory, which workers often jokingly refer to as a big black factory. The basic characteristics are similar to those of the small black factory, so I will not repeat them here.

Fifth: Conclusion

By analysing the industrial situation in street F in district A, we can draw the following conclusions.

1. 40% of factory workers in this street are employed in small black factories or category 4 factories, which hardly sign contracts, do not buy social security, have difficulties in enjoying normal holidays, and are managed strictly by the factories and deduct workers' salaries through various illegal means. Another 40% of the workers in the street are employed in category 3 factories, which sign contracts, buy social security but do not meet the legal standards, basically do not pay into the provident fund, have difficulties in enjoying normal holidays, have harsh management in the factory, and scolding by the grassroots management is common. The remaining 20% of workers are employed in category 1 and 2 factories, will sign a contract, basically pay social security and provident fund as required by law, general workers are able to enjoy normal holidays, the factory management is relatively humane due to the various standards imposed by international customers, and there are various communication channels in the form.

2. Small black factories, category 4 factories and category 3 factories, together employing approximately 80% of factory workers, all of these 80% suffer from this varying degree of lawlessness at all times. The mobility of workers is high due to low wages, poor benefits, intense and low-skilled work. This high degree of mobility, on the one hand, is conducive to the illegal profiting

of capital (e.g. not paying wages since leaving, not buying provident funds until they have worked for a full year) and, on the other hand, is not conducive to the formation of local social relations and therefore a sense of solidarity among the employees. Category 1 and 2 factories, together, employ around 20% of factory workers, and this 20% is exploited in a largely legal way. Due to the relatively humane management and good welfare benefits, the general workers in category 1 and 2 factories are not very mobile, have more veteran employees, have formed their own social connections, have long-term plans (e.g. to work until the factory moves), pay more attention to their daily rights and interests, and have a significantly stronger sense of solidarity.

3. In terms of the future, the objective for workers in Category 2 factories in economic terms is to increase their basic wage and to be able to complete the reproduction of their labour within five days and eight hours (or with no more than 36 hours of overtime per month), i.e. to obtain a wage of 4,000-6,000 yuan at current prices. Category 2 factories have the potential to achieve this goal due to their monopoly or dominant market position, with higher profits and the possibility of long-term solidarity due to the relative stability of their workers. On a day-to-day basis, the objective of the economic aspect of workers in category 1 and 2 factories is to carry out day-to-day defence of their rights and interests, and in the process strengthen their mutual ties.

4. The meagre profits of category 3, category 4 and small black factories and the high mobility of workers make it less likely that workers will be able to unite for a basic wage increase. And because of the meagre profits, there is greater uncertainty as to whether individual capital can support workers' claims for labour reproduction within five days and eight hours (or up to 36 hours of overtime per month). Therefore, the implementation of an 8-hour workday in small black factories or category 3 or 4 factories may require adjustments at the global level. On a day-to-day basis, the economic objective of workers in these factories is to urge the factory to implement basic laws, such as the purchase of social security and provident funds, access to statutory leave, etc. These are things that workers can do and are already doing. In the process, more people can be awakened to their rights.

5. There are some other conclusions that are not easy to state here.

Chapter 2 Basic information of Factory A

<u>I. Basic situation</u>

Factory A is a key unit in a coastal city, with a total of 1251 employees and a total of 40 departments. The ratio of men to women among the staff is close to 3:1, and the geographical distribution is mainly based on the two lakes and two provinces, with a total of nearly 70% of the staff outside the two lakes and Jiangxi. The company's employees are far more educated than ordinary electronics factories, with a total of 20% college and above, and a total of 60% secondary and high school students. The staff is mainly young and middle-aged, with the majority of employees aged 30-40. The factory is not very mobile, with more than 80% of the employees being more than 5 years old.

	人数	备注
总计	1251	
总经理	1	新加坡人
部门经理	6	台湾人
主任	8	大陆人
主管	33	大陆人
高级工程师	42	大陆人
组长	69	大陆人
一般员工	1065	大陆人
派遣	19	大陆人

The General Manager is a Singaporean and below him are the Department Managers, all of whom are Taiwanese, making a total of 6. The department managers have a total of 40 departments under their supervision, with several departments under the senior manager and one department under the junior manager. Below the manager is the director, usually only one person. Below the director is the supervisor, who depends on the department, with larger departments generally having more than one supervisor and smaller departments generally having one supervisor. Below the supervisors are the team leaders, and below the team leaders are the general staff. In addition, there are 42 senior engineers.

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The manager earns a high income, roughly in the hundreds of thousands to millions. The manager has a lot of power, not only does he have the final say in all matters of the department, but he also controls the personnel of the department. Team leaders are nominated by the manager for promotion to supervisor and supervisors to director. Anything nominated by the manager is usually approved from above.

The Director is paid around 200,000 a year and has certain personnel powers. When a general worker is promoted to team leader or the organisation is promoted to supervisor, it is usually the director who nominates the manager for approval, in fact, any manager nominated by the director will be approved. The director's salary is not high in terms of income, but the director holds the actual power to organise production. The managers are Taiwanese and are not responsible for organising production directly, but only for interfacing with the business and coordinating with the head office. Production is basically the actual responsibility of the director. Where to buy raw materials from and how to organise production are in practice all decisions made by the director. This gave the director a lot of room to use his power for personal gain. Two years ago a director was arrested because he was taking kickbacks from suppliers. The case involved tens of millions of dollars and involved employees from several departments, including quality and purchasing.

Below the director are supervisors, who assist the director with specific production arrangements. The supervisor's salary is significantly higher than that of the average worker, but also significantly lower than that of the director, which is typically around $120,000 a year. Apart from arranging production, the supervisor's main authority is to approve overtime and set monthly performance, which is divided into four levels, ranging from RMB 200-500/month.

The team leader is the lowest level of management and actually arranges production and drives output. The only power a shift leader has is to ask their supervisor to approve overtime for workers or to recommend their monthly performance. The salary of a shift leader is not much different from that of an ordinary worker.

The total number of people working in the production departments of the top five divisions is 600, or 48% of all employees.

II. Overview of the production situation in the sector

Production departments are divided into two categories: those that are skilled and easy to find work in, such as the assembly department, and those that are unskilled and repetitive, such as the testing department. The following is an example of the different situations in the assembly and testing departments.

(i) Assembly department

There are three assembly departments in the company, with a total of about 290 people. There are long day shifts, six days off and no shifts. Here we will mainly introduce the assembly department.

	人数	备注
总计	53	
经理	1	台湾人，对接业务
主任	1	主抓生产
文员	2	出物料、报关、行政（如发工资条）
组长	4	每人管 7 个装配工
工程师	3	一个管调试机器，其余管工艺流程
技术员	10	调试机器
高级装配工	22	装配机器
初级装配工	6	
其他外驻部门	4	外驻品质部小组

There are 49 staff on board in the assembly department and 4 permanent staff in other departments (quality department). All employees are regular workers, no dispatch (there used to be dispatch, but after 2018 the dispatchers were returned due to poor business efficiency).

The manager is Taiwanese and is not responsible for specific production matters, but mainly for docking orders and coordinating head office relations. The manager has his own separate office and starts work at 8:30 every day and finishes at 5:30 sharp. He usually visits the workshop 3 times a day and spends the rest of the day in his own office.

The director is actually responsible for the production of the department. There is no supervisor in the department, so the director has direct authority over the 4 team leaders who organise production. The director, clerk and engineer share an office. The director is usually in the office, but occasionally comes out to make rounds and supervise the work of the workers. The clerk is responsible for materials, customs clearance and other administrative matters, and the clerk also assists the director in organising production. The engineer does not have a lot of work to do, so if the technician cannot handle something, he will call the engineer. As a rule, the engineer can stay in the office all the time, but few people stay seated all the time. The engineer was worried about being scolded by the director, so he used to walk around the workshop and chat with the technicians to kill time.

The assembler is responsible for assembling the machine and the technician checks and commissions the machine after the assembler has finished assembling it and writes a report on the calibration and commissioning. The assembler and the technician are the most important workforce in the workshop.

The team leader arranges the work of the assemblers and is specifically responsible for supervising them. The team leader is generally not involved in the labour, but will lend a hand when he is particularly busy.

In terms of whether they are detached from production or not, assemblers, technicians and clerks are all engaged in specific work and are front-line workers; directors and managers are completely detached from production and are the organisers and supervisors of work; team leaders and engineers are not involved in specific work but are on the shop floor and are always on the front line of work.

The assemblers are mainly aged between 25 and 40. There are 20 male workers and 8 female workers. Most of the workers are married and have children. The assemblers are responsible for

three specific sub-trades: assembly of loose parts, assembly of components and wiring (connecting the wires of components and electronic products and arranging them in an orderly manner).

Assembly of loose parts and assembly of components requires the lifting of heavy parts and is therefore almost exclusively male. Scheduling is the easiest and is dominated by female workers. Wiring is the easiest, components and loose parts are more tiring.

As far as the working environment is concerned, the workshop is air-conditioned and dust-free, but there is a risk of being smashed during assembly, so the assembly department places great emphasis on safe production.

A specific production process is as follows: The task starts with the allocation of manpower by the team leader. The assembler first goes downstairs to pull up the empty racks with a forklift truck and informs the material room to send out materials. Once the preparation of materials is complete, the machine is loaded. First, the bottom of the machine is installed, then the wire is pulled, then the cover template and the top assembly is installed. Once completed, the wire and the assembly are pulled together and handed over for testing after assembly.

The simplest machines generally have 6 stations (2 loose parts for the bottom of the machine, 1 assembly, 1 template line and 2 left and right wire pulls) and take about 30 minutes each, some processes can be done in parallel and some cannot. The company requires 10 machines to be installed in a day, but the workers do not work that fast, they will drag their feet until they are working on only 8 machines a day, leaving the remaining 2 for overtime so that they can earn overtime pay. The workers saw clearly that the faster they worked, the less money they would make. One worker said, "We regular workers are not very active and are only 70-80% efficient. There are people who work hard, such as dispatchers who work hard to be regularised. But once they are regularised, they also start to be lazy."

A day in the life of a worker goes roughly like this: you arrive at the factory at 8.30am and the team leader calls a morning meeting. The morning meeting is about the work schedule and the emphasis on safety (this factory takes safety very seriously, because when there is an injury at work, the promotion of managers is blocked). After the morning meeting, the assemblers would go to the bathroom or to the pantry for a drink, for as little as five minutes, or as long as half an hour (the old greasers), and most of them were working by 9 a.m. They usually installed four machines in the morning. On the whole, the work is not too tiring. Of course, it's not any fun for the workers and they always find some opportunity to chat to someone for a laugh. For example, when the assemblers have finished loading the bottom of the machine, they can go and talk to the older lady next to them, and they can joke with each other and drive a car from time to time. The assembly section is a 12.30 meal, followed by work at 1.15. In the afternoon, we repeat the work we did in the morning. Some people get sleepy in the afternoon, and when they do, they go to drink water or run out of the toilet and squat inside for a short nap. The afternoon ends at 5.15pm and the total number of units assembled is usually 8. The company usually arranges two clocks, and this overtime is mostly continuous, with workers leaving work at 7.15pm.

Managers are usually off by 5.30 and directors are usually off at 6.15 (the company doesn't give managers more overtime because they are well paid). After the managers leave work, the workers start to mill around and play on their phones on a mass scale, playing while they work until they leave work at 7.15.

There are many ways for workers to slack off. Here is a list of five common methods.

1. Pulling racks. When it's not busy, the workers themselves use a forklift to go downstairs and pick up the pieces. After going downstairs, the workers rest under a tree. A rack that can be pulled up in 20 minutes can be pulled out in 40 minutes by workers who are grinding.

2. Screwing. Originally, there was an electric torsion driver, which could fix the screws in a few seconds, but the workers would use a manual hexagonal spanner to twist them, and it took ten minutes to twist them properly.

3. Find the material. With hundreds of materials for each type of machine, some material workers didn't know where to put them. If it is a batch loading machine, the material is usually prepared by the material clerk, if it is a non-batch loading machine, the material is the assemblers themselves to find. At this point, the assemblers take their time, taking breaks as they look for them. One assembler said, "I can still play with my mobile phone, as long as I don't get seen by the leader. You have to be smart to play with your mobile phone. Once when we were not busy, someone was playing with his mobile phone in a corner for half a day. When the leader came to the brother, he played match[6] to him and sent him a message to tell him to come out and show his face, and the leader was relieved. Playing with the phone everyone will play match, as long as they catch one person, the leader will scold a group. So the group leader said to us, be smart when you play with your phones and I will also be scolded less, and I won't come to scold you."

4、Assembled components. The assembler installed the assembly and slowly twisted the screws, because the screws are very large, the electric drill can not hit, it can only be manual, so it is ideal for being lazy.

5、Pulling the wire. It's easiest to be lazy while pulling the wire and goofing off. An assembler said, "I've seen a fellow pulling the wire, plugging it in and pulling it out, plugging it in and pulling it out, making a morning of it."

An assembler concluded, "You have to be technical to be lazy, firstly, you can't stop your hands, you have to make the leader think you are doing something. Secondly, you can't stay in one position all the time, you have to change position for an hour or you will be easily found out."

When talking about whether there will be guilt for being lazy, the above-mentioned assembler said, "Guilty Mao! Why do you do it so fast? If you do it fast, you won't have to work overtime. We are more united. One time on the Dragon Boat Festival, our department was not busy, other departments were busy, and other departments worked overtime. We didn't work overtime, and we were not happy. The old employees took the lead and stopped working. Later, the director gave us overtime, and we started to work. "

(ii) Testing departments

There are only 2 testing departments in the company, with a total of 68 people. There are two shifts, six days on and one off, and shifts off.

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[6] A sporting allusion, referring to being a team player.

	人数	备注
总计	68	
经理	1	台湾人，对接业务
主任	1	主抓检测工作
组长	3	分别负责操作、调校和质检
操作员	40	每人管 7 个装配工
调校员	10	一个管调试机器，其余管工艺流程
质检员	10	调试机器
技术员	1	
机修	2	

The structure is similar to that of the assembly department. The main focus here is on the general workforce. The operators, adjusters and quality inspectors are all general. The operators are unskilled and repetitive as they take machine assembly line work to inspect. Because the size of the parts tested in each batch is not the same, the machine parameters need to be adjusted, and the adjuster is the one who calibrates the machine during each transfer. Generally, 4-5 transfers a day take about 1 hour a time to tune. After the tuning most tuners help the operator with his work, as the operator's output counts towards his output and affects the tuner's monthly performance (300RMB difference between the lowest and highest grade).

The operator is the one who turns on the machine to check for defects in the aluminium sheet, and after the inspection, ships out those that pass, and reports those that do not. Operators are mainly female workers, aged between 25-40 years old, mostly married with children.

The operators have a very hard job. As they work in two shifts, they start work at 7.30am. At the morning meeting, the team leader takes roll call, organises the work and reprimands those who were complained about yesterday. After the meeting, they start working immediately and there is no chance to slack off and go to the toilet. Once the aluminium sheets have been pulled in for inspection, the operator places them in the inspection area of the machine, which runs like an assembly line, automatically checking and separating the good products from the bad ones, which the operator has to take out and seal. One operator has to look after 3-5 machines. In order to work efficiently, the operator has to work on his feet and repeat several actions throughout the day: loading, picking up, threading, boxing, placing, and after an order has been run the operator has to fill in a report (number of good and defective products, etc.) and enter it into the computer. As it is an assembly line operation, the machine runs at a fixed speed and will alarm if it is not loaded or if it is not picked up when the tablets are ready. When the machine alarmed, the team leader would run over and reprimand. If the operator was slow, the team leader would threaten him with monthly performance.

Lunch was in batches, one at 11.30 and one at 12.15, with a 45-minute meal break. 2-3pm was the most sleepy time, very sleepy and very tired. Some of the staff from other departments would run to the toilet and squat to sleep when they were sleepy. But the staff in this department did not dare to do so, they had to continue working when they were sleepy.

Due to the fact that they had to work standing up, their backs were sore and many of them had numb legs.

One worker said, "This is a clean room, you can't see your face when you wear dustproof clothes, and you don't know anyone after working for a long time. I've been working for a year and I don't even know what the supervisor looks like, I can only identify them by the colour of their clothes."

Another person said, "Working here is very depressing and I hate it very much. When I work, people stop and there is no air circulation, and although there is air conditioning, the whole environment is stuffy. There are also night shifts, and I have to work in shifts once a month. I often had trouble sleeping during the night shifts. What's worse is that it's also a shift. When you are off, you can't even find a friend, there are no social activities, there is no personal life. There's nothing but work, eat and sleep, it's a real three-point line. Once you're on the night shift you're even more isolated from the world. It's even darker than a small factory."

III. Wages and benefits

In 2012, there was a factory-wide collective defence of rights and since then, wages have risen and benefits have been adjusted upwards.

Let's take the assembly department as an example to illustrate the wage situation.

	底薪	福利	伙食补贴	全勤	月度绩效	岗位补贴
初级装配工	2600	100	450	50	200-500	-
高级装配工	2600	N*200	450	50	200-500	-
组长	2600	N*220	450	50	200-500	500
文员	2600	N*200	450	50	200-500	-
工程师	3000	3000+	450	50	200-500	-

注：N 是工龄。

At the bottom of the scale, a five-day, eight-hour employee earns a total of 3400-3700 before tax, while a five-year senior assembler earns 4300-4600 before tax, and a clerk earns the same as a senior assembler, with a team leader earning slightly more than a senior assembler of the same age. An engineer's salary is significantly higher than the above, with a two year old engineer earning around 7,000 before tax.

In addition, in order to save costs: 1. all overtime is calculated on the basis of the base salary, not the real salary; 2. the company tends to promote clerks from junior assemblers, so that some clerks do the work of clerks, but get the salary of junior assemblers.

The company does not bet on salaries, which are usually paid on the 7th of each month. The company pays all five insurance and one fund. However, the previous housing fund payment was not legal and the company was paying the local minimum wage as the base. Some workers knew that the payment of the provident fund inside the factory was not legal (many did not), but even if they did, they said there was nothing they could do, "Do you still go and complain, you don't want your job anymore?". Then one day, a departing employee complained and got the back payment of the provident fund, and the story slowly spread through the company. Many people calculated, "Wow, the factory owed me so much money (10 years of service often differed by more than 10,000), so more and more people went to complain about the company, and finally the company was under too much pressure to make up all the people's contributions.

IV. Other information about the company

(i) Management

The management of the company is not considered harsh and there is no explicit system of fines. Violations will be marked down and benefits or bonus levels will be reduced. For example, if a machine is not installed properly, the monthly performance for this time is reduced, but this does not affect the next time. Actions such as fighting, smoking and stealing are grounds for dismissal. Scolding by directors and supervisors is not common. Scolding by team leaders is also not common. In the assembly department, it is difficult for a supervisor to give an increase in output to a worker who does not see eye to eye, because an increase in output would involve a collective all increase and could not be directed at a particular individual. In the inspection department, the supervisors tend to speed up a bit when transferring goods and machines, but they don't dare to go too fast.

(ii) Embezzlement and theft

Theft from the assembly department is rare and not worthwhile. Embezzlement is not known. The testing department is the back end and embezzlement is not much.

There are two main types of departments that embezzle. One type of department involves the purchase of raw materials, where the leader is able to get money back from suppliers. The other is departments that involve outsourced parts, where the leader often opens a small factory outside and lets people in the purchasing department buy products from their own factory.

Workers would also steal things from inside the factory, such as stealing copper pieces. It's getting harder and harder now, with security guards spot-checking from time to time from among the people leaving the factory and sweeping with detectors. I have heard of workers putting iron bars in potions with gold ions to displace the gold and take it away. There are engineers who steal potions containing silver ions and extract the silver to take away. The extraction process actually produces highly toxic hydrocyanic acid, and the thief wants the money to use over his lifetime, messing around with the fume hood open at the same time. This kind of thing is quickly discovered because there is intensive surveillance inside the factory and the precious metal management is finely controlled.

(iii) Struggle

There was a mass collective struggle for rights in 2012. Prior to this there were few benefits, after which benefits and base salaries were increased. There were various small struggles during the 2020 epidemic, such as the back payment of the provident fund some time ago. The people in the equipment department were the most combative because they were highly skilled and could go out and find jobs easily without fear of being fired. The testing department is significantly worse because it is very replaceable and if it doesn't work, they are fired.

(iv) Working hours and rest

For long day shifts, from 8:30 to 7:15 p.m. For two shifts, from 7:30 to 7:15 p.m. Basically, we work six shifts and have normal holidays, some departments also arrange overtime work, but the number of triple shifts is less and the number of double shifts is more. There are no night shifts in the assembly department and most of the other production departments work in two shifts.

In terms of leave, sick leave and leave of absence are both available. You can tell us about sick leave in advance and we can make up the sick leave slip afterwards. It is generally not difficult to take leave. As workers have a tradition of struggle, the factory as a whole is more law-abiding, and generally do not dare to extend working hours at will, and workers will not meet early or leave late.

V. Staff life

Take an employee with 3 years of service as an example. The employee works 60 hours of overtime per month, of which, 28 hours of overtime are combined during weekdays from Monday to Friday, and 32 hours of overtime are combined on four Saturdays. This would result in a monthly salary of around RMB 4,500. Here are the basic expenses of the employee.

	数额	备注
房租加水电	600	10 平不到，一个床，有厨房厕所，没有空调，无电梯
吃饭	1500 左右	中午 15，晚上 15，早上 3-5 元，偶尔下馆子。
话费	50	
生活用品+零食	1000	
衣服鞋子	-	基本不买衣服鞋子
看病	-	身体好不看病
出去玩、交通	数百	

In this way, the employee could save less than $1,000 per month. If he saved his money, he could save 1500-2000 RMB. The employee used to like to go for foot massages (less than 200 a time, 1-2 times a month). Later, he stopped going after spending a lot of money on leisure.

The employee said that he now buys something after work and goes back to his room to eat and watch TV at the same time. He also goes to his colleagues' homes on weekends to cook and eat (mostly single colleagues, but also those who are married but separated). He now also likes to go to internet cafes to surf the web, watch videos or play games. Sometimes he also goes out for trips around the area, on holidays or double holidays, but these trips are more expensive and he doesn't go often.

Since the economic downturn in 2018, the company has removed the previous housing allowance. This year's year-end bonus is even more outrageous, with the highest level being lower than last year's lowest. The previously routine May salary increase has also been cancelled this year. The employee said, "Actually, at the overall level of the group, the benefits are better than last year. The company is doing this and people have grievances, but during the epidemic, there is nothing to say."

VI. Postscript

1. The factory under study is a rare "good factory" in the eyes of workers. The base salary and benefits are well above the minimum wage, and this is possible partly because the factory is a leader in its sector and has enough profit to raise wages, and partly because of the massive collective action of workers in 2012.

2. In this factory, all people do not possess the means of production, but the relationship between different groups of people and the means of production is clearly different. The manager is able to control the affairs of the department together and deploy the use of people and property, the director is able to organise production in practice and has a certain amount of power over personnel and the distribution of bonuses, and can even use his power for personal gain. The team leader is able to organise the production of workers and is somewhat detached from it, but his salary is not much different from that of a general worker. The engineer's salary is significantly higher than that of a general worker, but ten thousand dollars is just a living as a social animal on the coast. Technicians and clerks, both of whom are bottom feeders who are not removed from production. All

this puts different groups of people in different positions in production, with different benefits and therefore different consciousnesses (more on this later).

3. As can be seen from the production processes in both sectors, labour in a capitalist system is merely a form of torture for the worker himself. The worker finds ways to be lazy at every opportunity because he can realise that his interests are opposed to those of capital. The more skilled the worker, the more lazy he can be, and the more replaceable the worker, the harder it is to be lazy. Negative struggle through laziness therefore only applies to a proportion of workers; for many more workers, a more active approach is necessary to defend their rights.

4. Even in such a factory, a worker cannot save much money every month. A little over 10,000 a year saved, or 100,000 in ten years, and a major illness would wipe it all out.

Chapter 3: Class Analysis of Department P in Factory A

While the previous research on Factory A broadly sketched the outline of various aspects of Factory A, this chapter will present the situation of one sector. Further interviews will be conducted to give a more concrete picture of the current situation of industrial workers in China in terms of their work, life and rights and interests, using Factory A as an example. Readers can leave their comments in the comments section if they wish to learn more, and friends from different industries are also welcome to contribute information and share their views. Only by accumulating a large amount of first-hand information and conducting extensive research can we sharpen our eyes in the fog of the times and prevent ourselves from drifting in the flood of ideological propaganda.

I. Overview of the department

Factory A, as a large factory with a fairly long history, has been involved in a variety of fields of business. However, the company's core business is still the manufacturing of equipment with high technical content and high added value, so many departments are responsible for the assembly of equipment, and the M department is one of the larger ones.

The M department is responsible for the assembly of a wide range of equipment models, with prices varying according to complexity, with the cheapest generally costing several hundred thousand yuan and the most expensive costing more than three million. Orders for equipment fluctuate greatly with market conditions, with 50-60 units coming out each month when the market is booming, but such large bursts are not common, and only 15-20 units may come out each month when the market is depressed. This year's order situation is average, basically maintaining a production of about 25 units per month.

Because of the relative advantage of wages and benefits in the region, the overall staff turnover in Factory A is relatively low, so there has been little recruitment over the years, and there are high requirements when recruiting. In the M department, for example, even the most junior assemblers are required to pass a professional knowledge test (above 70 points) before being interviewed by supervisors and managers for employment. It takes at least 3 months of training after joining to be able to work independently, and in previous years, the hiring rate was only around 10-15%.

II. Personnel

The M department has a total of 84 people. Its personnel structure is roughly as follows:

非直接生产人员		直接生产人员	
经理	1	技术员（包括 3 组长）	10
部长	1	技术装配工	30
主管	3	装配工	21
工程师	3	测试员	12
文员	1		
跟单员	2		

The managers and department heads are mainly responsible for external communication and transmission of information, while the specific production management is done by supervisors and team leaders at the grassroots level, with some engineers, order takers and clerks as production support staff. The basic assemblers, technical assemblers and assembly technicians make up the majority of the department's staff and are the direct personnel actually responsible for production and assembly.

Of all the staff, more than 80% are five-year veterans; the ratio of men to women is approximately 10:1, with female workers mainly responsible for some of the lighter tasks such as batching. In the past, the company recruited regular staff directly, but in recent years it has started to use dispatchers and has been supplementing them mainly through the conversion of dispatchers (in previous years, when orders were high, a large number of dispatchers were recruited, and when orders decreased, they were returned to the dispatching company, with four of the 40 dispatchers eventually being converted).

The most junior staff in department M are assemblers, who can be promoted through the company's promotion system to technical assemblers, assembly technicians and technicians are also qualified to be promoted to engineers, with each stage being divided into junior and senior levels. As a foreign-owned company, Company A has a strict and cumbersome training and assessment mechanism, and even the most junior team leader is required to take an annual examination for induction. Because of the troublesome procedures, the head of department M is not active in nominating staff for promotion.

III. Work situation

The work in the M department consists of three main parts: assembly of functional modules, assembly of the whole machine and testing of the whole machine, with about 30 people in each of the first two parts and more than 10 people in the testing part. The assembly of just one of these functional modules generally takes between 8 and 10 hours, and even 20 to 30 hours for complex ones.

As heavy equipment for industrial use with a high degree of complexity, the actual number of orders for products in the M division is relatively stable and profitable, and does not require volume to win in the market. The nature of the work and the market situation together mean that the work in the M Division cannot be split up into the simple repetitive work of an ordinary electronics factory assembly line, so the workers in the M Division are not at all tied to the assembly line and are part of the machine, as are the workers in ordinary electronics factories, but have more autonomy in their working hours.

There is never enough work to do, because there is a constant flow of material. Specifically, when orders are low, workers can still be assigned to assemble modules and complete machines and keep them in stock. Over the years, however, an agreed rhythm of work has developed in the department, which is reflected in the IE's standard working hours (or "work efficiency") on paper, so that the head of the department is not free to increase the workload. As long as the worker completes the amount of work he is responsible for within the specified time (i.e. completes the "work efficiency"), he will not be given a hard time for no reason.

Therefore, in everyday work, when it comes to completing the workload, we all have an unspoken message that "when you work, you work well, when you rest, you rest well". The only way to benefit from more work is for the department to arrange more overtime when orders increase. The assembly of complete machines requires the cooperation of many people, whereas the assembly of

modules is assigned to individuals, so the workers responsible for the assembly of modules have more autonomy in terms of time management.

The breakdown of complex work into simple work makes workers more and more replaceable, and under this "fine science" workers are exploited to an ever-increasing degree. It also works 8 hours a day. The assembly line workers need to work non-stop, and even the time to go to the toilet is strictly limited. In the M sector, workers resist exploitation in a variety of ways by "touching fish", "paddling"[7] and "grinding"[8]. In the M department, the workers usually work only 5-6 hours in an 8-hour working day. Ministers and supervisors generally seldom leave their offices and leave work at the end of the day, not caring about the situation on the shop floor, while team leaders also turn a blind eye to this situation, as they are usually in the same state themselves. As long as this situation is not seen by the big leaders or visiting customers, there is usually not much of a problem.

If the capitalists and the many more "spiritual capitalists" were to learn of this, they would be jumping up and down screaming that this is exactly what Professor Xue Zhaofeng said: "It is not capital that exploits labour, but labour that exploits capital"! Regardless of how the concept of "exploitation" is distorted, the basic fact that we should be clear about is that even if these workers only work five hours a day, their labour creates value far above their wage level. This can be reflected in the price of equipment and the company's profits, and a more specific measurement can be carried out in conjunction with the wages of workers.

IV. Wage situation

In China's manufacturing industry, it is a common situation that workers "want" to work overtime, and they usually ask "how much overtime is there in this factory" when they are looking for a job. The reason for this is the low wages, which make it difficult for workers to make ends meet if they do not work overtime, and although the wages in Factory A are already high compared to the surrounding area, overtime is still an important part of their wages, and they generally want to work more overtime.

The wages of workers in Factory A are made up of several components such as:

(1) Basic salary, mostly 2600. engineers, supervisors and above will have a higher basic salary, but technicians and below are generally paid 2600. The basic salary is the local minimum wage when a new employee joins and will gradually increase over the next few years until it reaches the upper limit of 2600.

(2) Allowances, which vary greatly with length of service etc., are 0 for new employees and up to 4,000 for team leaders who have worked for more than 15 years. New employees have no allowance when they join the company, and only after their basic salary has risen to the maximum of 2600 do they start to receive an allowance. The basic salary is the same, and the difference in salary is mainly reflected in the allowance. The amount of allowance depends mainly on two factors: firstly, the length of service, as there is an annual pay rise (allowance adjustment); secondly, the leader's evaluation of you, as some people may only get an increase of over 100 depending on the leader's

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[7] "Paddling" originally referred to making soy sauce, but its contemporary meaning is laziness at work, to not working hard enough.

[8] The Chinese expression is 磨洋工 ("mo yanggong"), literally "grinding the foreign work". Allegedly it came from a procedure used during the construction of the United States-built Union Medical College Hospital in Beijing, with high requirements for construction quality. Built between 1917-21, workers were required to grind the surfaces of brick walls to make them perfectly smooth. Today, it is another euphemism for wasting time, for procrastinating over a task because you feel bored, useless, or powerless.

rating, while others may get an increase of over 300. There is no gap in the allowance rates for technicians and below, so there is no necessary relationship between promotion and pay rise, and it is not uncommon for the allowance adjustment for assemblers to be higher than that of technicians.

(3) Monthly performance. Below technician is divided into four grades of 200/300/400/500, technician 200/400/600/800, engineer 400/600/800/1000. Supervisors and above are on quarterly awards.

(4) Attendance bonus and other allowances. Full attendance bonus is 50; meal allowance is 450; housing allowance is 200, but only some of the old staff still have it (combined into the salary), because the company has cancelled it a few years ago; night shift allowance is 10/day, which is limited to some departments that work on night shift, M department does not have night shift; other is mainly some post allowance, such as team leader, contact with hazardous chemicals and other positions will have it, but the amount is generally not much.

The biggest difference in workers' wages is the allowance, which varies from 200-500 for workers with less than 5 years of service, to 500-1500 for workers with 5-10 years of service, and to 2000-4000 for workers with more than 10 years of service.

In the M department, 60-80 hours of overtime are worked each month for average orders (usually 2 hours a day on weekdays and 10 hours on Saturdays), and perhaps only 20-30 hours a month when orders are low, even giving some workers a long holiday. Among the workers, the overtime arrangement is generally the same for fairness, and the team leader may have a little less.

The different composition of wages causes different attitudes towards overtime work among people in different positions. For ordinary assemblers, especially new employees, overtime pay accounts for more than 1/3 of their wages, so they attach great importance to overtime; supervisors and team leaders' allowances have far exceeded their basic wages, and overtime pay does not account for a high proportion of their total wages, so they do not care so much about overtime; while department heads and above are paid on a monthly basis, and they often leave work at the end of the day and refuse to stay in the company even for a second longer, not to mention that overtime is not an option.

In the early years, Company A's salary package was relatively competitive with the surrounding area, and it was often necessary to seek internal recommendations to join the company. In recent years, as more mainlanders have entered the middle and senior management (in the past, the manager and above positions were basically monopolised by Singaporeans/Taiwanese), various benefits and subsidies have been cut or even abolished, and salary increases have slowed down. With workers' voices not being taken seriously by the management, more and more people are voting with their feet. This year alone, the M department has lost 20% of its staff, and the testing team has gone by nearly 2/3. This is an unprecedented situation.

V. Power and hierarchy

As mentioned earlier, the managers and department heads in department M are mainly responsible for external communication and passing on information. Although they are required to approve promotions, salary increases and many other things, the actual power within the department is held at the supervisor level due to a lack of knowledge of what is going on below.

The power of the supervisor is mainly in the form of raises and monthly performance ratings. For example, if a supervisor doesn't think highly of someone and consistently gives them a low performance rating, they will get a couple of hundred less than others each year, which can add up

to a significant difference. For example, there is a team leader in department M who has always been very much appreciated by his own supervisor, basically every promotion has been arranged as soon as possible, every raise has been increased by the highest standard, and the current allowance has reached more than 4500. But with raises coming only once a year, the most direct threat to the worker in the hands of the supervisor is the performance rating. For example, after a small work stoppage, a few workers who were seen as "leaders" were given the lowest performance rating for the following month. In addition to the direct use of power, if a supervisor has a bad impression of a worker, he or she can also be ostracised in various indirect ways, simply by "taking care" of shop floor discipline more frequently, checking to see if the person is on his or her mobile phone, naming and shaming the person at morning meetings, etc. This can put a lot of psychological pressure on the person concerned. In the past, some workers in the M department who were not well received by their supervisors were sidelined in this way.

The manager and the department head rarely go down to the shop floor and don't really have much contact with the workers. The team leaders have been working together and getting along with other workers on the shop floor for a long time, so they usually have a better relationship and are able to maintain a consistent position on many matters. For example, when people from factory A went to complain about the company's provident fund not being paid in full, many of them were encouraged by their team leaders, and some of them said, "You should all go and complain, I can only go when you all go". There were also few conflicts with the workers unless the team leader had to convey some administrative tasks from above, and the difficulties in conveying administrative tasks were generally understood by the workers. Consequently, conflicts between supervisors and workers are relatively common.

All the people involved in this article do not, in legal terms, possess the means of production. However, the reality of the situation is often quite complex and we need to analyse it in terms of production itself.

Although managers/department heads/directors do not nominally have ownership of production materials, they can handle and allocate them, so they actually have the power to make private profits (as opposed to the "public" of the company) from these production materials, colluding with suppliers for kickbacks, sending out orders to their own names This power is used to obtain "hidden income" in addition to wages, such as colluding with suppliers for kickbacks, sending orders to the company in their name, and scrapping company machinery and equipment in advance. From an economic point of view, they are able to make considerable profits; from the point of view of the day-to-day defence of their rights and interests, they are generally clearly in the position of the employer. In this sense, therefore, we can classify them as the upper strata of the petty bourgeoisie, who were exceptionally conservative and reactionary during the peaceful development of capitalism.

Supervisors are able to organise production in practice, have the power to organise production and, to some extent, the power to distribute income (the power to adjust workers' benefits and monthly performance). Economically, they earn considerably more than front-line workers; they are also often wallflowers in the defence of their rights. They can therefore be classified as a petty bourgeoisie, and they are the middle stratum of the petty bourgeoisie. They are also generally conservative during the peaceful development of capitalism. However, their position is less stable than that of the manager and they are therefore more likely to fall down in periods of capitalist upheaval.

The stream of engineers who assist in production, who economically earn more than front-line workers and are often less committed in the defence of their rights, are in fact not qualitatively different in class status from technicians and assemblers in their relationship to the means of production and their appropriation of surplus value, and can therefore be classified as the cerebral proletariat[9].

Technicians and assemblers are engaged in front-line work and are typically manual proletarians. They are the lowest paid, the least privileged and the most labour-intensive of the group. They have been at the forefront of all the rights defences in Factory A.

Thanks to a higher level of education and a certain technical threshold, workers in Factory A are more advanced in terms of awareness and action in defending their rights and interests compared to neighbouring companies. The workers of Factory A are aware of this difference in class status, but they are still not conscious of it in terms of action. There have been some work stoppages of various scales in the past, but in recent years they have been confined to a few departments. The low mobility of the workforce has led to the formation of some stable social circles among workers, but they are still largely confined to their own departments. The question of how to establish relatively solid and extensive contacts is an urgent one for the staff of Factory A.

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[9] The author uses the term "脑力无产阶级" which is literally "brain-power proletarians". There is a separate term for intellectuals, although one on-line dictionary defines 脑力无产阶级 as intellectuals with reference to Engels: "This is Engels' affirmation and assessment of the class character of the intellectuals of the working class. Marxism holds that intellectual workers belong to the proletariat as much as manual workers, and that intellectual and manual workers should unite to advance the cause of proletarian emancipation as a whole." Traditionally, intellectuals of the working class were not necessarily embedded in the process of production. Whether we translate it as "cerebral", "mental" or "brain-power" proletarians, this new term more clearly refers to workers embedded in the productive process.

Chapter 4: Research in Factory B

Editor's note: This is a research report written by an engineer in a factory. In this research, the author clearly points out that there is little room for promotion for engineers, and also speaks of how engineers, as brain-power proletarians, are less combative than production-line workers in fighting for their rights. In this study, the author also describes in detail the production situation in the factory, how the factory oppresses and exploits the workers and how the workers are gradually turned into subordinates of the machines. At the end of the study, the author also analyses the relationship between the workers' willingness to act and their industry, the level of skill at work and the factory management system, which is particularly valuable. Many people who have not carried out in-depth research often take it for granted that the harder the workers are pushed, the easier it is to organise, but this seemingly valid logic is often at odds with reality. The author's research clearly shows that workers with a certain level of technical competence (and therefore often not in the most difficult situation) are more likely to be organised.

I. Factory overview

Despite being in the same exploitative position, there are considerable differences between workers in different industries in terms of working hours, labour intensity, skill threshold (and also bargaining power) and social status. These objective differences have caused some divisions and discrimination in the working class horizontally. For example, intellectual proletarians discriminate against physical proletarians, skilled workers discriminate against ordinary workers, and high-end service workers discriminate against manufacturing workers. These divisions and discriminations are also often what the bourgeoisie in all walks of life are happy to see and intentionally defend. In countries such as Britain, where the workers' spontaneous movement began earlier, it was difficult enough for many workers to form unions within their own industries, but it was even more difficult to unite across industries - to move towards a true 'working class'. Let us take the example of the P sector in Factory B.

Factory B is a leading enterprise in City J, mainly producing various types of electroplating products. The factory has a long history, strong capital and a full range of products, including barrel plating, hanging plating and continuous plating, so orders have been relatively stable. Even during this year's epidemic, the factory was not affected too much, but was better off because of the 5G update for various electronic components market. The added value of electroplating products is generally not high, most of the products do not have much technical content, much of the technical equipment has been in continuous use for more than ten years, so product positioning is mainly to win by volume.

Production process. Electroplated products involve a number of processes before and after, which can be divided into four major parts: stamping, plating, post-processing and inspection. stamping and plating are the departments with the largest number of employees, accounting for about 3/4 of the small 2,000 people in the whole factory, and these two departments are also the two departments with the worst working environment: the main noise pollution in the stamping workshop, because with thick soundproof earmuffs, people usually communicate by yelling.

Working conditions. In this environment, many workers' hearing is impaired, and it is not easy to identify such work injuries. The electroplating workshop is even worse. In addition to noise pollution, the use of strong acids, alkalis and highly toxic chemicals in large quantities poses a greater threat to workers' safety and health. Although the factory does provide protective gear such as glasses,

masks, boots, gloves and aprons, the plating workshop cannot be air-conditioned due to the process, and it is inconvenient to wear protective gear in summer.

Wages and working hours. However, even in such a harsh working environment, the relatively stable salary income has ensured a low turnover of personnel in the factory. Older employees are generally more numerous, with over 80% of the workforce estimated to have more than five years' experience. The greater intensity of work and the harsh working conditions result in fewer female workers, distributed only in departments such as inspection. As electroplating is a volume-driven business, all departments in the factory basically operate on a two-shift shift system (i.e. Saturday is not necessarily a rest day), with workers taking shifts off but machines running almost all year round. Under such circumstances, workers generally work more overtime, usually more than 80 hours on weekdays and weekends, and even up to 150 hours in some cases, and the wages of front-line workers are roughly in the range of 5000-8000. Workers' wages are mainly composed of three parts: base salary, seniority award and overtime, and overtime accounts for roughly 1/4-1/3 of the total salary among employees with more than 5 years of experience.
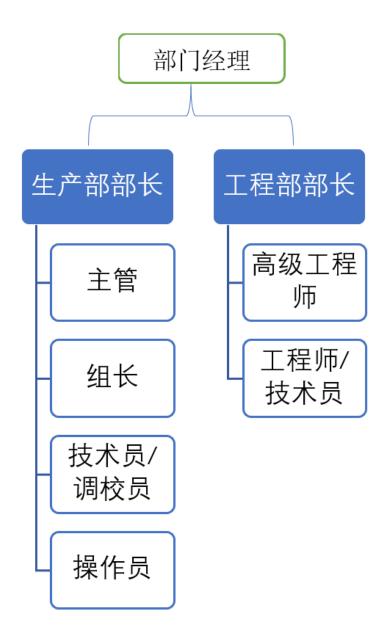
II. Overview of engineers in the P department

(i) Basic situation

The P department is a rather large department, responsible for continuous plating of products in all departments of plating, and is more automated than other processes, so the proportion of technicians is relatively high. Among the direct personnel, engineers, technicians (including team leaders) and adjusters are all technicians, accounting for nearly 30% of the total.

非直接人员		直接人员	
经理	1	工程师	25
部长	2	技术员（包括 10 名组长）	16
主管	3	调校员	10
高级工程师	4	操作员	120
文员	2		

In terms of job functions, the P department can be divided into two sections, production and engineering, each under the responsibility of a department head. The head of production is subordinate to a supervisor, a team leader and a technician/adjuster or operator, while the head of engineering is subordinate to a senior engineer and an engineer/technician. Although both sections have a technician hierarchy, there are still major differences.

The qualifications of the personnel in the production department are generally high school or technical secondary school, and the technicians are often promoted from the bottom-level operators after a long period of time (generally more than 10 years) from the adjusters; while the personnel in the engineering department have higher qualifications. Generally, it is a junior college or a bachelor's degree. After entering a junior college, you will have the title of technician, and you can be promoted to an engineer after a certain number of working years. If you enter a bachelor's degree, you will be directly given the title of engineer.

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(ii) The situation of engineers

(1) Job content and work intensity of the two types of engineers

The team of engineers is mainly divided into two parts, one is the production engineers who directly follow up the production line and make timely process improvements, and the other is other engineers who are responsible for technical support and equipment maintenance.

The distinction of work content has resulted in a huge difference and imbalance between the two in terms of working hours and labour intensity. The former workplace is mainly in the workshop and does not have its own fixed workstation or work computer, so it needs to follow other staff in the production line and work in two shifts, taking shifts and working overtime (because of the limited manpower to follow up the production line, the arrangement of production engineers is usually scheduled one month in advance, and if there is a temporary change, other colleagues must be on the post, so it is very difficult to ask for leave, and overtime arrangements are required. There is almost no freedom); the main workplace of the latter is in the office, and only when there is an

occasional problem will he go to the workshop to deal with it, and he has a fixed long-day shift and is relatively free in overtime arrangements.

The work of a production engineer is also quite intensive, with the majority of the work being physical, requiring you to adjust hardware, add chemicals and so on, in addition to completing software debugging, work summaries and other mental work. In terms of job content, production engineers are quite similar to adjusters in that they both follow up on production lines to deal with unexpected problems, except that one is responsible for process improvement and the other for mould improvement. In most cases, the workload is more intense, as each calibrator is responsible for 3-4 production lines, whereas a production engineer is responsible for up to 10 lines. Most of the undergraduates who have just graduated from school will leave after less than a month, and those who stay will generally work for 1-2 years to gain some experience and save some money before moving on. The operators and adjusters on the production line have long been used to this and concluded that those who can stay here are generally university students with poor family conditions and lack of money, and they are also advised in private not to waste their lives here.

(2) Room for promotion for engineers

This statement is not groundless, because in a large company like Factory B, no matter how much the superiors make a big cake, the hope of promotion is very slim. If the position is not vacated, the people below will have no chance. Although the company hopes to ensure the stability of production through technical and standard documentation measures, in order to avoid newcomers taking up their own opportunities and resources, the old engineers basically keep their experience strictly confidential and are always on the lookout for newcomers who might learn from them. But apart from a small increase in allowance, there is no qualitative change. Take the team of engineers for example, over the years, more and more people are responsible for management and supervision, while only a few people are actually working. The production engineers themselves also complained that "nowadays, there is basically one person working and five people supervising behind their asses" and "the more I do, the more mistakes I make, and when I first came here I thought I had to be more serious and responsible, but later I realised that I could just do what I wanted".

(3) The relationship between production engineers and general workers and their ideology

Production engineers at the bottom of the hierarchy, apart from being paid a little more than technicians and adjusters (some of the more senior technicians and adjusters may even be paid a little more), are in fact identical to them in terms of working conditions and content, and mingle with them in their daily social relations, while clearly distinguishing themselves from those engineers who sit in offices. However, the conservative influence of the engineers' status on their class position was still evident in the event of a real labour conflict. In a previous small-scale work stoppage, many operators and adjusters participated actively, but the engineers went into hiding in their offices to draw a line under them. The higher-ups would deliberately emphasise to them that "you are engineers, you are highly educated, you have to be qualified, don't get involved with those workers on the production line, don't be unreasonable", and they were happy to see and take the initiative to create some conflicts to increase the division between the production engineers and the other production line staff, for example by asking the production engineers not to compromise with the other staff on some production issues, to stick to some artificially defined specifications, or to say directly: "If you see any operator who is not practical, has communication difficulties or likes to make trouble, you can tell me, I have ways to get rid of him".

(iii) Other supplementary information

Production engineers are at the bottom of the hierarchy of engineers and are closer to manual proletarians in status, with no other source of income than their own wages, and hardly even a mouthful of soup, not to mention meat. The senior engineers, department heads and managers who ride on top of them are in a completely different position. Considering the fact that the production lines are in constant rotation all year round, the daily consumption of raw materials already amounts to a considerable amount, and a little power in them is enough to touch a considerable amount of profit margin. Senior engineers have a say in the procurement of raw materials (e.g. chemicals, consumable hardware) and testing equipment, not to mention department heads and managers. It is difficult to know the details, but you can see the tip of the iceberg when you hear rumours of former managers resigning voluntarily and emigrating overseas, or former department heads being arrested for financial crimes.

Those who steal hooks are punished and those who steal from the state are punished. Although there were occasional cases of theft of raw materials among the workers, they were no more than thieves compared to those in high positions and with big plans. Although the company was vigilant in guarding against this, it could not resist the huge profit motive, and so corruption and economic crime were endless. But talking about "public" and "private", isn't the "public" of the company also the "private" of the company's board of directors and senior management? "The essence of such corruption is simply the unequal distribution of the spoils within the bourgeoisie. All new value is ultimately derived from the surplus value created by the working class, and capitalist production and distribution in the form of companies is in fact a more covert and legalised form of theft from the working class.

III. Work and life of the staff at the bottom of the P department

(i) Main duties of the various jobs in the P department

The common goal of everyone in the P department is to make the production line run smoothly and steadily.

Operators. The operator is responsible for some of the most basic operations, such as hanging, receiving, splitting, starting up, testing the machine, daily inspection and maintenance of production line equipment, etc. These may sound simple and modest, but they generally require a month or two of induction training before they can operate independently. After all, the production line runs very fast, and even if there are many orders for a long time, the same product has to be hung, received and split regularly. The daily inspection and maintenance of the production line equipment is not a task that can be easily avoided. Even though many areas have been inspected many times, the operator will still be held responsible for any problems, and the supervisors will from time to time retrieve camera footage from various places to monitor the operators' performance. The risk of fire is a more frequent safety hazard due to the age of the equipment, and the pressure to replace the equipment, which costs a great deal of money, while it is obviously more cost effective to have people make more trips without being paid, continues to add to their workload.

Tuners, technicians and engineers. Their duties are mainly responsible for solving all kinds of problems that arise during the transfer, trial phase and mid-production. The tuner and some of the technicians are responsible for mould-related problems, while the engineer and some of the technicians are responsible for process-related problems. If the turnaround is small, we all have an easy time, while when the turnaround is large and some more complex and special products are produced, we have to be busy all the time, and many problems may take several trials to solve or

barely pass the test. There are also some shirking of responsibilities and conflicts in the workplace, but due to years of tacit cooperation there is generally no particular tension, and we all get along and maintain a good relationship on a daily basis.

(ii) The working environment

The harsh working environment is a huge challenge for everyone.

The city of J is located in the south and the summer season can last for more than half a year. As many locations on the plating line require high temperature heating, there is no way to install air conditioning in the workshop. There are electric fans in some locations, but the air that comes out is hot, so it's a sham. Many of the jobs are carried out on the production line, especially in some of the heated areas, so we all have the experience of being soaked in sweat, and when we are busy we may sweat several times, and at the end of the day we can see the layers of salt precipitated on our work clothes.

The second is toxic and hazardous chemicals. This is something to pay extra attention to, as all kinds of strong acids and alkalis and highly toxic products have to be used with extra care, but fortunately the company has been reinforcing safety education in this area and has equipped everyone with protective gear such as gloves, eye protection, masks and aprons, so workplace injuries directly caused by chemicals have not been common over the years, but there have been cases heard of people getting their eyes burnt by lye and their hands burnt by sulphuric acid. There is a general concern about safety measures, but the wearing of protective gear undoubtedly makes the hot weather even more difficult, and in this kind of working environment creates dilemmas for people.

Once again there are night shifts and extraordinarily long working hours. For many people this is a torment. Even to go to the toilet, they have to ask their colleagues to look after the line they are in charge of, otherwise they will be responsible for any problems. Some workers do not like working at night because it takes them a week to adjust their biological clock every time they change shifts.

Some workers would say that they prefer to work the night shift because other leaders than the team leader are on the long day shift, so the management of the night shift is relatively lax, at least they can have a good rest after they are busy, unlike the day shift where they will be gripped if they are seen by the leader to be idle. However, the production requirements of the night shift are actually the same as those of the day shift, and the workload is actually not any easier.

As orders from Factory B were steady over a long period of time, it was as if the products could not be finished. The overtime of the workers was almost at its limit, and apart from one day off a week, they had to work almost all 12 hours a day. When the workforce is not as well-staffed, even one day off a week is not guaranteed, and some workers may have to work for ten or twenty days in a row before they can take a break. Due to the nature of work on the assembly line, it is extremely difficult to request no overtime and to request leave.

(iii) Workers become subservient to the machines

The 886 for manufacturing workers and the 996 for programmers[10] sound similar, both working 12 hours a day and being paid overtime in the factory, as if the treatment in the factory is better. But apparently not many programmers are willing to leave their office life behind to work in a factory. Let's not talk about the actual salary, year-end bonus and social status, but the manufacturing workers are obviously more labour-intensive and have no freedom over their own working hours.

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[10] 886: from 8am to 8pm 6 days a week; 996: from 9am to 9pm 6 days a week.

They seem to be just a machine, an appendage of the assembly line, and they have no choice but to work overtime, because if they don't obey their bosses and earn overtime, it is difficult for them to feed their families with just a small basic salary.

The personal life of the workers on the production line is almost reduced to the extreme. This is exacerbated by the shift system, which means that for production reasons everyone cannot have a uniform weekend off, but has to take turns during the week. This led to an extremely limited personal life and very narrow social ties, almost isolating them from the outside world. Let's say you are lucky enough to have one day off a week, but only on Wednesdays, when other friends are at work and you are at work when others are off. Not to mention your friends outside the company, even colleagues in your department rarely get together if they are not on the same day off. Young workers would say "I'm not afraid of hardship, but I'm afraid I won't be able to meet any girls, let alone find a date", while older workers would say "We don't have much of a personal life, it's just like being in jail every day, and the work we do in jail is actually easier than ours, at least the environment is better".

IV. Daily management

The harsh working environment, the extremely long working hours and the limited personal life are not bad for many workers to get used to. They say that life is like this and there is nothing they can do about it if they are not used to it, especially as they are old and have no other skills and it is difficult to find a job with the same salary when they go out. But while the oppression from things may be visible, the oppression from people seems to be never-ending.

(i) Faster and faster

The assembly line is the lifeline of the factory, and what rolls down the line is the workers' labour and the added value, the profit that the bosses are never satisfied with on the financial statements. So in the quantitative management of workshop production, the core indicators are production and downtime. The higher the output the better, and the faster the line ran while maintaining quality, so from manager to department head to supervisor to team leader, the goal of increasing output was delegated downwards, with everyone in the office shouting "speed up, speed up!" As soon as a production line stopped and the corresponding icon on the dynamic chart turned from green to red, the boss in the office started to frown, and when it took too long, he came over to see if anyone was slacking off.

The management of Factory B has always adopted a simple and brutal style, often a word from the big leaders would come down, and the small leaders below will make some actions to show their sincerity, completely regardless of the feelings of the grassroots staff. One day the manager came to inspect the workshop and saw that many workers were not as busy as they should be, and that many people were sitting on the stools at one end of the production line to rest. The production manager was so upset that he gave an order the next day to remove half of the stools, as if there was more work to be done if people had no place to rest.

(ii) Other situations

The supervisors in Factory B hold substantial power on the shop floor and can arrange everyone's overtime, decide on their bonuses and year-end bonus ratings, and are therefore usually the ones who have the most direct conflict with everyone. However, the department heads and managers above the supervisors make more frequent visits to the shop floor to catch production tasks and site discipline on a daily basis. In particular, the new manager, who came from a Japanese factory, put

more emphasis on the tidiness of the workplace, and would order the desk to be rectified whenever things were not to his liking, which made everyone miserable.

As far as the supervisor was concerned, apart from secretly operating on overtime and evaluation, he would also take some direct measures against what he saw as "bad staff", the most common of which was to transfer and increase the workload. Each plating line is often different in terms of labour intensity due to differences in equipment and product conditions, so transferring people to "bad production lines" becomes a blatantly punitive measure.

V. What is the way out?

In the face of such unfair treatment, different workers react to different degrees, some take out a playful posture and refuse to obey, and say "be more careful leaving work". Those who are submissive and obedient workers are often get deeper and deeper into this situation, as if the supervisor has already made sure that you dare not speak up and dare not resist, and picks on the soft targets. Some flexible minds start to "resist" in a more passive way, for example, by not breaking up with the supervisor, but by making all sorts of soft attempts, saying nice things and sending gifts to make a pleasing gesture, which also seems to require a high level of skill and is difficult for most workers to learn.

The daily repression was just a preview of what was to come in the previous small-scale work stoppages. The highest jumpers and the most vocal were soon "unconditionally dismissed" by the company, saying that they would not be paid a penny, but had in fact been given enough hush money privately and reportedly signed confidentiality agreements. Others involved in the scene were threatened with various kinds of coercion, at the time with no pay during the suspension, and afterwards with the lowest bonuses. The struggle was soon put to rest, with fewer people daring to stand up for themselves and more and more people talking out of turn.

Awareness and willingness to act on the rights of workers in Plant B still needs to be raised, and the reasons for this may be varied. Firstly, as far as the industry is concerned, although workers in Factory B need a certain level of skill and a longer training period, many of the products in Factory B belong to smaller categories, even though there may not be many of the same type in the entire electroplating industry. Most of them have more pressure on their lives, so they are more conservative when considering their job stability. Secondly, Company B's complex promotion system and other measures have objectively created status differences among workers, successfully leading to more division and difficulty in joining forces. Take the adjusters of the plating line for example, although they have been operators for many years, they have always strictly distinguished themselves from the operators in their consciousness, and would say to the operators "you have to do a good job, learn everything, and this position will be yours in the future", while other technicians and engineers, although they are usually generally friendly and mingled with everyone, they often become more clear about their special status during conflicts and struggles rather than standing with the bottom operators.

Like many other high-polluting enterprises in City J, the relocation of Factory B is only a matter of time. Although the workers at Factory B also began to worry, they didn't know what else they could do besides being slaughtered. In the face of various sabotage and differentiation measures by the company's management, the workers of Factory B have not had a clear concept, even though some workers have realized that only by uniting on a wider scale can they win the legitimate interests they deserve; but they also felt that in this atmosphere, it was difficult to move a step - not only did not see much hope, but there was a great risk of being stabbed in the back. However, there are still

different possibilities in the future. When everyone finds that they have no way out, they will definitely think more about their own situation and the only way out. From the awakening of consciousness to the joint action, it is true that it is not an overnight thing. Even if it is from the lessons of failure, many workers will definitely learn valuable experience. Today's working class in China is still a young class, and even if the future is difficult, we can still see that bright future.

Part II The Brain-power Proletarians in Small and Medium-sized Businesses

Chapter 5: A Day in the Life of a Telemarketing Company

Editor's note: This article gives a brief overview of the basics of a 50-person sized telemarketing company. Through this article, we can get a general idea of the problems of this type of small sales company that exists in large numbers: long working hours, severe oppression, widespread illegal matters, and a class consciousness that has not yet been awakened in most employees.

It is common for service workers, brainwashed by success stories, poisoned by chicken soup texts[11] and bound by consumerism, to be somewhat less aware and less organised than manufacturing workers, so the awakening of class consciousness among the employees of such companies tends to come later. However, it is clear that the author of this article possesses a clear class consciousness, which also suggests that even in such industries, advanced proletarians are beginning to emerge gradually.

<u>I. Basic information</u>

I am a native of Henan, living in the countryside since I was a child, an only child, and my parents are engaged in farming.

After I graduated from college in 2013, my first job was as a down-loader in a machinery factory in my hometown, mainly cutting, bending and punching steel plates. I was not satisfied with the 2,000 yuan salary in the machine shop and hoped to earn more money to change my family's plight. Soon after, I quit my job and moved to the big city to look for a way out. I joined a telemarketing company in Guangzhou because I had heard people say that sales could make a lot of money. It was a small company, and in this company, I felt the pressure of capital on us.

The size of the company was more than 40 people, including the boss, and there were four business groups, each with a team leader who was responsible for coordinating about ten people under him. The company's business was very simple. The boss distributes telephone resources to each group, and each group member gets a list of names and makes telephone calls to contact customers and sell products. The team leader assists the team members by teaching them sales techniques, helping them to upgrade and maintain their customers, enlivening the atmosphere, etc.

Initially there was some novelty when I started working at the company, but after a few days I fell into a boring repetition of work.

Every day the work is a repetition of a boring process.

I arrive at 8.30am for the morning meeting, where the leader rewards and punishes the work done yesterday. The rewards and punishments were simple and brutal: those who completed their tasks were given money directly, those who did not were criticised and hung, and there were even corporal punishments, such as push-ups for boys and squats for girls. The internet often reveals all kinds of strange corporal punishment, such as slapping each other and learning how to crawl, which are not uncommon in this industry.

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[11] "Chicken soup text" is an internet buzz word for articles designed to inspire people, but which often leads to a mind-numbing outcome. They are often seen on popular platforms like QQ. Many of those who do pyramid schemes or disguised pyramid schemes also give very positive speeches, but their content is false and misleading.

After the corporal punishment, the team leader routinely gives everyone a chicken blood injection[12] and pours chicken soup texts. This kind of stuff was a little refreshing at first two times, but then there was nothing left but disgust.

The job started at 9 o'clock and consisted of making phone calls to customers to sell products. Out of a hundred calls, ninety or so are rudely disconnected, and the fragile mind is constantly broken. The whole morning was spent on the phone constantly. It was hard to get through to 12 o'clock, so we were happy to leave work for lunch, followed by a rare lunch break of one and a half hours.

The lunch break ends at 1.30 and the whole staff play games or do a group dance, which is done to wake us up so we don't slack off. At two o'clock the afternoon officially begins, still making phone calls to clients. Repetition after repetition, dull and boring. There was no skill involved and the whole thing became an appendage to the job.

In the afternoon, you have to keep calling from two o'clock to six o'clock. Imagine what kind of torture it is to be on the phone all day. Dinner was served at six, and after a short break, the party started at seven. At the party, the leaders take us through a summary of the day's takeaways, with those who have achieved sharing their success stories and learning to exchange sales techniques. At around 7.30pm, we start the evening work and continue to call and sweep customers. At 9:30 pm, those who have completed their tasks can leave work, and those who have not completed their sales tasks work overtime until 11:00 pm.

Such is the life of a day, from 8.30am to 9.30pm (or even 11pm), all the time on the phone, apart from meals, meetings and a few breaks. And all the calls, the vast majority of them, were hung up on. Boring, dull and torturous. It is rare to have a happy moment in a day, and perhaps the happiest time is when you go for a late dinner with your colleagues after work.

II. Pay situation

In such a boring life, our salary is also pitifully low. We are paid a base salary plus commission, with a base salary of 3,000 and a commission of ten points on sales performance. The company team leader is also paid a base salary plus commission, with a base salary of 5,000 and a commission of three points of the team's overall performance. If the team leader also does business himself, he also has 10 points of commission for his own business.

As for overtime pay, that is a matter of legend, in law but not in reality. Apart from overtime pay, there are many things that companies do that are illegal. In fact, this is often the case with such small companies, where violations are everywhere, and I will list them roughly as follows: (1) The source of telephone numbers is usually obtained illegally by the owner through certain channels. (2) No labour agreement is signed with the employee, and no social security is bought for the employee, and the employee is usually also made to sign a waiver of social security agreement. Based on an average salary of 4,000 yuan per month, the company can make an illegal profit of 800 yuan per person per month by paying less social security, which is 40,000 yuan for 50 people, or 480,000 yuan a year. (3) Cash wages are generally given to employees as a means of tax evasion. (4) Corporal punishment and even verbal abuse of employees is common. (5) All that is needed to dismiss an employee is a word from the boss or team leader, and there is no compensation for dismissing the

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[12] Chicken blood is an expression of behaviour that is used to satirise the person's sudden emotional exuberance towards a particular person or thing. It originated in the 1980s from a health care method called "chicken blood therapy", in which the blood of a year-old rooster was drawn out and injected into a person. It was popular among the old cadres. People who had chicken blood injected into them had a red face and were said to be mentally and physically stimulated.

employee, and the employee's performance commission or even normal salary is not paid after dismissal. In this way, the company deducts the hard-earned money of the employees every year.

However, although the law is serious, labour disputes are not much, because in the telemarketing industry, employees generally do not have a strong sense of rights, the general staff will not have any disputes with the company.

III. Preliminary analysis

Inside the company, the boss has absolute authority and is the ruling class (bourgeoisie) of our company. The team leader pleases the boss at the top and oppresses the staff at the bottom. His salary is a bit higher than the ordinary staff, but it is also difficult to buy a house and settle down, and he belongs to the middle class which is dependent on the bourgeoisie. I think they are actually the proletariat, but their consciousness is brainwashed by the boss. We, the employees, are at the bottom of the pile and tend to go against the grain. It doesn't matter if the staff are united or not, most of them still have a good relationship in private, but there is no sense of rebellion. One reason is the status quo of the industry, the default unspoken rules, and the second is that we have been brainwashed by the corporate culture of these companies, and our class consciousness has not awakened. They have never thought of using legal means to protect their rights, because the jobs they do are not particularly bright jobs, and they are harassed during the phone calls rather than directly at work. The employees themselves are actually disgusted with the work they do, but in order to make quick money, they are greedy for comfort, and they are not willing to get steady and reliable jobs to make real money.

Employees like us, who save money every month, can only live at the bottom of the ladder.

I was doing very well because I was doing well personally and I got over 7,000 a month. Every month after I got paid, I would send home 2000 to my parents. The rest of the money, rent 700, daily meals 900 (30 per day), smoking 300 per month (10 yuan a box per day), other expenses almost nothing. Because I'm frugal and want to save up for the future. I spend very little on socialising and only go out for a meal with friends once a month, spending a few hundred dollars at most. I don't buy a lot of household items, and when I do, I try to buy cheap ones, a few dozen a month. Basically, the monthly fixed expenditure is more than 4,000 yuan (including 2,000 yuan for my parents). In a year, I can save about 40,000 yuan (not including the amount given to my parents).

There are actually not many employees like me. Firstly, many colleagues do not earn a high income, basically a base salary; this part of the people resigned or don't dare hand in their own resignation. Staff mobility is particularly large, in a few months they will be replaced by a group of fresh blood. In addition, many colleagues will go to KTV, bars and bathing centres to spend money after they are paid, especially those with good performance in that month. Some of them will also buy things they like, such as designer clothes, etc. In this way, many colleagues cannot save much money in a year, and some even have to borrow money for the New Year.

Such small companies exist in large numbers in China, and many of them are in the grey areas and on the edge of the law, not only exploiting the rights of their employees, but also defrauding their clients. The company instils in us a wolfish culture, consumerism and hedonism, which leads to employees losing their sense of morality by any means in order to perform, losing their sense of rights in the general competition, becoming numb in the illusion of getting rich, and becoming penniless in the atmosphere of hedonism, with the end result that employees become more dependent on the company.

Chapter 6: Telemarketing companies and my transformation

Editor's note: This article is a sister to chapter four. In this article, the author gives a more detailed account of his experience with the telephone company, how he joined, how he was trained, how he went through the lows, how he was billed, and how he was already being ignored by his boss. In this process, we see the efforts of a hardy worker who wants to change his fate, but this effort, under the whole capital system, translates more into profits for the boss.

At the end of the essay, the author recalls the transformation of his own thinking, from believing in individual struggle to recognising capital for what it is. Such workers are still only a small minority, after all, "just staying alive has given me all I can do". But there are more and more such workers, and the journey the author has taken will be the journey that more and more workers will take in the future.

I. Interview

In 2014, I went south to Guangzhou with the dream of making a fortune and was advised by a friend to look for a job in a telemarketing company. It was with great trepidation that I attended an interview with a telemarketing company. The company was located in a busy commercial area and as soon as I arrived at the company's entrance I heard a cacophony of phone calls.

After introducing myself, the interviewer asked some simple questions. After learning that I had no sales experience, the interviewer asked me if I could take hardship and stressed that sales was not that glamorous and that you had to take hardship to make money. I said, "I'm not afraid of hardship I'm afraid of poverty".

The interviewer was very satisfied with my answer, and told me, "Sales are more for more work, and it is easy to earn 30,000 to 40,000 yuan a month if you do well. If you are lucky enough to meet a big customer, you will not be capped. A new employee who just came to the company less than a month ago, met a big customer, and the monthly commission was more than 200,000." In order to increase his credibility, the interviewer changed the topic, "Of course luck is not reliable, we say that under normal circumstances, If you do well and work hard at 30,000 to 40,000 yuan a month, if you have a normal monthly income of 30,000 to 40,000 yuan, and one day you are lucky enough to meet a big client, you will turn around."

I had a good conversation during the interview that day. I thought it was the interviewer who appreciated me. Later, I learned that the company's recruitment and sales are almost always welcome. And it's not so much that the interviewer is evaluating you, it's better that the interviewer is trying to induce you. They will use various sales techniques in the interview. For example, when they hear that I want to make money, they will brag to me that I can make 30,000 to 40,000 yuan a month in sales. Their general technique is to raise the price and then discount it: in the first step, they will say a large amount, such as a lucky person who made hundreds of thousands, which will arouse your great interest. In the second step, they will deny this amount, "Not everyone can earn hundreds of thousands, it depends on luck." In the third step, they will discount the hundreds of thousands to give you a sufficient amount. For example, they will say, "But in general, if you do well, there is no problem with 30,000 to 40,000 yuan per month." In this way, you can feel that 30,000 to 40,000 yuan is still credible by comparing yourself. In fact, most salespeople It is difficult to maintain a monthly income of over 10,000.

II. Onboarding

The day after the interview, I joined the company with great anticipation, imagining that I would be one of the lucky ones to hit a big client and turn over a new leaf.

The company was over a hundred square metres in size, with over fifty salespeople packed tightly into the booths. With headsets on, they were at their stations, either standing, sitting or crouching, making calls moment by moment.

The company has four business groups, each with a team leader, and I was placed in the second group. Next to me was a chubby old employee who spent the morning contacting old customers and chatting with them about the world.

There were several salesmen making orders in the morning. Whenever someone made a result, their group leader would shout in the business lobby, "Congratulations to employee XX of group XX for closing a deal of $XX! Everyone join in the congratulations!" At this time all the people in the business hall would applaud and congratulate the employee who had made a performance. The applause is passed on to the customers over the phone and most of them will wonder why you are so lively there. The salesman will then say to the customer in a very excited tone, "Sister/brother XX, one of our customers just placed an order for XX yuan 。。。。" In this way the joy of the transaction is passed on to the customer, while also using the herd effect to force a single customer and increase the turnover rate. Later after training I learned that salesmen must use an excited, exhilarating tone of voice, so that customers feel the atmosphere, and feel as if they have suffered a great loss by not placing an order.

I was still new at the time and this enthusiastic atmosphere undoubtedly infected me as well, loving the fact that I was the one making the performance, being called out by name and shouting out the results.

After 4pm, the team leader took the time to give me my first induction training. The training was basically an introduction to tactics and pouring out chicken soup. After the training, the team leader handed me a book of tips and told me to get familiar with the tips and then request a phone number from him and start making calls.

III. My first phone calls

The first assignment was 300 phone calls. I was very nervous before the first call, even though I had prepared myself for it. My hands were almost trembling as I clicked on the first number and hung up after two seconds of beeping. The second call, which I did not hang up until the end of the 60 seconds, was not answered, so I was relieved and a little glad that the call was not answered.

In this state of nervousness, I spent the rest of the day making 300 calls, and apart from the few I hung up on, most of them didn't get through, and a good proportion of those who did, hung up immediately afterwards, and less than 20 of them actually listened to me, and most of them politely turned me down.

After 300 calls I got nothing, but I still classified the customers according to the business process in order to follow up (generally divided into four categories of ABCD: D is not answered or just answered and hung up, C is willing to talk, but there is little intention, B is interested, but there are concerns, A is a deal for the customer).

The team leader appeared at the right time to help me sum up my experience and cheer me up, "It's okay, it's normal, newcomers will have this experience, they're afraid to make phone calls, they stutter on the phone, their heads go blank... The person on the other side of the phone can't see it.

When it comes to you, I can't do anything to you, so there's no need to be afraid... You need to be thick-skinned, we are in the 'thick-skinned, eat enough - thin-skinned, can't eat' club. You have to put your face in your pocket like this." While speaking, the team leader does the action of wiping his face and putting it in his pocket. After finishing, the team leader also encouraged me, "Old employees make at least 500 calls a day, and you only need to make as many calls. It's okay, come I work steadily." The team leader's timely psychological counselling helped me regain my confidence. Yes, anyway, across the phone, you can't do anything to me, and you can't take a piece of my flesh. In case of a deal, it will be a real commission.

IV. The low point

For the next period of time, I began to practice my words internally and my face externally, but the results were still very small. I made hundreds of phone calls every day, but every call was almost a self-destruction, especially when I encountered cursing, I was a bit self-absorbed. But on the one hand, the team leader would do timely counselling, and on the other hand, every morning I would see the cash rewards for those who did well, and I felt that I was still not working hard enough and had to work harder.

A month went by slowly, and I had nothing to show for it. One day, the team leader approached me and said, "According to the rules, newcomers who have a month without performance will be eliminated, but I feel that you do things with a good attitude, and also work hard, so I gave the boss a guarantee, and can give you two-week's grace. In these two weeks even if you open a small single sale, I will have a reason to keep you. I was criticised severely by my boss to keep you, I was under a lot of pressure, don't let me down, understand?"

At that time, the team leader's words were a heavy blow to me, but they moved me. I promised the team leader that if I didn't produce results within two weeks, I would resign automatically.

Hey, I was still young then. It was only later that I learned that the company usually resorts to this trick if it wants to fire people but does not want to cause resistance. If you are forced to make a performance, of course, it is good. If you don't make an order, you will be fired according to the trend, so that you have no complaints.

V. Making Orders

The next two weeks, I repeatedly listened to the phone recordings of other people's success stories after work every day, and devoted almost all my time to my work.

Time passed a little, to the fourteenth day, but I still had no performance and I was very anxious. This was my deadline, and if there was no performance I have to leave.

At nine o'clock that night, I called out. Beep beep beep 。 。 。 。 。 。 。 There was a long beeping sound and the call was answered.

"Hello?"

"Good evening sir! I'm Li from XX, have you heard of 。 。 。 。 " I repeated the opening line a thousand times, I didn't even need to look at the script and read it out loud anymore.

"Thank you, no!"

"Sir, this new product from our company has XXX benefits 。 。 。 。 "

"Thank you, no!"

Usually by this point I would say, "Well then, I'm sorry to bother you, have a nice life!" Usually when I got to this point, I would say: "Well, I'm sorry to bother you, I wish you a happy life!" But that day I thought that I would not be able to make any achievements anyway, so I continued sentence by sentence with my speech skills so that I would be happy when I left.

"Sir, our products are really suitable for you 。 。 。 。 。 "

"Thank you, no!"

"Sir, you know 。 。 。 。 "

"Thank you, no!"

。 。 。 。 。 。

"Sir 。 。 。 。 " I continued to pour out the words.

"Thank you, no!"

I don't know how much I said, but the client kept saying "Thank you, no!". But for some reason the client didn't hang up. I wanted to give up and I was tired of talking. Finally I said to the customer: "Okay, sir, thank you for not hanging up on me, this may be my last day in this industry, because I have been in this business for a month and a half, I have no performance, and today is the last day. I am not selling misery, and do not want to push anything on you. I am very depressed this month, every day I make hundreds of calls, every call is rejected by the customer. Some even cursed me, every call has been devastating to my heart, can you be a listener and listen to my story?"

"Tell me about it." The client finally changed his words, leaving me highly moved.

"I actually grew up very introverted and not very talkative 。 。 。 。 。 。 " I shared with him my experiences from childhood, my stories with my parents and friends, my hardships after I came out to work, my family's hardships 。 。 。 。 I was trying to vent my long-suppressed feelings. Finally I said, "Sir thank you very much for hearing me out, have a nice life, I'm ready to hang up."

"How do I place an order?"

"What?" I was a bit confused.

"You don't want to do the performance? Then forget it."

"Nope. No, I just didn't react for a moment, I'll teach you to place your order now 。 。 。 。 "

So my first order was born, on the night of the deadline.

"Congratulations to Xiao Li, the second group of employees, who successfully issued an order of 20,000 yuan. Congratulations to everyone!" Our group leader's high-pitched voice resounded in the business hall, and then everyone applauded and congratulated me on my first order. At that time, my heart was very complicated, I didn't feel much excitement, and I was a little confused. I felt a little lucky. At the same time, because of the first order, I understood more about sales.

At the morning meeting the next day, the company rewarded me with 100 yuan and asked me to share my experience.

I said: "Actually, the biggest feeling of being able to place an order this time is that I was lucky and met a good customer. If I insist on sharing a little experience, I think the first point is not to give up

on yourself, and the second point I think is to talk about the story. I almost gave up in the end. I told the client my own story, the tone, speed, and emotion I told were real, and the client also felt that what I told was true to myself so the customer was moved by my sincerity and my story, and then placed the order. I want to share these two points. Thank you everyone."

After I finished sharing, the boss summed up his speech: "What Li just said is very good, don't give up lightly when you are dealing with customers, if they hang up the phone, how can you get a performance? We are here to eat meat, not to eat shit. If we don't have the wolf spirit, we won't be able to eat meat, and we won't even be able to eat shit in the end. When I used to work on performance, in order to deal with a single order, every day I pestered the customer, so the customer was pestered by me for three months, and finally told me that I was too good at pestering people, so the deal was done. Some old employees are now a little complacent, and it's not good enough to have only achieved a little performance. There is no wolf. You can't afford a house for the rest of your life like this. If you don't have wolf spirit, you can only eat shit, and wolf spirit means not being satisfied and not eating enough. We all need to have wolf spirit, I have a lot of money here, it depends on whether you have the ability to take it or not!"

VI. Seeing through it

So, I slowly adapted to the days of daily phone calls, of continuous calling, contacting customers, or cleaning the phone. My performance slowly stabilized, and then I carefully calculated - the company does not cover food and housing, I can actually save money with a factory part-time job. The only point may be that the office white-collar work seems to sound a little better than the factory part-time work. After a long time, I also found that there are actually not that many high salaries, only one or two people may get 30,000 to 40,000 a month, and some people are lucky enough to have a monthly commission of over 100,000 a year.

Most people earn no more than 10,000 a month and have to work at least 13 hours a day, which is far more than what is allowed by the labour law.

In such an environment, there is a huge turnover of staff, with new people coming in one after another. And this is how the company forces us to work overtime constantly.

Once I received a large single order, and according to the requirements of the bonus they should at least given me a 2000 bonus, but the result was they only gave me 1000. The commission was at least worth more than 200,000. The result was that the boss said in the end he would only give me 70,000. He said without this platform I would not have earned this money, so, this time good luck. With this large single order, we cannot give you all this at once, you also need to know how to return a favour to the company. If you can often make such achievements in the future, I will give you a 20 percent commission, no problem.

I had a good performance, the boss promised to work until the New Year to give me a year-end bonus, the results of the year-end told me, after the New Year back to me, after the New Year and said to delay until May to send. This incident made me very angry, and I was not motivated to do performance. In May, I told my boss about the year-end bonus, and he said, "Look at you, you're doing so badly now, and you still have the nerve to ask for a year-end bonus, what's on your mind?"

My performance was not bad, the boss promised to give me a year-end bonus at New Year, but at the end of the year, he told me that he would come back after the New Year and send it to me, and then he said that it would be delayed until May. This thing made me very angry, and the motivation to do performance was not enough. In May, I told the boss about the year-end bonus, and the boss

said, "Look at you, you are doing so badly now, aren't you too embarrassed to ask for the year-end bonus. What are you thinking?"

I was completely disappointed by the boss's repeated deceptions. The so-called wolfishness was just an excuse to break the law, and the so-called meat-eating was just him, the wolf, eating the meat of us little sheep.

After this incident, I left my job. The next few years I went round and round doing sales, switching from e-sales to online sales, with my total sales skills remaining the same and still managing to make a living all the time.

I was 28 years old when I resigned from a sales company looking for a job, and saw that the recruitment requirements are generally 18-28 years old, I suddenly realized that I was old, that I was about to be eliminated because of my age. At this moment my heart was in turmoil, and this mood was very complicated.

Looking back on the experience of doing sales in the past few years, over the years, we salesmen have done a lot of deceiving and harassing customers for the sake of performance. But even so, which of the salesmen around really achieved financial freedom by sales? None of them. On the contrary, the boss raised a mistress, and bought a house and a car for the mistress. We salesmen work hard, but are not as good as a mistress. The real money maker is the boss, the boss can't let you really be financially free, let you be financially free, even if you are still willing to work hard. I began to recall the works of Marxist philosophy and the Selected Works of Mao that I had read in school, but had long forgotten. A capitalist is still a capitalist and he will not give up the opportunity to exploit his employees. When my youth was drained, he would abandon me mercilessly.

Now I have left the sales company completely and stepped down to find an engineering job. But while the capital of sales is oppressing people, won't the capital of engineering do the same? The capital of sales let me cheat my clients for profit, but won't the capital of engineering? That's how the world of capital works, you change places, you change jobs, it's just a new cycle.

VII. Review

Although I was born into a poor family, for a long time I believed that hard work could change my own destiny. When I was a child, I liked Confucian culture and Yan Hui[13] was peaceful and happy, which had a great influence on me.

During my high school years, I was influenced by online novels in which various protagonists, who did not care about their personal pleasures and lived a life of asceticism, changed their destiny through personal struggle.

After working, for a long time, I thought that my current situation was due to my own reasons. For example, I used to get good grades, but a falling out with my class teacher in high school caused me to be bored with school, which affected my entrance exams. I often think that if I had the experience I have now, such mistakes could have been completely avoided and life might have been different. Even now, I think that the reason for my predicament today is because of my personal lack of effort, only that I see things in more dimensions and analyse them in a more three-dimensional way.

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[13] Yan Hui (521 BC - 481 BC) was a poor scholar of Qufu in today's Shandong Province. He followed Confucius and became head of the seventy-two sages of Confucius.

I don't deny that individual effort can change destiny, but for someone from a poor family, he has to work harder and the chances of changing destiny will be a little smaller. The opportunity may come once or twice, and you are not allowed to slip up, or else it is lost. And those from good families can fail again and again, they have more opportunities for trial and error. For those at the bottom, the chances of going to university through education are unfair, so changing one's situation can be difficult.

This is not only true for studies, but also for work. The biggest thing I've experienced is that it's hard to turn over[14] in society. All your hard work creates value, and most of it is taken by the capitalists, and the harder you work, the richer the capitalists get, but life forces you to work harder, otherwise you have no income and no way to live a normal life. In other words, working hard only allows you to solve the problem of food and clothing, but does not change your destiny.

Then there is education and health care, which may maintain stability at the bottom of society, but it certainly creates greater class entrenchment. Education and healthcare are so unequal, yet they are so important, one is about the hope of the next generation and the other about the reality of happiness. Many poor families cannot and dare not receive an education because they are poor, and once one seriously ill child appears in such a family, the whole family comes crashing down. In recent years my father's health has been poor and I have often compensated him for his visits to the doctor. At the hospital, I saw so many sad things, poor people who could not afford to go to the hospital when they were sick, and some people who had no money and went home to die. Once I was on the ground floor of the hospital getting medicine when I heard a bang and I turned my head to see that a lady had jumped to her death, just ten metres away from me. I later found out that the lady was in her 20s and had a child less than a year old. She was suffering from uremia and had committed suicide so as not to drag her family down.

I should say I was relatively strong. When I was very young, my parents were busy working in the fields and I was not yet as tall as the stove, so I supported a bench from which to cook for them. Every year in the summer I helped the family with the farm work. But even then, it was too hard to change my fate.

I watch a lot of short videos now, and it's a real adult breakdown in just a moment. I can't watch videos like this, I'm emotionally fragile and prone to tears. And there are so many people at the bottom of society, so many people, plus I'm at the bottom of society myself, so I have a natural affinity for this group.

It was only when I went through a lot, rereading Mao again and reacquainting myself with Marx, that I really appreciated their greatness.

My thinking has now changed significantly and I no longer believe so much in personal struggle and all that capitalist nonsense. The change in my thinking I attribute to two things, one is the poisonous influence of society and the other is my own learning. The combination of these two has shifted my thinking towards the proletariat. Of course I'm not a fighter yet, I'm just a member of the proletariat now, and my ideological understanding is not nearly enough, because just staying alive has taken all I have.

I feel lost, but I won't stop thinking about it. Where exactly is the way out for the working man? I am searching, and this is what I think about most, apart from my work.

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[14] The author uses the expression 翻身 (fanshen) which was popular during land reform and meant to achieve freedom by "turning over" your body. It was the title of an influential book by William Hinton.

Chapter 7 The case of a small gaming company

Editor's note: In this article, the author describes the situation of a typical small Internet company, from which it can be seen that most of the people working in such small Internet companies are paid very low wages, not even much more than the manual proletarians. Their working hours are long, their work is not less intense and they are heavily oppressed by capital. Such companies, which usually not only have no overtime pay and irregular social security and provident fund payments, they are more heavily oppressed than monopoly capital. Under the oppression of capital, the core technical staff are more likely to compromise, while the bottom employees are able to unite to defend their rights under certain conditions. At the end of the article, the author describes a small rights defense, which failed, but the author sees more meaning in it, "The previously obsequious brain-power proletarians actually dared to assemble and fight, which shows that the class consciousness of brain-power workers is beginning to gradually awaken."

I. Basic situation

Mr. D (hereinafter referred to as D) is a game industry worker in Hangzhou with a college degree. His parents came to Hangzhou at an early age, and after graduation, he worked in two game companies for about 2 years (the first company and his graduation internship lasted for 9 months, and the second company lasted for about one year and two months).

Hangzhou Z Game Company (hereinafter referred to as Z Company) was the first company D worked for. During his employment, D worked as a copywriter. The following is a general description of Company Z (the data is not time-sensitive and is for reference only).

(i) Education and mobility

The minimum diploma of Z's employees is college, and the ratio of men to women is roughly four to one or more, with female employees mostly working in the operation and personnel departments. The staff is mainly young, basically there are no employees over 30 years old.

The company has been unprofitable for a long time, resulting in very low salaries, chaotic management, frequent overtime and repetitive work, resulting in no growth for the staff, which makes Company Z worse than other game sweatshops and causes huge staff mobility. Apart from a few important positions in planning and programming and senior management, most employees only stay in the company for a year or less, and very few stay for more than a year.

(ii) Departmental structure and salary scale

The company has a staff of about 30, with two senior executives, and is divided into five major departments, with the basic structure being: planning, art, programming (technical), operations and personnel departments.

部门	人数（估计值）	备注
策划	7	项目负责人为总经理
美术	10人左右	
程序	5人左右	
运营	5	运营负责人为公司高管
人事	2	

There is no specific hierarchy of job titles in Z. Each department has one or two team leaders who organise production (but have no decision-making power). The team leaders are generally skilled or highly skilled employees (e.g. programmers and senior planners who produce the underlying code) and are paid more than employees. At the top of the organisation is the project leader, who is directly appointed by the company's general manager.

The salary of Z employees is related to their level and job content. Generally speaking, salaries for the same level are in descending order: programming team, art team, planning team, operations team and personnel team (this is the same as in most game companies).

On the other hand, due to the high work pressure and the high turnover of staff, most of the positions are filled by new employees or trainees, except for some highly skilled veterans. This has resulted in most of the employees' salary disparity actually being small and large compared to the salaries of employees in large gaming companies. In casual conversation, D learns that the team leader (not the person in charge) of his planning team is paid around five thousand, which is only about two thousand higher than his own (D's salary is 3000, which is including social security). And the wage gap between colleagues in the same department as himself is also only about a thousand.

II. Departmental production

In terms of production methods, the various production departments are broadly similar - they use the computers provided by the company to produce value. They can be subdivided into two main groups: those that directly produce game content, such as the planning team, the programming team and the art team, and those that provide indirect support for the development and maintenance of the game, such as the personnel team and the operations team.

In terms of authority, neither the team leaders nor the general staff have decision-making power. Decisions regarding the production of the game are taken by the general manager; decisions regarding personnel and other miscellaneous matters are handled by the head of operations. The job of the team leaders is merely to answer questions and monitor the progress of the team members. Due to the special nature of game development companies, all members of the company, including executives, are involved in direct production to a greater or lesser extent.

Here is a general overview of the planning team as an example.

(i) Basic information

The planning team consists of a total of seven planners. They start work at 9.15am (15 minutes late) and finish at 7pm. On the bright side, the team works a system of two hours off after five days of work.

	人数	备注
策划组组长	1	
项目负责人	1	由总经理担任
文案策划	3	
数值策划	1	
关卡策划	1	

The planning team are all on full contract (D added that it seems that the whole company is on a five-year contract). All the staff come from cities of all sizes across the country, with D being the only local resident.

The project leader (i.e. the general manager) is responsible for the overall production planning of the game. To make it easier to supervise the staff, the GM often sits with the other planners and works together. The GM often works late into the night and is able to go to work the next day as normal. He has very little social life in the company and rarely communicates with people outside of projects.

The head of the planning team is responsible for providing solutions to some of the game's key systems, as well as helping others with their work and answering difficult questions.

The copywriter, numeric and level planners are each responsible for their own areas of work and are required to submit and communicate with the other two production departments.

In terms of whether or not they are removed from specific production, all of the planning team staff will be involved in the work, but the project leader will do less of the front line production work; the rest of the team leaders and general planners are highly similar in terms of what they do.

(ii) Specific job content and labour situation

The curators are all under the age of 30, six men and one woman, all unmarried. The planning section is divided into three sub-categories: copywriting planning, numerical planning and level planning.

In terms of working environment, the company is a common white-collar office - air-conditioned and with joint desks. There are no partitions between workstations, a triple cabinet for each person's desk, and a computer for production, and D makes a point of mentioning that during his time there, the office was relocated and covered in "Struggle" style slogans and stickers.

A specific production process is as follows: the planning team meets first to decide on the content of the task, and then the team leader discusses with the person in charge to decide on the manpower. After the task has been completed, the staff members are checked by the team leader and the person in charge (if necessary), and if the task is approved, it is completed.

Also, there is a production method for iteration. Iteration means that the original content in the game is modified and the old content is replaced with new content. Due to the desperate efficiency and level of communication between the person in charge and the various departments, iterative types of production often occur, and there are many uninterrupted successive iterations of a single piece of content in a short period of time. This has left most of the staff abhorring iteration.

All planners are very restricted in their content production. This is the usual state of affairs on commercial handheld and end-game titles. In the same way that journalists have to write pieces they don't believe in, planners often have to plan games they really hate. With the intense workload and inhumane management, no employee actually has any desire to create or express themselves, they are just tools to walk around driven by capital, they just want to get off work and go home and rest. As for what they have done and whether they will be scolded by the players, that's not even a concern.

(iii) Working hours

The planning team and other groups work in line with each other, all of them work from 9 to 7, with five days off. However, there are often exceptions, and I will give you some of the main exceptions: (1) There are urgent jobs that require overtime. (2) Tuesday is basically overtime. The company has to test the game package every Tuesday, and the planning team must accompany the program team to complete the package. (3) On Wednesdays, we basically work overtime. On Wednesdays, we have weekly planning meetings, which usually start at 7pm after dinner and don't end until 12am. At one

point D asked his manager why he didn't have planning meetings at work, and the manager said it would take away from work time and said, "Look outside, no company meets during normal working hours." (4) Weekends would be added every fortnight. The planning team needed to come into the office every other week to play games to brainstorm. This is actually the big and small weekly work system.

In addition, instead of helping employees to be more efficient, the company's various work collaboration software has increased the complexity of their work and led to hours being extended again (some groups work longer hours, such as the operations group. Since operations work can be done with a single computer, the operations team is often delegated by their managers to work out of hours, even at home).

As you can see from the above, there is a lot of overtime at Company Z. However, like most companies, Company Z does not provide any overtime pay.

Assuming a combined 7 hours of overtime on Tuesdays and Wednesdays, 8 hours of overtime on alternate weekends, and occasional rush jobs, the overtime would be roughly 50 hours per month. Thus, for an employee with a salary of $5,000, the company would pay $2,400 less per month in overtime alone, or $28,800 less per year. If the company counts 30 people, the overtime alone is a deduction of $864,000, which becomes the owner's profit.

(iv) Touching fish

With such low wages and high working hours, it is impossible for employees to behave themselves, but they are not yet able to unite to fight, so "groping for fish" and slacking off has become the main way of resistance. There are many ways for employees to be lazy, and some common ways of touching fish are as follows: (1) playing with mobile phones at work; (2) watching computer videos, reading novels or browsing other content (this type of laziness does not apply to employees sitting near the person in charge or the manager, as the computer screen is difficult to hide); (3) so-called paid shitting, i.e. laziness to go to the toilet; (4) smoking.

When it comes to slacking, most employees have a mixed attitude. On the one hand, slacking off can provide great mental relaxation; but on the other hand, slacking off to complete a task is likely to result in being left to work overtime. This means that slacking off essentially doesn't reduce your working hours and can even delay your time off work. But in any case, no one feels guilty about being lazy, which means that all people can vaguely feel themselves in opposition to capital.

However, the introduction of performance points and web-based collaboration software has greatly enhanced the company's ability to control its employees. It has become increasingly difficult to fight negatively by being lazy. In connection with the introduction and promotion of the concept of the Internet of Things in recent years, it is feared that workers in the new era will experience a tougher environment of struggle than their predecessors.

III. Other information

(i) Payment of wages

Wages at Company Z have the following characteristics: (1) due to the high turnover of staff, many employees in the company are paid as interns or on a probationary basis. The company often recruits interns and forces them out before the end of their internship in order to save costs; (2) The company only pays three insurance policies and one social security fund, and pays the employees at

the minimum standard. (3) Company Z will hold back a month's salary after joining the company until the employee leaves.

No employee has expressed any objection to the illegal payment of social security and provident fund.

(ii) Management

In terms of attendance, the company allows about 15 minutes of lateness, but if it exceeds 15 minutes, the company will punish the employee by buying milk tea for all employees in the same group.

Managers generally do not or rarely scold, but they generally put on a look of indifference. They don't pay attention to what their staff think, they don't take their suggestions seriously and they don't try to manage them more humanely.

Grassroots management does not have much power, mainly in terms of arranging work. Certain grassroots management (team leaders) are rather harsh on their team members, and if anyone disobeys him, they will be given a hard time. In the case of the art team leader, for example, if an employee is in conflict with him, he will increase that employee's workload and will pick on him and say nasty things during acceptance. In addition, due to the poor professionalism and communication skills of the project leader himself, all employees receive an equally large amount of unbearable work content without being deliberately made difficult.

IV. Preliminary analysis

(i) Basic analysis

Company Z is a typical small Internet gaming company and a typical "sweatshop". Due to the chaotic management and the limited technical skills of the top management, Z is one of the worst sweatshops in the industry. In addition, because the company's games were in development and not profitable, salaries were low in the industry.

All of Z's production materials are owned proportionally by the various contributors (general manager, managers, investors). In terms of production, everyone is involved in front-line production, but in varying proportions, a common feature of small internet businesses.

In terms of the production process of the planning team, under capitalism and performance-based management, labour becomes a form of punishment and torture, rather than the realisation of self-worth. Similarly, in a capitalist system, it is difficult to mobilise the creative desire and initiative of workers in creative jobs such as games and films. Managers treat their employees as tools and machines, repeating their work mechanically and ignoring their opinions.

New technologies and new production methods have been kidnapped by capital, which has not benefited mankind, but has brought more suffering to the proletariat. If the proletarians themselves do not change this status quo, then the prototype of the cyber society written by Philip K. Dick and William Gibson, "he imagined working for a big company all his life. The company dormitory, the company hymn, the company funeral", will be our fate. It will be will be announced to us like a new CRT monitor with low-frequency scan lines, frame by frame. It will stretch its ugly, pixelated body and engulf us in a darkness of despair.

But the proletarians are already trying to change things.

(ii) Class analysis

The company is a small society, and within this society there are also rulers and ruled.

The two executives of the company are the ruling class. They are in control of the company's means of production, control the company's operations and enjoy the profits that the company may generate. The employees who have personal relationships with the executives act as the "lapdogs of the ruling class" and together with the executives form the core of the company.

The core programmers and planners, who are the core employees that keep the company together, form the middle of the company. They also suffer from long working hours and inhumane management, but because the company pays them well, they are more likely to choose to maintain the status quo than to join the struggle.

The rank-and-file employees and the ordinary team leaders (who have no personal relationship with the executives) are the ruled class and are the most combative.

Shortly after D left the company, there was a major rights campaign. It started when the company extended working hours and tried to tighten up the management of the art team (which had been more relaxed before). The art team was more combative in this struggle, as art posts are technical positions and it is easy to get out and find work. The art team even took more radical action in the struggle (e.g. a direct physical confrontation with the art team leader).

The timing of this militant struggle, which took place just before and after the 996.ICU incident[15], is well worth studying.

In this struggle, the activists first set up a private QQ or WeChat group, then confronted their bosses and used their collective resignation as a bargaining chip to negotiate with the company. However, the company's top management broke up the struggle by "negotiating individually with the employees, retaining high-value employees, concentrating on cleaning up the troublemakers, and dividing and dismantling the struggling employees". Most of the participants in the struggle were grassroots employees, while not many of the aforementioned core staff participated, and to some extent, these centrists were unwilling to unite with the general staff, which indirectly led to the fragmentation of the struggle.

Talking about the struggle, D believes that although the struggle failed, it shows a trend. The fact that the formerly subservient proletarians had the courage to rally and fight shows that the class consciousness of the brain-power workers is gradually awakening.

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[15] 996.ICU refers to working from 9 a.m. to 9 p.m., six days a week, and being admitted to the ICU (Intensive Care Unit), when you are sick. 996 violates the regulations on standard working hours, which are 8 hours a day and no more than 40 hours per week on average; overtime is capped at 3 hours in a day and 36 hours in a month, and overtime pay is not less than 150% of the usual wage. The maximum number of hours worked in a week should be 48 hours. On 27 March 2019, a project called 996.ICU spread on GitHub. Programmers exposed "996ICU" internet companies and boycotted the 996 work system of internet companies. Within a week, Huawei, Alibaba, Ant Financial Services, Jingdong, 58 Tongcheng, Suning, Jindo, DJI ...... were on the list.

Chapter 8: Research on a restaurant company in a second-tier city

Editor's note: In this article, the author describes the basic situation of a restaurant chain company. This catering company has nearly 100 directly-operated and franchised shops, and is a sizeable catering company. From the author's description, we can see that the company works in a high-pressure environment, from the director down to the employees. The staff are not well paid and are fined at every turn (the article describes a deduction of $10 for every minute of lateness at the head office and a deduction of $50 for indecent dress). This high-pressure environment is matched by a large number of illegal practices, such as illegal social security and provident fund payments, non-payment of overtime, and so on.

This has resulted in an extreme aversion to work and consequently a high level of staff turnover. In order to alleviate the class conflict within the company, personnel and other departments tried every possible way to organise reunions and gratitude education in the hope of maintaining staff enthusiasm for their work through brainwashing. However, the reality of a severe beating is far more educational than verbal propaganda.

The perception of capital by hired labourers is a process that goes from the surface to the inside. We can see from the article that the lies of individual capital no longer work. But recognising the oppression of individual capital is far from enough. The reality of life will inevitably make more workers realise that it is not a single capital that oppresses them, but capital itself that oppresses them. This in turn will form a bridge to the further advancement of the working man's thinking.

I. Company profile.

Established in 2010, J is a privately owned restaurant company specialising in Western-style fast food, with two restaurant brands. Its head office is located in S, Zhejiang Province, and it has nearly 100 shops (including directly managed and franchised shops), mainly in various cities in Zhejiang Province, with a few shops in neighbouring provinces. The head office employs around 30 people, and together with the frontline staff of the directly-managed shops, the total number of employees is less than 200.

The company is located in a cultural and creative park, where there is noise and dust from the construction of nearby units. The whole park shares one toilet and it is a long way away. You have to bring an umbrella to relieve yourself, otherwise you will have to endure the wind, sun and rain on the way. The company is a small two-storey building, next door to one of its directly-managed shops, and staff usually choose to eat at the shop next door or order takeaway. Five or six people in one department are crammed into a small office. Opening the windows to ventilate the building no longer solves the problem of sweltering heat in summer, so the air conditioning has to be turned on. The company has an aunt who comes every day to clean the office, and every Friday there is a routine 5s check, and the cleanliness is fair.

II. Hierarchy and Headquarters work content

(i) Division of departments

(Note: As the franchise and the headquarters are cooperative rather than subordinate relationships, they are not included in the scope of this research)

The head office of the company has a headcount of around 30 people and is divided by function into R&D centre, brand marketing centre, marketing centre, supply chain centre, investment centre, personnel department, finance department and other departments, the following is an overview of the functions of the main departments.

R&D Centre: There is usually only one person in this centre, and the director is a person with certain culinary skills and experience, with relatively low requirements for academic qualifications. The R&D director is mainly responsible for the development, testing and adjustment of the dishes. Due to the limited space at the headquarters, the R&D stage needs to be carried out in the kitchen of one of the nearby directly-managed shops, discussing with the leadership team and the supply chain centre on issues such as procurement, cost control and pricing, and ensuring that the products pass acceptance before going online after several tasting sessions are held at the headquarters. The promotion phase, on the other hand, is done in collaboration with the brand marketing centre.

Conflicts often arise between the R&D director and the big boss. For example, when the big boss thinks the dish is not perfect, he will ask the director to make constant adjustments, often causing him to become anxious and lose confidence. Research and development is a more complex and arduous process, and the director has to accept overtime because he has to keep his boss happy and meet deadlines. If these problems are not dealt with, the director is very severely reprimanded and the boss's scolding resonates throughout the company. There have been cases where people could not stand it any longer and clashes broke out with their bosses on the spot and they subsequently resigned voluntarily.

Brand Marketing Centre: The centre is divided into three departments - Planning, Design and Takeaway Operations, which are responsible for all kinds of activity planning, brand promotion, material design, takeaway platform operation, and estimation, statistics and analysis of product sales, input budget and activity effects. There are more people than in other departments, mainly composed of young people with specialist degrees and above, with a strong yin and yang.

Although the functions of the centre are more clearly divided, there are still situations where the centre has several jobs and a large workload. For example, in addition to designing a large number of pictures and materials, graphic designers also have to shoot and edit videos. It is often necessary to catch up with the schedule and frequently connect with other departments, because almost all the picture and video work of the company is undertaken by them; in addition to their own work, as copywriters, they also serve as new media operations and data statisticians, business center management, customer service, and frequent docking with other departments, because almost all the writing work of the company is undertaken by them. The takeaway specialist is responsible for managing the Meituan, Hungry Meal, Koubei and other ordering platforms, dealing with a lot of boring data on a daily basis and trying to meet targets. The employees receive low salaries for a lot of work and complain a lot. They have repeatedly reflected this to their superiors, but the big boss does not intend to recruit a few more people on the grounds that the company is still in transition. Many people were tired and developed occupational diseases such as cervical spondylosis, frozen shoulder, back and leg pains.

Overtime and frequent meetings are another characteristic of the centre. The director and supervisors need to meet frequently to report to the big boss and cannot leave work on time. Some people have complained that meetings take up most of the day and they cannot work properly. It is not uncommon for planning and design staff to work overtime until 21:00 on working days and on rest days, and sometimes they are still uploading reports, work plans and designs in the work group at one or two o'clock in the morning after returning home. Although the boss would not force the staff to work overtime, he always kept urging them in the group, forcing them to work overtime voluntarily to catch up with the progress. Of course, there is no overtime pay or triple pay on holidays, and at most, there is only transfer leave.

As a result, the centre has become the department with the highest staff turnover.

Operations Centre: responsible for the shops (especially directly managed shops) of various business indicators, training, supervision, assessment, rewards and punishments, contracting and a series of business management activities, mainly by the operations director, directly managed shop supervisors, franchise shop supervisors, operations assistant and other personnel. As they are specifically responsible for managing the shops, they need to be in frequent contact with the shop managers. The Operations Director is extremely demanding and stern with shop managers. This centre is the department under the most pressure to perform, and even on weekends, statutory holidays, winter and summer holidays, they cannot rest at ease and are often frantically named by the big boss.

Supply Chain Centre: The centre is divided into 2 departments, the Purchasing Department and the Distribution Department, with a refrigerated warehouse, an ambient temperature warehouse and its own distribution cold chain system. It is responsible for the customisation, purchasing, warehousing, logistics transport and distribution of materials, and controls the cost of materials according to the supply situation and market prices. In hot weather, the distribution department needs to move and unload goods in advance to avoid their heat deterioration, and shuttle back and forth between the

cold storage and normal temperature storage, which is a tough condition and prone to work-related injuries.

Merchants Centre: responsible for publicity, docking with franchisees and carrying out investment contracting work. Mainly composed of investment director, investment manager, channel commissioner, investment customer service and other personnel. If the business targets are not met for a long time, members will feel the pressure.

Other departments: omitted.

(II) Job hierarchy and remuneration package

Position	Recruitment	Actual Salary	Academic requirements
XX Director	No data available	Unknown	Not known
XX Manager	9k~10k	Unknown	Tertiary and above
XX Supervisor	No data available	Unknown	College and above
XX Commissioner	4k~6k	When the previous job posting was 3k~5k, the salary was only 3,000	College or above
XX Assistant	3k~5k	Unknown	College or above
Supervisor	6k or above	Unknown	College and above
Shop Manager	5k~7k	Unknown	Excellent freshers are welcome
Reserve Store Manager	3.5k~4k	Unknown	Excellent freshers are welcome
Shop Manager	Negotiable	Unknown	Junior high school education or above

(Note: due to the slightly sensitive issue of income, there is very little communication between staff, so you can only refer to recruitment information)

The ranking order from highest to lowest at headquarters is Director - (Manager) - Supervisor - Commissioner - Assistant, while in shops it is Store Manager - Reserve Store Manager - Store Clerk. The higher the position, the higher the salary.

The promotion route for head office staff is usually assistant/commissioner-supervisor/manager-director. Directors and supervisors are occasionally short-staffed or parachuted in and are only at a level linked to the remuneration package and not necessarily subordinate. Directors and supervisors are responsible to the big boss and general manager and often need to meet and discuss, and the power of words is usually in the hands of the big boss. Commissioners and assistants, on the other hand, interface with directors and supervisors, and are usually more relaxed and equal in their flat management. From time to time, there are situations where the director of the operations centre reprimands the shop manager and the shop manager reprimands the shop staff. There is no verbal abuse or assault at this time.

The head office does not provide board and lodging, nor do they have room, car or meal allowances, which are met by the employees themselves. The front-line staff of the shops can live in the community dormitory provided by the company or in a simple room in the shop. During the epidemic, some shop managers were unable to return to the community dormitory for more than 20 consecutive days and had to live in the shop rooms, which had no air-conditioning, no water heater, only wooden beds and broken quilts.

The minimum wage in S is 1,800 yuan. Generally speaking, if the job posting says 3k-5k per month, you can basically only look at that lowest figure. For example, it was previously written online that the monthly salary for XX commissioner was 3k-5k, but in reality the probationary period was 2800 RMB/month (for 2 months) and after regularization it was only 3500 RMB/month, with performance accounting for 15-20% of that. After deducting the social security to hand less than 3500, and no provident fund, no seniority pay, no overtime pay, no job subsidies. The social security contribution base is 3322 yuan, and the amount of individual contributions is 265.76 yuan. There is nothing you can do without a provident fund, as most local private companies do not pay it.

It is said that the salary of J Company is adjusted once every six months and the provident fund will be paid after one year of work. However, many young people are afraid of the big boss because they have a lot of work and little money, and they are sick of the company's rules and regulations, group activities and corporate culture, so they quit before they can survive that time, and they don't know whether the company has painted a pie or not[16]. Most of those who can stick around are middle and senior managers.

(iii) Labour process.

Head office employees are mainly engaged in mental work and have a certain degree of control over their labour compared to assembly line workers. However, as the big boss has a strong desire for control and wants to control the whole situation in every detail, he often asks to report on the situation and catch up with the progress, so the employees generally feel under great pressure, especially the middle and low-level managers.

Take the brand marketing centre as an example, the labour process is as follows: the big boss and general manager put forward the requirements, the director and supervisor make plans and arrange tasks by year/month/week/day, and the commissioner and assistant are responsible for implementation. During the period, the director and supervisor are responsible for supervision, and the final result is accepted by the big boss and general manager. If the task is too large, the director and supervisor will help to adjust it.

In terms of progress, the planning and design departments need to collaborate with each other, share information and discuss the programme together. Occasional disagreements occur, but overall the relationship is cordial. Overtime, meetings and late nights are the norm as the plans and designs need to be constantly revised to meet the requirements of the big boss.

III. Management System and Corporate Culture

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[16] Companies promise new employees all kinds of benefits and a bright future for the company, but for various reasons it is very difficult to achieve the phenomenon. Employing people is also a psychological game. The boss's "pie" is a hope, not a promise. If the employee's "value for money" is high enough to make the boss satisfied and like the worker, the "pie" will become a real pie. Otherwise, it is literally "pie in the sky".

1. Working hours: Long day shift at headquarters (8:30-17:30 in summer time, 8:30-17:00 in winter time), lunch break from 12:00-13:30 (summer time) or 12:00-13:00 (winter time), fixed weekend off (small and large week, one week single break, one week double break). The shop operates a morning and evening shift and a rota system. In practice, breaks are still annoyed by leaders, colleagues and customers, and rest time is seriously encroached upon. The big boss, in particular, has no sense of respect and will frantically @[17] people in the group to report on the situation, whether it is off hours, weekends or holidays. Some employees jokingly said privately, "It's as if I've signed not a contract but a deed of sale, giving all 24 hours to the company."

2. Overtime pay: you can only apply for approval if you have worked overtime for 4 hours, otherwise you will not be timed. There is no overtime pay, no triple pay for holidays, only transfer leave, and you must work overtime first and then transfer leave, not transfer leave first and then work overtime.

3. Benefits: There may be fruit (such as a slice of watermelon or an apple), snacks and small gifts for the holidays, but not necessarily every time. It is not clear whether there are other benefits.

4. Rewards: usually only departments that put together performance are rewarded, for example, for every successful signing or renewal of a franchise shop in the operations centre and investment centre, the supervisor and investment director/manager can get 1,000 to 2,000 yuan. Excellent performance of the direct shop manager has a monthly award, quarterly awards.

5. Penalties: 10 yuan for every minute late to headquarters, dress is not decent deduct 50 yuan, 8:20-8:30 caught in the company to eat breakfast also deducted money (but the actual time of work is 8:30). These deductions are euphemistically called "donations". The first time you forget to clock in and out, you don't get charged, but if you do it again, you get charged ($50 each time), regardless of whether you make up the card or not. Money is deducted from the shop for receiving a bad review (the supervisor in charge of the shop is also deducted) and from the shop for failing an indicator.

6. Leave: It is good to take personal leave because you don't have to be paid if you do. However, annual leave, sick leave and maternity leave must be requested in advance and meet certain conditions. For example, you can only take annual leave if you have worked for one year, and you can only take sick leave, maternity leave and bereavement leave if you show relevant certificates.

7. Trade unions: they do not exist. If you have a problem, negotiate with your superiors, and if you really can't solve it, go to labour arbitration, or resign and expose it on the internet.

8. Corporate culture:

(1) Morning meeting: It is mainly divided into Monday morning meeting and daily departmental morning meeting. The participants of the Monday morning meeting are all members of the headquarters, and the main contents are promulgating new rules and regulations, reporting the work of each department, and sharing positive energy stories. The participants of the departmental morning meeting are the members of the department and are supervised by the personnel. The main process is to emphasise the discipline of the meeting, say hello, read out the departmental culture, share chicken soup, hug and encourage each other, and shout "Go! Go! Go for it!" It was not very nutritious and delayed the progress of work, causing dissatisfaction among many people.

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[17] @ - I'm not sure. Perhaps means he will contact them by email or social media at any time.

(2) Culture of affection and gratitude: The big boss and personnel glorified labour relations as family relations, claiming that the boss is the head of the family, colleagues are relatives, and that the family should help each other and tolerate each other. It is also said that the company provides a platform for everyone to develop, and that employees should learn to be grateful, give selflessly and work hard. However, young people generally do not accept this rhetoric, as their wages are not rising but their tasks are increasing.

(3) Group building and book clubs: The company often initiates book exchanges and group building, but most employees are extremely averse to them, especially young people. Personnel require staff to take time to read books on success, management and chicken soup for the soul (e.g. "Be a Grateful Employee"), check the progress of reading from time to time, and conduct exchange sessions, which seriously affects personal work and rest. Reunions are usually held on working days and do not take up rest time. The content is usually badminton matches, ice-breaking games, quality development (such as military training), bicycle races, etc., but participation is also compulsory and it is difficult to take time off work, without taking into account employees with poor health. Many people prefer to stay and work in the company because the reunion will delay the work progress.

(4) Corporate publications: praising employees who stayed on duty and worked late into the early hours of the morning before they were injured or in labour, trying to promote their selflessness and dedication, implying that pregnant workers "worked until they were delivered". It is unclear whether any compensation or incentives were offered to injured employees for work-related injuries.

In general, the general manager, directors and supervisors are good at calming subordinates, negotiating problems and adjusting progress, and are quite popular. The personnel, although not bad in character, usually think from the perspective of the big boss, making a lot of rules and regulations, conducting group building, promoting brainwashing corporate culture, and the nerve-wracking way the big boss handles things, many employees are quite critical of this and even have thoughts of quitting. Many said, "If it weren't for the good relationship with colleagues and the fact that I couldn't let go of everyone, I would have resigned long ago." Resignation is fairly free, as long as you apply and hand over your work 30 days in advance. Some revealed that in just six months since she started, nearly 20 people have left.

IV. Staff thinking

1. Dissatisfied with the rigid, complicated and unreasonable rules and regulations, especially the overtime system and the punishment system. There was an employee who forgot to punch the card after working overtime and was deducted backwards from his normal salary, theorized with the personnel to no avail and came back complaining, "Never work overtime again, there's not only no reward, but there's punishment, which is a pain." If there is a substandard performance in a certain department, all members of that department have to participate in the city marathon, a decision that makes many people think of leaving.

2. Dissatisfaction with group building and corporate culture. Employees are more inclined to work on their wages than to undergo meaningless brainwashing.

3. Dissatisfaction with the remuneration package, for example, the interview salary is lower than the job posting promises, and the tasks are increasing, which can be described as "an increase in quantity (workload) without an increase in price (salary)". One person said: "If it wasn't for the fact that my former employer had moved away and it was too far from home, I wouldn't be here. I used to get over 5,000 for the same work, but now I only get gross 4,000, and I always have to work overtime."

4. Feeling dissatisfied with the leader. As mentioned earlier, the power of speech is usually in the hands of the big boss, whose desire to control is stronger, often requiring employees to report on the situation, catch up on progress, and of this is not done in time, they will be criticized. As a result, employees generally feel a lot of pressure, especially the middle and lower management. The personnel usually think from the perspective of the big boss. In addition, the leaders love to follow the trend in order to compete with their peers, and with their lack of experience in certain matters, they often change their orders from time to time.

However, there are not many good companies to choose from in S. There are many companies that do not follow the rules (e.g. no contract, no social security, single break, compulsory overtime and no transfer leave), and there are many applications from local civil servants, institutions and state-owned enterprises. There are not many companies like Company J that sign a contract on the first day of employment, pay social security after regularization, have single and double breaks and holiday time, and have good relations with colleagues. Even if it has less money and more things to do, no provident fund, overtime, seniority pay and job subsidies, many people have to continue to put up with it, but it still cannot change the problem of high staff mobility.

Chapter 9: "Apprenticeship" and "Tool Man" - My Experience in a Design Institute

Editor's note: The author of this article, a brain-power proletarian in an architectural design institute, describes from personal experience the working conditions, hierarchy and various illegal employment situations in design institutes.

During his years in the design institute, the author experienced extra-long overtime, "Once, my colleagues and I worked overtime until 3am, and when I walked out of the office building, I felt that my whole body was light and airy, as if this shell no longer belonged to me, and my soul seemed to rise into the air to examine myself on the ground, like a drawing instrument made of steel mixed with flesh and blood, knowing only numb and mechanical repetition of the act of tapping the keyboard." The author also encountered a sudden dismissal, "As it happened, one evening three months later, my boss called me into his office and told me, for the same reason as before, that I had been unilaterally dismissed, but that I was still to be thanked for my contribution to the unit over this period of time. It was then that I realised that the polite, humble and courteous man in front of me was an unapologetic smiling tiger and a vampire in human skin."

In this process, the author gradually recognises the ugly face of the capitalists, and the author begins to doubt the value of his work, "You have to have a sense of social responsibility to do construction, but ask yourself, in this era when everything is regarded as a commodity, if on a personal level, medical care is still able to save lives and help the injured, and teachers are still able to teach and nurture people, then we, the grassroots workers, who work countless days and nights In the end, the overtime and late nights we work constitute only part of the huge profits of real estate developers and financial institutions, consolidating the mountain of housing that generally weighs down on the heads of working people, and feeding one billionaire and Cao Yiwen Iris[18] after another, which is the painfully common reality. How much do the ivory tower rhetoric, the conceptual texts full of bourgeois elitism and hubris, and the varied and richly stylised contemporary architecture really have to do with the bitter reality of working people's lives in the end?"

But the author does not stop at the level of scepticism, he goes one step further and exposes the bourgeoisie's lies: "The fat-brained bosses always say that they feed us from our jobs ...... without knowing that it is the hard work and sweat of our grassroots workers that feeds their huge enterprises empire and the functioning of this society; and who would willingly work for them if they did not have a complete monopoly on the means of production such as land, machinery and raw materials, and we had nothing else to sell but our labour?" And he boldly predicted that "in the midst of the bourgeoisie's rampant attack on the working masses, a series of identities shaped by mainstream society, together with consumerism, form a heavy siege over our time, from which no one can escape. As mental workers, in addition to striving to get rid of the influence of the bourgeoisie's systematic deception, we must not think too highly of ourselves just because of the voices we make (such as 996.icu, which has not been described before). Only when one fully understands and recognises the advanced and resolute nature of the traditional manual proletariat (e.g. industrial workers, service workers, etc.) in the labour struggle, and supports, helps and even integrates into the struggle of the manual proletariat in word and deed, only then can one truly show that one's interests are aligned with those of the proletariat. In the past, the bourgeoisie has always found ways to try to create cleavages and divisions between us, and it is this illusory

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[18] Cao Yiwen Iris's is a Shanghai vlogger who parades herself as a "super rich girl" who lives like a princess. In one of her videos, she filmed herself on a construction site which she said belonged to her father, and made a number of insulting comments about the workers. Se boasted of having an account worth 15.49 million yuan, all the time mocking the workers.

ideological fog that is our priority in this day and age, and the beginning of a move towards general solidarity among workers."

This is an excellent piece of research that deserves to be read carefully by every friend.

I. Overview of a first-tier city design institute

After I finished my university entrance examination, I obeyed the transfer and entered an undergraduate architecture department. After graduation, I came to a first-tier urban design institute and worked as an architectural designer.

(I) Overview of the design institute

(1) Structure and division of labour

The design institute, which is about 40-50 people in size, is part of a large real estate group and its main business scope is the design and consultancy of construction projects. The owner is the director who is the chief engineer and is not usually directly involved in front-line production activities. He is responsible for communication and collaborative work with various disciplines and the A-party, and gives certain advice on schedule control and design content. The unit has several departments, including architecture, structure (civil engineering), plumbing, heating and electricity, personnel and finance. The two departments of architecture and structure each have 1-2 senior engineers of the respective disciplines who are responsible for surveying the construction site, communicating with the A-party and reporting, as well as making plans, decomposing tasks and arranging work in specific construction projects. The design staff at the grassroots level work under the guidance of the senior engineers. In the case of architectural design professionals, the general project workflow is as follows: draw up drawings for the schematic design stage, produce concept texts - draw up preliminary proposals, deepen schematic design drawings, communicate and proofread with other professionals - draw up construction drawings --Verify the drawings --Produce drawings. However, for newcomers like us, the usual job description is to help the older staff in the project process at different times and gain experience at the same time, so the tasks that come to hand are usually not complicated, but with a high repetitive workload.

(2) Working hours and wages

We newcomers are offered a salary of RMB 3,000/month, while the senior staff in the same department are generally around RMB 4,000-5,000/month and the dean is RMB 10,000/month, with a uniform payday of the 25th of each month. As the unit is located in a first-tier city, the cost of living and prices are not low, and the unit does not provide food and accommodation, so this income is barely enough to survive here, without any personal savings or quality of life. As far as working hours are concerned, according to the contracts signed, there is an apparent 965 system[19], but due to the specific nature of the construction industry (which I will describe later), in practice the department responsible for the main work usually has to work 3-4 hours of overtime after the normal working hours, even for months on end. It has been an open secret in construction circles for years that overtime is not paid, and this design institute is naturally no exception.

(3) The fleece comes off the sheep's back

Many uninformed people may say that you have a very high year-end bonus. I don't know, the wool is on the sheep's back, the number of year-end bonus compared to what we save the boss by

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[19] 9am to 6pm 5 days a week.

working overtime for free, is also small. Take the two departments of construction and structure as the object of about 20 people, tentative average salary of 4,000 yuan, a day in addition to the normal 8 hours of work also need to work overtime 4 hours, six days a week, then an employee usually overtime pay about 138 yuan, Saturday overtime pay about 552 yuan, equivalent to about 4,967 yuan a month, a year down is about 59,602 yuan. The total amount of overtime for twenty people in a year could be about RMB 1,192,080, or nearly RMB 1.2 million, without taking into account overtime on statutory holidays and months without rest when the project cycle is tight. Therefore, the so-called year-end commission (or year-end bonus) in this line of work is really the overtime paid to the practitioners, but it is often "calculated" in the name of "more work, more pay" and "personal performance share". In the event of a project falling through, the builder running away, or difficulties in collecting the final payment, it is often difficult to pay out this portion of the fee to the designers. The vast majority of designers, too, almost never want to claim their overtime pay from the management, but rather acquiesce to the environment that the management has shaped over the years.

II "Apprenticeship" in the construction industry

(1) Intense work

The formal working hours are from 9am to 6pm, with breaks and meals between 12 noon and 2pm. Apart from the schematic design stage, most of the work time is spent in repetitive work, just following the senior engineer's ideas and the requirements of the relevant professional specifications to produce the design drawings that the supervisor wants, and nothing else. The workload of the junior design staff is often extremely demanding, as the client in the construction industry (i.e. property developers of all stripes) has a habit of compressing deadlines to increase profits. With the possibility of changes to previous proposals and feedback from others during the design process, we are constantly revising and even completely overturning drawings, with countless hours of overtime and overnight work. The tight deadlines also meant that few staff got up from their cubicles to move around or go to the toilet, although there were no enforced restrictions on this.

During busy periods, I often worked overtime until after 10pm before I could go home. Repeatedly adjusting my opinions, going back and forth to revise my drawings, coupled with long hours of ambulatory work, made me so distracted and exhausted that even after I got home and washed up and laid down on the bed, the clips and details of my work were still playing automatically in my mind. On one occasion, my colleagues and I worked overtime until 3am, and when I walked out of the office building, I felt that my whole body was light and airy, as if this shell no longer belonged to me, and my soul seemed to have risen into the air to examine itself on the ground, like a drawing instrument made of steel mixed with flesh and blood, knowing only to repeat the act of tapping the keyboard numbly and mechanically. Over time, the past leisure time pastimes became tasteless, and I also suffered from this industry common occupational disease - lumbar disc protrusion, some colleagues also were hit early by this disease and even cervical spondylosis. For this type of occupational disease, the unit leadership will only remind everyone to pay attention to the body, maintain good habits, and will not be counted as a work injury, as in the site survey and acceptance injuries, and most colleagues will be attributed to their "poor sitting posture".

(2) The usual verbal abuse

When I first joined the company, I was under a lot of pressure because there was a gap between what I had learnt in school and the requirements of the job - most of what the teachers at the

university taught was theoretical and basic, while what the design institute was looking for was the applicant's mastery of the software and professional specifications. I spent most of my working hours revising and proofreading drawings countless times, while suffering reprimands and insults from individual colleagues. For trainees like us, who were new to the industry and had no working experience, reprimands and even humiliation from older employees were commonplace. For the older staff, this is naturally done so that the newcomers can 'remember' the relevant professional experience, and the newcomers who are reprimanded most of the time do not dare to show their opposition, but accept this kind of education in silence and blame it on themselves, and few people think that this feudal apprenticeship-like scenario is inappropriate. justified.

3) "Warm and fuzzy" and "something to talk about"

However, even so, due to the existence of five insurance policies (paid at the minimum standard), holiday/high temperature subsidies, overtime reimbursement, overtime transfer (although in reality, due to the project cycle, the opportunity to transfer is almost non-existent), annual leave, dinners and annual party dinners, as well as the stable source of projects, the ability to pay salaries on time, the work atmosphere of the unit has been relatively lifelike The director has always been friendly, and he gives gifts to some of his staff on holidays, so many of them are willing to stay in the design institute for a long time, and many of them have formed close friendships in their personal lives after work. Staff with more than three years' service account for at least 80% of the staff in this unit. However, even such a "warm and fuzzy" design institute is one of the very few in the industry.

During my employment in this design institute, two incidents have made a deep impression on me: once a finance officer in the finance department was forced to leave because of a dispute with the immediate leader of our department, who disrespected her; once a senior engineer in the structural department and a junior designer clashed with the director over work arrangements, and both eventually left. In the former case, most colleagues were cynical and insensitive, and some felt that the finance officer was "not very capable but had a lot of things to do"; in the latter case, most people just stood by and watched, and many colleagues in the same department took a conciliatory attitude, believing that they should obey the director's instructions and should not offer "arbitrary opinions". It was only at such times that the senior engineer remembered to defend his rights and interests, and his position was always to the side of the head of the institution before the conflict occurred.

I spent nearly three years at the design institute with a sense of confusion and resistance to the norm of overtime work, during which time I did not make any significant achievements. Last year, I decided to leave the design institute and go to my partner's place of work because she had decided where to work elsewhere. So I went to a second-tier city in the south, where my partner lives, and started a new round of earning a living.

2. The second-tier city design institute profile

When I first arrived in this city, it coincided with the low recruitment season. I was forced to work temporarily in a local building materials factory as a draughtsman, with a salary of 3,500 RMB a month. At the beginning of this year, due to the epidemic and the fact that I wanted to go back to work in the construction industry after all (as that was all I knew), I took the opportunity to resign from this position and looked for work again.

(i) A "contracted" design institute.

This design institute appears to have a large number of staff and strong industry qualifications, but in fact its various 'departments' are made up of small, individually registered studios under individual names. These studios are recruited in the name of the unit and work independently of each other, with all design work being the product of the formal qualifications of the design institute (I later learned that design institutes of this structure are common in the local area and even in neighbouring cities); these individually registered studios are mostly registered in other neighbouring cities, which makes it more difficult to defend workers' rights in the event of labour disputes.

During the interview, the studio owner verbally agreed with me that the probationary period would be one and a half months, and the salary during the probationary period would be RMB 4,000/month, and the salary after the regularization would be RMB 5,000/month, without any food and accommodation, and without any commission bonus for the first year, and that the employment contract would be signed after the probationary period, and that social security and provident fund would be paid according to the minimum standard, and no social security or provident fund would be paid before then. At the same time, he told me about the benefits of the company, such as paid annual leave, public trips, dinners and reunions, transport allowance after working overtime, and quarterly commission bonuses for regular employees, etc. I agreed to his request.

What I did not expect was that this decision at this moment was about to be the beginning of a series of twists and turns to follow.

(ii) Probationary period and tool people

When I first started working at this studio, I was very motivated and always tried to get work every day in order to eventually stay at this establishment - after all, there weren't many options out there. At one point during that time, I got sick and had to take about a week off work, and my boss was very concerned to tell me to take care of my health and not to worry about work for a while. Who would have thought that when the one-and-a-half-month probationary period came, my boss would only pay me less than RMB 3,000 and deduct the salary I had earned when I took the leave, while deeming that I could be cultivated and making a verbal promise to be transferred, but to continue the probationary period for a further period, and to sign a contract and pay social security, again after the transfer. Given that there was no other option at the time, and that the owner of this studio had some professional attainment, I gritted my teeth and finally agreed to his request.

At the same time, the studio recruited two or three more interns, with the same promises and lower salaries, and also extended the probationary period at the end of the trial period. The payroll was partly in cash and partly by bank transfer (the records of which were often used for reporting purposes), and the owner said that this resulted in him paying "higher taxes". I later found out that the studio had recruited a dozen people (most of them interns) using the same tactics since last year, each of whom would work for no more than 3-4 months before being unilaterally terminated by the studio or forced out by the deliberately low salaries. The main pillars are three or four older employees, and naturally their position is completely on the side of the boss. The last worker at the computer I used was told by his boss at the end of his extended probationary period that this was a "special time" (i.e. during the epidemic) and that this was all I could offer you, so if you could accept it, you could continue to work here and I would treat you well.

There is no more communication in this workplace than coordination and professional interaction between the staff. There was an invisible barrier between the staff, no one mentioned their personal lives or trivial anecdotes, only specific work and interests, and the usual abuse of new staff by some

of the older staff. The boss, in his usual work arrangements, also uses some words from time to time to suggest that we, the new employees, are guilty of something, trying to make us feel a sense of guilt and thus work harder at our jobs.

(iii) What comes around always comes around.

Later on, perhaps because of the low season, the number of tasks assigned to us new staff gradually decreased. I was still trying to get work, but at the same time, something deep inside me was getting stronger. One evening, three months later, my boss called me into his office and told me, for the same reason as before, that I had been unilaterally dismissed, but that he wanted to thank me for my contribution to the unit. It was then that I realised that the polite, humble and courteous man in front of me was an unapologetic smiling tiger and a vampire in human skin.

Thus, I once again became a member of the industrial reserve army and set out to find a job again. After learning more about the construction industry in this second-tier city, I realised that as the construction industry is not very well-developed locally, competition among the only design units is often very fierce, so there are a lot of irregularities in employment, such as underpayment or even non-payment of social security, delays or non-signing of labour contracts, less holidays on statutory holidays, and signing of yin-yang contracts[20]. Last year the city's large design units also had a large number of labour disputes with grassroots designers, all of which ended with the labour side losing the case. But this made me even more indignant that this studio's blatant deception and oppression of workers had actually become the norm in the industry, and so began a long journey to labour arbitration.

III. What is the way out?

Looking back on our journey so far, it is a poignant experience. When we were at school, we were most often taught to be absolutely subservient to our clients and bosses, to be patient and to treat our work "like our own children", and to make a name for ourselves. But few people have ever asked, "After picking a hundred flowers into honey, for whom do you work hard and for whom do you work sweet?" But ask yourself, in an age where everything is seen as a commodity, if, on a personal level, medical care can still save lives and help the injured, and teachers can still teach and nurture people, then the countless hours of overtime and late nights worked by us grassroots practitioners will, in the end, only form part of the huge profits of real estate developers and financial institutions, and consolidate the general This is the painfully common reality that the housing that weighs down on the working man's head feeds one billionaire and "Cao Yiwen iris" after another. How much of the ivory tower rhetoric, bourgeois elitism and arrogant conceptual texts, as well as the varied and richly stylised contemporary architecture, have anything to do with the bitter realities of working people's lives in the end? Ironically, decades ago, avant-garde architecture, no less avant-garde than today's, was a symbol of the proletariat's attempt to justify its existence. Did the glitz and glamour of the big cities belong to the construction workers who sweated day in and day out on site, but could almost never fit into the skyscrapers they created?

(i) The class status and consciousness of grassroots designers

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[20] A "yin-yang" contract is one in which the parties to a contract enter into two or more contracts on the same matter with different contents, one internal and one external, of which the external one is not the true intention of the parties, but for the purpose of evading state taxes, etc. The internal one is the true intention of the parties, either in writing or orally. The "yin and yang contract" is a violation that brings "benefits" to the parties while also signifying risks.

As for the personal utilitarianism and indifference that pervades this line of work, from the perspective of class analysis, most grassroots practitioners in design institutes belong to the brain proletariat or even semi-proletarian origin (some are even urban petty bourgeoisie), distinguishing themselves from the working class in the classical Marxist context, and due to the working environment and the nature of their work, they are more susceptible than manufacturing and service workers to be influenced and transformed by the dominant social consciousness of the bourgeoisie. In addition, the cascade of profit-taking promotions (of course, the largest tier of profit-takers are real estate agents and financial institutions such as banks), the implicitly tied salary structure (if you leave before the year-end bonus is paid, you will most likely not get any of it), the stable source of projects for a long time (although this has been breaking down at a visible rate in the last two years). This, together with the legal shackles of lifelong responsibility, has kept most junior designers from leaving their jobs and defending their rights for a long time, working out of a sense of responsibility while believing in the bourgeois dream of getting rich and "making it" to management. Surrounded by the pursuit of personal fame and consumerism, they become more attached to the company. At the same time, many real estate companies and design institutes have been liquidated or restructured during the economic downturn of the past two years, and the long-established land development in the country has also been declining, and the wave of mixed reform has also affected the state-owned design institutes.

(ii) Who feeds whom?

In the red-hot days of the past, workers were the masters of the state and society, the true creators of human society, and factories and enterprises were collectively or universally owned by the workers. This has led to an explosion of motivation that is incomprehensible to modern people (i.e. those who grew up in a privatised society). Today, with the resurgence of capital, the worker has been transformed from the master of the past to the slave of capital and its personified being, the bourgeoisie, and everything is done for money, efficiency and profit, rather than for people. The labourer's need to satisfy his or her self-identity has been reduced to a dull, alien and compulsive thing that he or she wants to escape, because without work there is no way to survive in this society of soaring prices. The bosses, who are full of brains, always say that they support us through our jobs, always accuse us as adults of having "unprofessional" hobbies, always stand on moral high ground and scorn us for our "cheap entertainment pastimes". They are unaware that it is the hard work and sweat of our grassroots workers that feeds their vast corporate empire and the functioning of society, and that if it were not for their complete monopoly on land, machinery, raw materials and other means of production, and we had nothing else to sell but our labour, who would willingly work for them?

For grassroots workers who devote most of their day to their workplaces, factories and bosses, with only a little time for themselves and their families, time spent looking down at their mobile phones on the underground or bus, or lying on the bed in a cockroach-infested rented room or dormitory, is the only time we have left to escape from high pressure and anxiety. How can many people not fall into the whirlpool of consumerism as a pastime and relief from the stress of work? As Engels pointed out in The State of the Working Class in England: "Since the poor man deserves a little enjoyment after all, and society does not allow him all the rest, he has no choice but to go to a small hotel. ...... Since society has put him in the position where he is almost inevitably going to become a drunkard, and since society does not care for him in the least and is destined to make him rough, how can this society blame him when he really becomes a drunkard?"

(iii) Lifting the fog

At a time when the bourgeoisie is rampantly attacking the working masses, a series of various identities shaped by the mainstream society, together with consumerism, form a heavy siege over our time, from which no one can stay away. Apart from trying to escape the effects brought to us by the systematic bourgeois entrapment, we, as brain workers, must not think highly of ourselves for the voices we make (as in the case of 996.icu, which has not been followed before). Only when one fully understands and recognises the advanced and resolute nature of the traditional manual proletariat (e.g. industrial workers, service workers, etc.) in the labour struggle, and supports, helps and even integrates into the struggle of the manual proletariat in word and deed, only then can one truly show that one's interests are aligned with those of the proletariat. In the past, the bourgeoisie has always found ways to try to create cleavages and divisions between us, and it is this illusory layer of ideological fog that is our primary task in this day and age, and the beginning of a move towards general solidarity among workers.

Part III The brain-power proletarians of the molecular companies of monopolies

Chapter 10 Research on state-owned insurance companies

Editor's note: This is an excellent report with detailed content and a clear structure. This article describes the basic situation of a district and county branch of a state-owned insurance company. As the company is a subsidiary of monopoly capital, its profits are more lucrative than those of private enterprises, and it is therefore treated better than private enterprises. However, "this kind of exploitation" and "that kind of exploitation" are both exploitative, only to a different extent.

From the text we can see the rigid hierarchy within the company, the unequal pay structure and how capital specifically squeezes employees. In this district and county branch, the leadership of the state-owned enterprise is rendering a culture of struggle, making toxic chicken soup[21] and harshly exploiting the grassroots staff for their own income, acting like "factory owners" and "foremen". The rights of the grassroots are often violated, as they are not paid for overtime work, are often denied leave on holidays, and are informed and criticised for the slightest grievance, as if they were private sector workers for hire. In order to oppress employees to the maximum extent possible, companies try to control their behaviour from all sides through process control, all standby, etc., and at one point even installed locator rings on their employees.

The employees have their grievances, but they often dare not speak out. Young people choose to leave, while the older ones have to put up with it - after all, exploitation is much more serious in the private sector. But grievances and anger are building up, and this will one day explode.

I. History of development.

Company A is a district and county branch of a property insurance company under a state-owned insurance group in City B (a second-tier city in a developed region), mainly engaged in property insurance business (mainly vehicle insurance, but also property, liability, health and accident insurance, etc.). Group Head Office
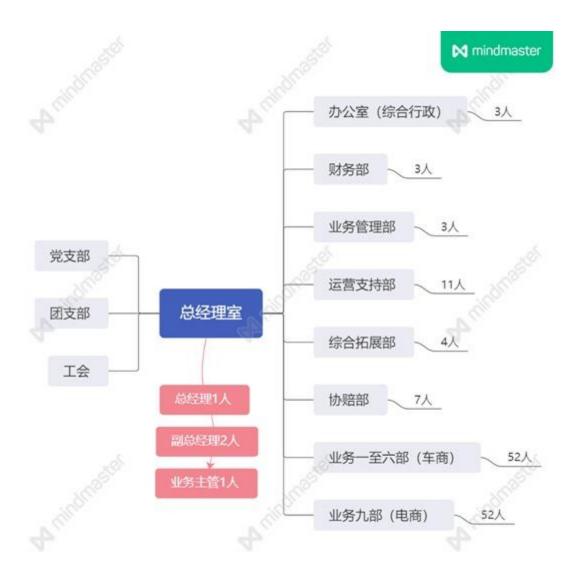
It has more than 10 subsidiaries and employs around 200,000 staff. Its property insurance companies are located in 31 provinces (autonomous regions and municipalities directly under the Central Government) and are involved in the underwriting of most of the major projects in China.

II. Management System.

(i) Division of labour and departments

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[21] See Section 2.5, footnote 1

Note: The party branch, the league branch and the trade union are not counted because they are not functional departments and their numbers are not always fixed.

The company has 139 employees (including regular, dispatched and outsourced workers). Similar to general insurance companies, the company is divided into business and non-business departments, except for the leadership team. The business departments include the General Development Department, which is responsible for the non-car insurance business, the Business Departments 1 to 6, which are responsible for car insurance and the interface with car dealers (4S shops, dealers and used car dealers), and the Business Department 9, which is responsible for the car insurance e-commerce platform (hereinafter referred to as the e-commerce department). The non-business departments mainly include the Office (General Administration), Finance, Business Management, Operations Support and Claims Department. The following is an overview of the departments.

Businesses I-VI (Car Dealers): These six car dealer business units are the main business units, as the work content is basically the same integrated overview. Hereinafter referred to as the Car Dealer Business Department.

There are currently 52 employees in the car dealership business department, most of whom have a college or university degree. Each department generally has a department manager (deputy manager or supervisor) to manage the department's staff. The daily work of the department is divided into three main categories: (1) business development and processing. The members of the

department are mainly stationed at the shops of the car dealers to obtain new car insurance business from the car dealers through cooperation with them, and to handle business and issue documents for new customers and renewal customers. (2) Daily consultation and clerical work. Staff are required to provide advice to customers and direct them to the car dealers for repairs, etc. Departmental staff are also required to collate and submit various reports, data and documentation. (3) Customer retention. The staff of the department are required to regularly maintain and promote the renewal of customers' insurance policies. Theoretically, this is done in conjunction with the E-Commerce department, but sometimes there are conflicts with the E-Commerce department regarding the renewal of old cars.

Staff do not have a normal lunch break and are often required to work overtime without pay, and there are various strict assessment criteria for income, so there is usually a high turnover of new staff. Older employees are more stable for various reasons.

Business Department 9 (E-Commerce): Mainly responsible for car insurance customer maintenance and telemarketing on e-commerce platforms, divided into two teams to carry out work. There are currently 52 employees, with a permanent department manager (deputy manager or supervisor) and a team leader for each of the two teams. The day-to-day work of the e-commerce department is relatively monotonous, with calls all day long. The staff mainly rely on the company's special offers and telemarketing to solicit car insurance customers. The company has a daily assessment of the number of effective hours and calls, and if the target number of effective hours and calls is not reached, the staff will be required to work overtime before they can leave work. Employees will often work overtime on their days off. As there are very few regular employees in the e-commerce department, the turnover is the highest in the company. In addition, often due to the company's arrangement, there are sometimes business conflicts with the car dealership business department.

Operation support department: The operation support department is mainly responsible for technical support to the business departments, with 11 employees, all with bachelor's degree or above, and a permanent department manager (deputy manager or supervisor) responsible for daily management. The department is mainly engaged in three areas of business: (1) the printing and collation of insurance documents sold by the various business departments; (2) counter reception services for customers visiting the shop; and (3) receiving telephone enquiries and complaints from customers.

During the staff's lunch break and within half an hour of the normal closing time, two staff members will be on duty to provide the necessary services, and the duty will be conducted on a rotational basis.

Business Management Department: There are 3 employees with a Bachelor's degree or above. The staff are responsible for collecting market information and data on a daily basis, and using this to develop relevant assessment indicators for the business department. They are also responsible for the supervision and control of the business progress of the business departments and the formulation of overtime programmes for departments and individuals who are behind schedule. In addition, the Business Management Department is also responsible for occasional visits to the car dealership shops to conduct random checks (including whether they are on duty, easy to look at, whether they are wearing work clothes, the office environment is hygienic and tidy, etc.) and appraisal. Therefore, the business department has a lot of complaints against the business management department.

Claims Department: The Claims Department has 7 staff members, mainly with a college degree or above. They are mainly responsible for inspecting the accident scene, liaising between the insured customer and the repair facility, and verifying the damage to the vehicle. Due to the nature of its work, the department is required to work shifts and rotations in order to meet the needs of clients who are insured at night. In addition, the claims department will direct the insured customer to the company's designated repair facility for repairs, thereby giving the company negotiating leverage over the car dealer to obtain new car insurance business from the dealer.

Other functions: omitted.

(ii) Hierarchy and Salary System.[22]

职级	薪资范围	备注
总经理	未知	领导班子
副总经理	未知	领导班子
业务主管	未知	领导班子
部门经理及副经理	15k~20k	中层干部
部门主管及协管	10k~15k	
一般员工	5k~12k	

Note: Because the company's payroll is confidential and does not allow employees to openly discuss their income among themselves, the income shown here is a rough estimate.

Theoretically, state-owned enterprises are in the public economy and wages and salaries should be distributed according to work. However, in reality, even in state-owned enterprises, management usually earns much more than the average front-line employee.

The hierarchy of the whole company can simply be divided into three broad tiers: top, middle and bottom.

The upper echelons of the company: The upper echelons are made up of the members of the general manager's office, including the general manager, the deputy general manager and the heads of operations. They are the commanders of the company and hold all the power of speech. They convene company meetings to discuss and study the instructions and tasks of the higher company, which are broken down and distributed to the various functional departments for implementation according to the situation. During the implementation process, adjustments are made according to

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[22] My translation of this table:

Company Hierarchy	Remuneration	Category
General Manager	Unknown	Leadership team
Deputy General Manager	Unknown	Leadership team
Operations Manager	Unknown	Leadership team
Dept. Managers and Deputy Managers	15k-20k	Middle level cadres
Dept. Supervisors or Co-Managers	10k- 15k	
Ordinary workers	5k- 12k	

the situation. In addition to taking the overall lead, they often represent the company in visits and business negotiations with various car dealers and companies. In addition, during the morning and evening meetings, they instil a theory of struggle in the staff and maintain the unity of the company by pouring chicken soup[23] to promote business development. Their salaries are linked to the company's profits. Although we cannot find out their real income situation, we can still get a glimpse of it in certain aspects. For example, they fail to meet the targets set by their superiors and are often deducted tens of thousands of dollars, which means that he is paid very well. By all accounts, they are the "factory owners" and "technical experts" of the company.

The middle of the company: The middle of the company is often selected from experienced employees with excellent business skills. They are responsible for receiving instructions and tasks from the general manager's office and then dividing them up with the actual situation in their own department and assigning them to individual employees. The difference is that the income of the middle-level cadres in the business sector is influenced by both the company's profit and the achievement of departmental targets, whereas the non-business sector is generally influenced only by the company's profit. Therefore, in the case of good achievement of section tasks, the income of middle-level cadres in business departments is much higher than that of middle-level leaders in non-business departments.

But the workload is also far more stressful than in non-business departments. In normal times, middle-level cadres in the business sector usually spread some "positive energy" ideas, struggle ideas, etc. in the sector. They also instil in the grassroots staff that the reason why they can work and have such an income is because of the platform provided by the company and this kind of blessing. In this way, the staff will realise that they are not important to the company, but only have the value of existence if they work hard to create profits for the company. They are like the "foremen" of the company, representing the "factory owners" and "technical experts" in their supervisory role.

The third stratum of the company: The only thing this stratum does is to carry out the tasks assigned to it by the upper stratum. There are two sections in this hierarchy. A small number of people work as supervisors or co-managers (from the bottom of the hierarchy), who are not really managers or leaders, but are distinguished from ordinary employees. In addition to doing their own work, they are also responsible for assisting the middle management in managing the internal affairs of the department. They are among the best of the grassroots staff and have the prospect of being promoted. They are therefore active and dynamic, and may one day make the leap from the third to the second rank. They usually work with the middle management to appease discontent in the department and unite people to ensure harmony within the department and the smooth running of the business. The rest are the general staff, who have no role at all. They are the general public in the company, but there is a difference between some of these people. Those who have connections, who are good at their jobs and whose leaders like them will be placed in good positions, especially in the business sector, where such people will be placed in easy, less busy, well-paid car dealership shops. If they are not favoured by their leaders, they will, on the contrary, be placed in some stores where there is a lot of work and a general income, which often leads to a kind of "trap". It is difficult to carry out work and achieve tasks with a lot of work, which will lead to criticism from leaders and directly affect their own income.

When recruiting staff, companies often put up slogans such as "state-run enterprise", "stable income" and "high salary without fatigue". Usually the income level will be written to 10k or even

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[23] Ibid.

15k according to the income of excellent salesmen, but the actual post will find that according to the company's various rules and regulations and penalties, etc., few employees can have such excellent income, so the mobility of new employees will be very great. However, the company is still implementing the five insurances and one fund[24], although there will be some delays in the salary, but the social security and provident fund are paid on time every month. In addition, the company also provides mutual medical and annuity benefits for regular workers.

(iii) The labour process

As the conduct of insurance business is not a standardised labour process, employees have a certain degree of ability to organise and adjust their personal labour. However, the company can accordingly supervise and control them by various means to squeeze them to the maximum.

Process control: The insurance business for new cars is less controllable due to the impact of car sales, while the insurance business for old cars is controllable. The company made the renewal follow-up form for each employee's corresponding business through the statistics of the Business Management Department, and each employee made telephone calls and filled in the results of each call according to the form. In this way the middle management and the Business Management Department can be informed directly from the regular follow-up forms of each employee's completion and make corresponding countermeasures such as overtime, fines, etc.

On-call 24/7: The insurance industry is unique in that it requires front-line staff to be on-call almost 24/7, whether it's for front-end sales or back-end claims. Whenever there is a need from the supervisor or the company or a customer, they have to respond immediately. Even if it's a day off or late at night, as soon as a call comes in or a message is received, you have to get to work and deal with it. This situation has become more and more serious since the advent of WeChat, Nails and other apps. After all, there are many options for customers, and if business is lost because of a lack of timely responses, the leadership will not accept such an explanation.

Events and group purchases: Insurance companies regularly organise special offers and insurance group purchases for various types of customers. In such cases, employees are often required to work overtime. Due to the time constraints, employees are often required to inform and facilitate a large number of customers in a short period of time. In such cases, "day and night" or "six plus one" is a common occurrence.

Meetings and training: Insurance companies often organise regular morning and evening meetings to inform on business progress and instil "positive energy" and "chicken soup". Ad hoc meetings and training sessions are also called when there are important instructions from higher levels of the company, important matters, or when new products are launched. These meetings and training sessions are usually held after normal office hours to ensure that they do not interfere with daytime work. Following the epidemic this year, with the use of office software, ad hoc voice or video conferences are sometimes held out of hours. In any case it is important not to waste work time.

III. Systems and cultures of oppression and exploitation

Insurance companies themselves do not create real value, but rather "generate" money through speculation. Not only do they pursue profits externally, but they also oppress and exploit their employees in a variety of ways internally. Although the company is a state-owned enterprise,

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[24] The five insurances and one fund are the collective name for several types of security benefits given to workers by employers, including pension insurance, medical insurance, unemployment insurance, work injury insurance and maternity insurance, and housing provident fund.

because the income of the leaders is linked to the company's profits and the completion of business, they try to reduce the income of the employees, increase their working hours and save money in various ways, as if they were "factory owners" and "foremen".

During the period from 2016 to 2017, before the reform of motor commercial insurance premiums, premium income and rebates were at a relatively high level. At that time, due to business needs, every month or two the company would conduct so-called "group buying" activities. Sometimes this was done directly by the company, sometimes in cooperation with car dealers. The so-called "group buy" is to increase the cash rebate or free fuel card to customers within a certain period of time, in order to quickly absorb a large number of customers to take out insurance. These events are usually held over a period of 4 to 7 days, during which time your days off are completely cancelled and you will not be given any time off. Because of the time constraints of the campaign, you will need to make a lot of phone calls to inform customers in advance of the campaign. Because of the sheer volume and the fact that you have other business and work to do during the day, it is not uncommon to work overtime after work to contact clients. Of course, such rest days and after-work overtime are so-called "voluntary", the company's consistent rhetoric is that business done in your own time is your own income, so you are working overtime for yourselves, to make money for yourselves. During this time, the company's tasks and profits were fine, so there was no very strict control over what the employees were doing in the event that it was completed. The income of the employees was also relatively substantial, and there was always about 100,000 a year. The monthly income of an average employee in B city is about 3k to 4k, which is very good in comparison.

In the past two years, with the introduction of various reforms and regulatory measures in commercial auto insurance, insurance companies have been hit hard in this area of the auto insurance business. During this period, due to the transfer of the leadership team, the control and penalties for the following employees have become increasingly strict, with various deductions and penalties being introduced. For example, a penalty of RMB 20 for being late, RMB 30 for not clocking in, RMB 20 for not wearing standard work clothes, RMB 20 for not keeping the office area tidy, and all kinds of penalties that you can think of and cannot think of. The business side has introduced rewards and punishments, but the rewards and punishments are disproportionate, and the bonus may go up by 10% if the progress is completed and exceeded, but may go down by 20% if it is not. The exact range is always studied by the leadership team and then announced, but often the rewards are small and the penalties are large. Control is also not limited to behavioural and financial aspects. The company is keen to promote the usual empty "positive energy", "chicken soup for the soul" and disgusting "struggle" ideas. The company's philosophy is not that state employees are in charge, but that "without the company, you are nothing", because the company provides you with all the platforms to develop your career. This specious brainwashing is the same as the Nazi Goebbels' phrase "without your country, you are nothing". The whole company is under the influence of "positive energy" and you can't say anything "negative" even if it's true. A colleague who complained in the workplace was criticised at the company's morning meeting.

During this time, the company has even distributed a kind of electronic work badge with a positioning function, which employees are required to carry with them, even after work, to take home. It is equivalent to being able to locate you whenever the company wants. If the company found out that the work badge had been in the same location or was in a state of being switched off without power, then the employee would be punished and informed accordingly. Although many employees complained privately about this serious violation of human rights, they did not dare to speak about it in private, but the measure was later discontinued. This shows how much control the

company has over its employees. In the intervening two years, overtime was still available, and it was still free. But earnings have fallen compared to the previous two years.

2020 was the worst year, with the outbreak of the epidemic at the beginning of the year. At the request of the local authorities, businesses and operations ceased to operate. At first, the company also arranged for employees to work from home as requested, but then the company forced the business offices to start operating in mid-February when the conditions for resumption of work were not yet in place, despite the risks involved. During this period, some employees reacted anonymously to the local authorities and the situation was communicated to the parent company, which investigated and corrected itself but replied that no irregularities were found in the resumption of work and the matter was left unresolved.

Since September, a new reform of commercial vehicle insurance has begun and premium income has been further reduced significantly. Under these circumstances, the company has once again increased its assessment and the rewards and penalties have become more intuitive. For example, an additional bonus of $20 for each unit over and under was deducted and penalised at $30 per unit. But the target for the task itself was set very high, and it was clear which was harder or easier. The year continued to be a stifling one with pay cuts and overtime. The only slight relief was that since the September reform, salesmen were no longer required to advance money to customers, which at least took a lot of pressure off.

In addition to the functional departments, the company also has a party branch, a league branch and a trade union. The secretary of the party branch is the general manager and the number of party members is about ten. As I am not a member of the party, it is not possible to find out the content of the internal meetings of the branch. What can be judged, however, is that none of the members of the branch has probably read the Manifesto, let alone had any grounding in Marxist-Leninist theory. The company is more interested in the success and management theories of the capitalists than in these, and the level of the branch that promotes such theories can be roughly judged. In addition, this month the branch developed three activists, two of whom are members of the team and one of whom is a follower of the leader who advocates "struggle", none of whom has any theoretical level. It is a sad thing that the vanguard of the working class keeps developing such people. The league branch is even more crowded, after all, there are league members everywhere nowadays. However, apart from allowing young employees (whether they are members or not) to access the provincial league committee's league classes on their mobile phones, the league branch's day-to-day activities consist of collecting league dues and nothing else. As for the trade union, its president is currently a deputy general manager. Apart from organising day-to-day union activities (basically just hiking or going out for fun) and giving out holiday gifts and birthday cards, there is nothing more that can be done to help employees fight for their interests. The employees probably don't understand the role of the union either, let alone complain about oppression and exploitation through the union. In short, it is a company union rather than an employee union.

IV. Staff thinking

Discontent and grievances naturally arise in the face of exploitation and oppression, but of course this only remains at a private level.

One, no matter what reforms the regulators have made to car insurance, the workload of the staff is actually not reduced but increased. But because of the reduction in the company's revenues and profits, the salaries paid to employees have also shrunk significantly, which is most unacceptable. In

addition, year-end bonuses are also paid at the whim of the leaders, sometimes not. So the most intuitive thing is that employees are not rewarded for their efforts.

Secondly, the arbitrary and compulsory overtime makes employees physically and mentally exhausted, and in the most exaggerated cases, there is no rest day for three months in a whole quarter. Such high intensity overtime not only causes physical damage, but also has a great impact on employees' social and family relationships. Annual leave also depends on how much and how often the leader is willing to give it. But even if you take leave, you still have to work, because of the nature of the job.

Third, many business tasks are suppressed in the name of political tasks, forcing employees to complete them, and even forcing employees to purchase them on their own. In essence, it is a behaviour of forced buying and selling, and employees are forced to buy under pressure. Such behaviours that greatly damage the economic interests of employees are very repulsive.

Fourthly, the skulkers have been promoted and those who really work are not protected. But then there is a situation where if more work is done, more mistakes are made, while if no work is done, there are no mistakes. Those who do not work are praised and commended, while those who work get into trouble. To a large extent, this has led to dissatisfaction with the management of the staff. But it is not easy for people to talk about it, nor can they. It is a long-term repression.

After all the discontent and pent-up grievances have arisen, the new new members who have just entered society often choose to leave their jobs. They do not have loans or families, and one person has enough to feed the whole family. For them, there is no place for them to stay. More older employees often choose to continue, after all, if they leave their jobs without a break in salary, their loans will not be cut off and neither will their family's expenses. In general, salaries in B are generally low and exploitation in the private sector is even worse, but Company A, despite its problems, is generally better than most companies in B. There is no better option than to take the risk of starting your own business, but to carry on with the bitter set-up. After all, the sun rises as usual.

However, the day when people realise their slave-like state is not too far away to change it.

Chapter 11: A county branch of a telecommunications operator

Editor's note: The author of this article describes the basic situation of a county-level branch of an operator. The operator is a typical representative of monopoly capital, with high monopoly profits and employees who are treated significantly better than those in the private sector. But even in such an enterprise we still see (1) a rigid hierarchy within the enterprise and the unequal income linked to it, and (2) corporate violations, such as working overtime and not paying overtime.

The author's monopoly state capital offers its employees better treatment and benefits than private enterprises, but the employees still cannot change the fate of hired labourers. They do not enjoy the status of masters in the enterprise, and they often have to put up with violations of their rights and interests. Obviously, such state-owned enterprises are still capitalistic state enterprises.

As the conflicts within the enterprises are not acute, their own struggle is relatively weak. Compared to industrial workers in the big cities, or even to the brain-power proletarians in the big cities, they are under less pressure and their conflicts are more moderate, so they may have awakened later. However, in recent years, with the economic downturn and increased pressure of life, employees have become more stressed.

Conflicts have been slowly building up in the daily oppression that is the day of the decade. In such days, one after another, like the author, workers are gradually awakening.

I. Basic information.

The unit is a county-level branch of a telecommunications operator. The GDP per capita of the district and county in which it is located is in the bottom few within the city, less than one-half of the national average. The performance of the county company is average, in the middle to the bottom of the city-wide range, with the performance of the government and enterprise department being at the bottom for a long time.

According to the survey, the basic situation of the company is similar to that of all other county branches in the prefecture-level city in which it is located, and is somewhat representative. Communications operators are engaged in a monopolistic industry as defined by the state, but the major operators compete fiercely with each other. In previous years, the operators were very profitable by virtue of their monopoly status and their employees were treated well. In recent years, the state has introduced policies such as "portability" and "speed and fee reduction", which, coupled with the effects of vicious competition, have led to a deterioration in the treatment of the operators' grassroots staff.

II. Organizational structure and personnel.

(i) Position level

There are four people in the leadership of the company, including one party secretary and general manager, one deputy manager in charge of marketing, and one deputy manager in charge of network and construction and maintenance, all three of whom belong to a certain level of manager (leadership level). There is also a manager of government and enterprise, and the government and enterprise department is a newly set up department, specialising in government, large enterprises and other group customer business. There are 20 middle-level employees in the company. The middle level is the main force in the actual work, and the work pressure is generally greater than that of the grassroots staff. There are more than 60 other regular employees. There are also about

10 staff members responsible for hygiene, security and maintenance and construction, all of whom are outsourced.

(ii) Basic information about the staff

Looking at the age. Most of the company's managers are around 40 years old. In recent years, the company has a tendency to have a younger leadership, and the superior has issued documents requiring that newly promoted managers should, in principle, be under the age of 35. The majority of the middle level of the county company is 30-40 years old, with only one person over 40 years old and one under 30 years old. Most of the other employees are also aged 30-40, with a few over 40 or under 30. Most of them joined the company before the age of 24.

By origin. The non-leadership company's formal employees are broadly divided into three categories: veteran employees transferred to the company from the former post and telecommunications bureau, provincial companies' unified staff, and other formal employees. For the sake of clarity of presentation, these three categories of employees are named as old post and telecommunications bureau employees, unified recruitment employees and social recruitment employees.

Of these, only four of the socially recruited staff have full-time undergraduate degrees and all the others have specialist degrees. In response to a request from the parent company to improve the overall academic qualifications of its staff, the company cooperated with a university in the city to give employees the opportunity to obtain an adult self-study undergraduate degree. This qualification is highly watered down, and employees do not need to attend the actual study, as long as they pass the final exam.

Socially recruited employees are recruited by the district and county companies on their own in the community. They are first interviewed at the county company and then go to the city company to take a written test, which they pass to be hired. More than 80% of the socially recruited employees have worked for more than ten years, and about half have worked for more than fifteen years.

In the district and county companies, the ratio of veteran post and telecommunications employees, unified employees and socially recruited employees is about 1:1:5. Considering that some of the veteran post and telecommunications employees have retired and some of the unified employees have left the company, the actual ratio of socially recruited employees is higher, up to 1:1:7. In the provincial company, the city company and the district and county companies in the urban area, the ratio of unified employees will increase.

III. Income and other benefits.

(i) Salary Situation

Employees' salaries are linked to their ranks. Since 2016, undergraduate university students recruited by the provincial company have been graded at approximately 5 levels, with upward and downward fluctuations depending on the year, and master's degree students are 1 level higher than undergraduate students, and there are generally no PhD students within the municipal company. Older employees of the post office are generally graded at around 8. Most of the socially recruited employees have a grade of 1-4, and many grassroots socially recruited employees who have worked for several years have a grade of 1-2. Socially recruited staff are the mainstay of the company, but their grades are significantly lower than those of other staff, as detailed in Part V below.

Staff salaries are made up of a monthly salary and a year-end bonus. The monthly salary includes basic salary, position salary, performance pay and allowances. The allowances include, in addition to the regular allowances, holiday expenses, heating expenses and summer heat protection expenses. Basic salary and position salary are determined by rank and remain unchanged from month to month, while performance salary is determined by the previous month's performance and is more complicated to calculate, so I will not go into details. Monthly payroll is paid on the last few working days of the month and there are no payroll deductions.

Due to different performance and competition bonuses, there is a difference in income between different employees at the same level, up to RMB 1,500 between employees at level 5. Even for the same employee, there is a difference in income between different months, which can be as much as thousands of yuan. 5 level employees earn an average monthly salary of about 5,000 yuan, with an annual salary and bonus of about 80,000 yuan. 2 level employees earn an average monthly salary of about 3,000 yuan, with an annual salary and bonus of about 45,000-50,000 yuan. The above salaries and bonuses are the actual amount of money paid to the salary card, not including other benefits such as five insurance and two gold benefits.

Undergraduates who have joined the company in recent years will pay a performance deposit of RMB3,000 for undergraduates and RMB5,000 for masters students before joining the company. At the time of payment the company did not state when it would be returned. Theoretically, it should be returned once the employee has joined the company, or at least after six months of regularization of employment. In practice, however, the 2018 class of entry-level employees counter-returned it after about ten months of employment. The deposit for the class of 2019 entry-level employees has still not been returned, despite numerous attempts to communicate with the masses of employees to seek clarification.

The salary status of the leadership is unknown, but based on anecdotal evidence and payment of party dues, etc., it is presumed that the manager's monthly salary is no less than RMB 15,000 and no more than RMB 30,000, and the year-end bonus is unknown.

(ii) Overtime pay

For overtime marketing on holidays such as the November holidays, the company will apply for a uniform overtime payment of three times the salary stipulated by national law, which will be paid at the end of the following month along with the monthly salary.

Except for such holiday marketing, there is no overtime pay for all overtime work. Daily overtime is nominally voluntary for employees to work overtime to complete their work, and employees will not voluntarily apply for overtime pay. To apply for overtime pay, an application needs to be submitted in the system, including information such as the reason, time, location and photos of the work saved. After submitting the application, it is first approved by the general manager of the district and county company, and then by the relevant department of the city company before it is considered official overtime work and overtime pay is granted. The city company disliked the submission of overtime applications by the district and county companies. On one occasion, before the November holiday, the City Company issued a document strictly prohibiting district and county companies from paying employees for overtime on holidays when they had not actually worked overtime.

I had applied for overtime on my own after participating in marketing activities organised by the district and county company on a working day, but the head of the county company did not approve it. I was later invited by the General Department to have a heart-to-heart talk, the content of which was approximately that there was no such thing as applying for overtime pay on working days, that

employees should work together to improve performance for the company, and that working overtime to complete work was a normal and positive sign of motivation, etc. The overtime pay was also left unresolved.

(iii) Social security and provident fund.

The company pays five insurance and one pension and supplementary enterprise annuity, which are purchased according to the actual earnings due and the percentage of payment is high. However, due to the high social security payment, the corresponding deduction of salary is also more, so the actual monthly salary is not high, many employees have some complaints about this. Many employees who are not highly ranked are paid only one or two thousand yuan per month.

(iv) Rest and leave.

Employees are entitled to annual leave and other leave (e.g. maternity leave) in accordance with the law. In the absence of special circumstances, the Company will normally approve annual leave for employees.

The Company will organise marketing during national holidays (e.g. November holidays) and apply for overtime pay uniformly. Grassroots staff have many complaints about marketing during holidays, but will generally follow the company's requirements. There are many opportunities to hang out and be lazy in marketing, and many employees will chat and shop at the same time.

Generally, sick leave and justified personal leave will be granted by the Company. As a rule, the company will deduct the employee's performance points and salary accordingly. Employees are not paid performance pay or allowances for longer periods of leave, such as sick leave and maternity leave, and other wages are paid normally. Many employees at lower ranks are not paid much in terms of basic salary and position pay, leaving very little after deduction of the five insurance and two contributions. Very often, employees take leave simply by speaking to their leaders, who, as a sign of humanistic concern, do not mention the leave officially in the system without deducting wages.

(v) Other benefits

In August each year, the company will organise a medical check-up for all regular employees. To protect privacy, medical examination reports are issued directly to individual employees and the company generally has no right to ask questions. The cost for the same level of medical examination for ordinary social workers is about RMB1,000. It has been observed that the company's employees are generally healthy, but will suffer from common office occupational diseases of a lesser degree.

Each year, the company issues benefits for festivals such as Mid-Autumn Festival and Spring Festival. There are usually seasoning items such as cooking oil, rice, soy sauce and other food items. From time to time, the company will also distribute daily necessities such as laundry detergent, toilet paper and soap, about 2 to 3 times a year. During the previous period when the epidemic was more serious, the company would also issue masks to be able to ensure the personal use of the employees.

The company has its own canteen with breakfast at RMB 2 and lunch at RMB 7. There is no dinner in the district or county level companies. Lunch is usually one meat, one vegetable and one soup, with unlimited main meals. The menu changes daily and is recycled once a week. The food tastes fine and basically satisfies the taste of the average person. The head of the company also eats in the canteen with the staff. The last General Manager ate in the canteen almost every day at lunchtime. He

treated people gently and the atmosphere was good as we watched TV and chatted together during lunchtime. The current leader eats in the canteen about twice a week. He is more serious and everyone is very quiet during lunchtime.

If there is an inspection by a superior company, the canteen will prepare lunch specifically for them at noon instead of going out to a restaurant for lunch, as required by the spirit of clean government of the Central Government.

The company does not provide accommodation, the city company will rent a house in the community for the general manager of each district and county company, the rented housing level is about medium to high. In addition, the municipal company will provide a rental subsidy of RMB 600 per month for six months for new employees who are recruited on a general basis. This subsidy is cancelled after six months when the new employee is regularised.

While they are not yet regularised, new recruits are paid their full basic salary and allowance, their performance bonus is paid in full at the city average, and their position salary is paid at 60%. The average take-home pay will increase by a few hundred dollars after regularisation. Due to the removal of the rental subsidy after regularisation, there are employees from districts and counties with poorer entry performance who are instead paid less after regularisation than they were before.

The company will also have some other benefits. For example, the company will hold sports games from time to time, about once a year, and those who sign up will be issued a set of sportswear; the company will organise a staff trip once every few years; the company will issue a set of work clothes every few years.

IV. Work situation.

(i) Working hours

As a rule, the daily working hours are 8:30 a.m. to 12:00 p.m., 2:00 p.m. to 6:00 p.m. in summer (May 1-October 1) and 1:30 p.m. to 5:30 p.m. in winter (October 1-May 1). However, almost all districts and counties require employees to come to the office early in the morning for morning meetings, with the most districts and counties requiring them to come to the office half an hour earlier, i.e. at 8:00 a.m. for morning meetings. Most employees work overtime of half an hour or more in the evenings, with some of the more demanding employees working overtime of three hours or more per day. On average, the marketing staff work the hardest.

The working week is a full day Monday to Friday and a half day Saturday morning, but there is no clocking in and signing out on Saturdays. Many employees who have unfinished work will come to work on their own on Saturday and Sunday.

The company organises regular marketing campaigns and organises a round of marketing every once in a while. When marketing is organised, it is three times a week and people within the department take turns to participate. The marketing mostly starts at 4pm and lasts until after 8pm. All such weekday marketing is organised by the county company and there is no overtime pay.

(ii) Working environment

Staff have their own workstations, each with a computer for work use and access to both intranet and extranet. The office is centrally air-conditioned for heating in winter and cooling in summer. The leadership has a separate office, but the area is small except for the general manager. The account managers have the task of going out, at least four days a week, and can either apply for an official

car or ride their own electric bikes. In principle, you can apply for a fuel subsidy if you drive your own car.

(iii) Colleague relations

Generally speaking, colleague relations are relatively cordial. We are not limited to working relationships, but are also mostly good friends in private. Staff will bring in good food they have bought to eat with them, and share things they have bought that are good value for money. There is generally no conflict between the leadership and the staff. The leadership will reprimand the staff if they are unhappy with their work, but will not be abusive. If staff are unhappy with certain requests from the leadership, they will complain in private and not show it openly.

But there are exceptions. Rumour has it that the leader of a district company was once beaten up at night. Some people said that he had unclean hands and liked to molest women, so he was beaten up; a small number of people said that he was beaten up because he treated his staff too harshly. The leader chose to call the police after he was beaten. However, as there were too many people with whom he had a poor relationship, the case was difficult to investigate and the beating was dropped, so the city company transferred him out of the district and county.

(iv) Work status

The working status of the three departments is as follows:

Employees in the political and corporate sector can be broadly divided into two categories. One type of work is mainly in the office and usually involves statistics, filling in forms and scheduling indicators. This type of work is very boring and requires long hours of sitting in the office using a computer, which can cause boredom. Another category is responsible for external customer-facing, usually need to visit a variety of visits, marketing or in the business hall to face the public. This kind of work is also very boring, sometimes need to visit three or four groups a day.

The network and construction maintenance department is similar to the second category, except that instead of visiting customers, they have to go to the site and direct the construction.

The general and marketing departments are similar to the first category, but the marketing staff are the mainstay of marketing activities and need to take the lead in going out and marketing.

In my case, the district and county government and enterprise departments. Arrive at the office at 8:00am for a morning meeting where the leader arranges the day's work. The daily tasks include, but are not limited to, tallying various data, filling out forms and application forms, scheduling business development for each township grid by phone, and processing or cancelling group product business, which is boring and annoying. In addition, there are teleconferences to attend, about once a week, which usually start an hour after work in the evening and last about two hours. Going home for dinner at 8pm was the norm. The most annoying part was the group number transfer, each of which required the uploading of eight sheets of official stamped documents, the swiping of ID cards and the taking of photographs to verify identity, each of which took ten minutes. Sometimes there are dozens of numbers that need to be transferred to one group, and it can take all day to complete the process.

(v) Additional situations

In pursuit of performance targets, the company's leadership sometimes ordered employees to compulsorily conduct a certain business for family members and friends, or to purchase certain unsold backlog products in the name of in-buying sessions. At most, around New Year's Day of a

particular year, all regular employees of the entire municipal company spent approximately RMB2,000 each to purchase the company's backlog of smart mirrors and smart door locks.

V. Other conditions.

(i) Historical situation

Approximately ten years ago, the Company entered into employment contracts with veteran employees of the Post Office and the general recruitment category. The socially recruited category of employees contracted with a third party company, and the Company worked with the third party company in a manner similar to a labour dispatch to employ the employees. At that time, the company was efficient, had few regular employees and was extremely well treated. It is said that the Old Post Office employees were paid tens of thousands of yuan per month in 2003. Every time they were paid, they received a pile of 100 yuan notes, which was the envy of the socially recruited employees who were dispatched by labour. Rumour has it that some leaders bought many roadside shops and rented them out by virtue of their high salaries at that time.

Generally speaking, the workload was about the same for the general staff and the socially recruited staff, with the socially recruited staff being slightly higher. The post office employees were older and some had already retired, while most of those who had not retired had relatively unoccupied positions. Except for a very few special employees, the vast majority of them are considered to be serious and dedicated to their work, and there are no cases of rascality, disruption, seniority and long-term non-work.

The socially recruited employees, who are the mainstay of the workforce, not only do not have a labour contract with the company, but their treatment is also worlds apart from that of regular employees, which makes people feel bad. Around 2012, the state required state-owned enterprises to limit the proportion of labour dispatch. The company began to take on a large number of socially recruited staff as regular employees and signed employment contracts. At that time, the company stipulated that all socially recruited employees had to take an examination, and after passing it, they could sign a labour contract and become regular employees. The examination was about work ability and basic competence.

At this time, many leaderships strictly forbade employees from privately establishing QQ groups to contact each other and prevented staff organisations from forming a force. Despite this, some municipalities did organise social recruitment staff to protest at the provincial company, the details of which are no longer available. After the transfer, there was still a gap between the treatment of socially recruited employees and that of regular employees, but it was no longer as disparate as before.

(ii) Dismissal

The company generally does not fire employees, and if there is a termination of employment relationship, it is the employees themselves who propose to leave. As there is an assessment of the staff departure rate, the company leaders are generally reluctant to let staff leave. After an employee has proposed to leave, the leader will try to retain the employee, delay the employee as much as possible, and will propose to meet the needs of the employee as far as possible. If the employee is determined to leave, the company will also follow the provisions of the separation procedures.

In recent years, new employees are recruited by the provincial company through campus recruitment, and most of their education is master's degree, and there are also a few

undergraduates. These employees are highly educated, open-minded, active and most of them do not have the burden of supporting their families, so all of them leave the company. The common reasons for leaving are: the remote location of the company in the district and county, the lack of rest from work, the salary does not meet the satisfaction target, etc. Common destinations after leaving: graduate school, public examinations, examinations for teachers, through the local government's talent introduction into the authorities, to the big cities to find another job, etc.

In 2018, a university student was unhappy that he had to work on Saturdays, saying, "The state says that I don't work on Saturdays, and the employment contract I signed doesn't say anything about working on Saturdays. If you want me to work on Saturdays, then you show me the letter of the law. I'll do the work I'm supposed to do, I'll work on a normal working day, and you can't deduct my salary." His attitude was the same for other non-working day marketing-type jobs. The company had no choice but to compromise in this area as they had no choice but to take him. Originally, he had to work all day on Saturdays, and since he has, many employees have stopped coming to work on Saturday afternoons if there is no work. Other employees privately appreciated his behaviour, but none had the courage to follow suit. The employee resigned after less than a year of employment to go to graduate school.

(iii) Trade union organisation

Trade unions have little presence among the staff and only appear during the festive season when benefits are given out. The staff are not united enough when they are in conflict with the company, and their legal awareness is weak, so they often choose to hold their tongue when they encounter grievances. Only a few grassroots staff in district and county companies will express their grievances. However, instead of reflecting them through official channels such as the trade unions, they resort to finger-pointing and passive struggle. Most of the employees in the district and county have another income for their families, even if they do not rely on their salaries to keep their families afloat.

The union sometimes organises donations for the whole company. Donations are made to, but not limited to: poor students who cannot afford to use mobile phones; Hubei, where the Covid-19 outbreak occurred; and employees within the company who are seriously ill. When making donations, the union will ask leading officers to take the lead in making donations, which will generally not exceed RMB 200. In principle, donations are voluntary and the amount is decided by the leaders themselves, but some leaders attach great importance to donations, and if there are employees who do not donate the leaders will talk to them individually to prompt them to donate.

(iv) Living situation

With the exception of a few university students and three employees whose hometown is out of town and who live and work locally, the employees are all from the county. About 90% have formed families and the subjects generally also have jobs. Most of the employees' families have at least one house through work accumulation or family support. Local house prices are not high, averaging only two to three thousand dollars a few years ago. Even now, house prices average just over five thousand dollars. Many employees with families have purchased more than one house a few years ago when the industry was doing better and salaries were higher. Only new university students, who have joined the industry in recent years, rent a house.

On the cost of labour reproduction (a broad estimate of the cost of labour reproduction, with reference only to myself and a few colleagues, is given here):

Take a single young man as an example. If one lives modestly and only calculates basic expenses, one has the following scenario. Renting a house: 650 RMB, eating: 700 RMB, daily expenses: 150 RMB, total 1500 RMB. Among them, the rented house is a relatively old house at the edge of the county, and will even lack some necessary electrical appliances; commuting to and from work by bicycle; breakfast and lunch at work, dinner and weekend food shopping and cooking at home; daily expenses including telephone bills, utilities, daily necessities, etc.

If you live normally, you have the following. Rent: RMB 900, meals: RMB 1,000, daily expenses: RMB 300, other expenses: RMB 300, total RMB 2,500.

If the quality of life is good, the monthly expenditure is no less than RMB 3,000.

Take for example a family of 6 with their own house. If living modestly and counting only the basic expenses, the monthly spending will not be higher than 3,000 RMB. If living normally, the monthly expenditure is around 5,000-6,000 RMB. If the quality of life is good, the monthly expenditure will be no less than RMB 8,000.

If the elderly have no income and rely on the couple's income alone, the average family does not have much left over each month. Some families are even moonlighters and depend on the year-end bonus for their annual surplus.

Schooling for children is a major issue. The various out-of-school tuition classes cost a lot of money and are a burden for the average family (but tuition classes are not the highest percentage of costs, in fact for the vast majority of families, the highest percentage of costs is still food). As there are not enough public schools, some people will spend a lot of money on public schools, which puts a big burden on families. In the county, there is only one public high school and two private high schools, and the number of students enrolled is hardly enough to meet the demand. Some junior high school students even have to repeat two years to prepare for their secondary school exams. Families who can afford it choose to send their children to private high schools, or to high schools in other districts or even other cities.

VI. Summary

Despite the current low salary, the other benefits are good compared to the average private company. Apart from overtime work, there are also few violations of labour laws. Employees who are not demanding for wages and do not make any major mistakes can generally work peacefully until retirement.

Conflicts in general life work mainly include: high workload, low efficiency, low salary, disgusting marketing activities, all kinds of messy meetings that squeeze into rest time, and formalistic inspections of all kinds. The contradictions exist mainly between the employees and the company, and there are basically no contradictions between ordinary employees. Generally speaking, marketing activities are mainly initiated by the deputy manager of the marketing department, hygiene and tidiness inspections are initiated by the director of the general department, and working meetings are initiated by the general manager, and these three people, as representatives of the company, take up many of the employees' private grievances.

On the whole, there is less conflict within the company than in the private sector, and employees are less conscious of their struggles. As for overtime work, employees mostly submit to it, and often people say, "The leaders want us to work overtime, what can we do?" Others say, "What can we do if we don't work overtime because the work is not done?" The occasional appeal by one of the students to unite and fight for their rights was seldom responded to, and everyone just took the

appeal as a joke. After the university students leave to find another way out, the situation becomes similar again to what it was before.

On the whole, employees of communications operators are enviably good jobs.

But the communications industry as an industry has been going downhill in recent years, with many businesses being taken away by new Internet and computer companies. Central enterprises such as operators, with their large volumes and difficulties in transformation, are being led by the nose by internet companies and their profits are decreasing.

In previous years, due to the decline of the industry, major operators competed for business volume and user resources by offering "unlimited traffic" and "free broadband with subscription", leading to vicious competition. In the past two years, the central government has proposed "portability" and "speed reduction", which has intensified the vicious competition among operators. At the same time, the State-owned Assets Supervision and Administration Commission (SASAC) requires operators to ensure that the profits they pay in are not reduced. With less revenue but no reduction in profits, and no money coming out of thin air, the burden has to be placed on grassroots employees. In addition, the central government has issued instructions to state-owned enterprises on integrity, and many hidden benefits and various subsidies have been abolished one after another.

In fact, the pressure on grassroots employees is getting worse and worse, and their wages are not increasing or even decreasing. Many young people no longer want to choose to work for an operator. Many employees in their thirties also have the idea of leaving to find another way out, but being old and with nothing good to do when they go out, they remain here.

In the midst of the slow growth, conflicts are still building up.

Chapter 12: Research on overseas sales employees of a medical device manufacturing company in a first-tier city

Editor's note: This is an excellent research report on a group of overseas sales employees of a medical device company.

This group of employees is typically brain-power workers, and because they "generally have more specific professional abilities (e.g. small languages[25]), they have relatively strong bargaining power and companies can still offer them relatively high salaries."

This group is not united by the relatively good wages and the fact that they are divided into atomised individuals by the capitalists, so although "the capitalists discriminate arbitrarily in the recruitment and promotion of employees on the basis of gender and age, develop overseas markets at the expense of their personal and property safety, and lay off employees by forcing them to leave in order to avoid compensation," but they are "disgruntled but generally believe that this is the rule of the day in the overseas sales industry as a whole, and have little awareness of resistance and rights."

However, evasion does not change the reality that capital is oppressing them. There is no overtime pay for overtime work, social security contributions have been illegal for a long time (this year they are legal) and "despite their hard work, they are still unable to break away from the class they are in. The high consumption in first-tier cities makes the accumulation of wealth incredibly slow, and the dream of making the class leap by working for the capitalists seems out of reach."

Although this group of employees is currently in the budding stages of class consciousness, the author is optimistic about their awakening, given the increasing oppression of employees by capital. "On the one hand, due to the growing willingness of Chinese companies to explore the markets of developing countries, the national enrolment of language majors, especially minor languages, is rising day by day, and there is even a tendency for certain majors to be overcrowded. In the future, more and more graduates will enter the overseas sales job market. When the professional skills of sales representatives are no longer scarce, companies will inevitably lower their salaries and exploit and squeeze them more and more. On the other hand, due to the increasingly complex international situation, our overseas sales business is not doing well. In particular, this year's corona virus epidemic has added to the woes of the overseas sales industry. Lower profits have caused capitalists to further begin to sacrifice their employees, and even the large listed companies in this report have simply cancelled their annual salary increases this year. This bodes well for the crisis in the sector. And with lower wages and salaries, discontent is beginning to creep in among this group."

I. Company and department introduction

The company is mainly engaged in the research and development, manufacturing and sales of medical devices, and is a large listed company with more than 2,000 employees and more than 30 R&D and sales branches and offices in first- and second-tier cities in China and abroad, as well as its own factories. Among the staff, there are nearly 600 R&D personnel and the rest are sales, human

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[25] Small languages, as the name implies, are foreign languages that are only used in a few countries compared to English, which are widely used and widely used. There are generally two definitions of minor languages. Refers to languages other than the common languages of the United Nations (Chinese, English, French, Spanish, Russian, Arabic). There is also a belief that English is a universal language, and other languages are non-universal languages, so another definition of minor languages refers to languages other than English. According to the first definition, there are about 30 minor languages offered by colleges and universities in China.

resources and finance personnel as well as workers with formal labour contracts. The company has relatively regular upstream and downstream enterprises, the upstream enterprises are mainly raw material suppliers, mainly supplying machinery parts, while the downstream enterprises are freight forwarding companies, providing sales and delivery services for the company.

The interviewees were working in the sales department and had no knowledge of other departments. The sales department is divided into domestic and overseas sales, and there is little intersection between the two in terms of organisational structure and actual work, so this research focused on the company's overseas sales system.

The company's two main products for overseas sales are ultrasound instruments and endoscopic instruments. The company claims that its business is spread over 160 countries and regions, but in fact, as the overall level of China's medical device industry is still a certain gap compared to that of developed countries, the company's actual business is concentrated in developing countries in Asia, Africa and Latin America, relying on the price advantage of low-end products to open up the market.

By vertical management structure, the largest leaders of the overseas sales system are the Director of Overseas Sales, who is responsible for the development of sales strategies for all products, and the Deputy Director, who is responsible only for the sales of specific star products. Under the Director are the Regional General Managers, who are defined by sales region, usually by continent. Under the Regional General Managers, there are Product General Managers for each region according to their products, who are responsible for the sales of specific products. The product general managers divide their region into smaller areas, usually by specific countries, and each small area has an area manager to manage the sales of the specific product in that small area. Below the regional managers are sales representatives such as the interviewees, who are the junior staff of the company in the overseas sales area and are directly responsible for specific sales matters.

Rank	Range
Director / Deputy Director Worldwide.	The director is responsible for all, the deputy director for a product.
Regional General Manager / General Manager for a product in a region.	Continent. Regional General Manager for all, Product General Manager for a product.
Regional Manager	A particular country
Sales Representative	Base level

From this, it can be found that in large listed companies like this one, the large scale of the enterprise and the complex management structure make the grassroots employees generally lack knowledge of the work of other departments, the company does not take the initiative to explain these to the employees, and the employees lack the desire to take the initiative to understand them in the absence of business crossover. For example, the interviewee is an overseas sales representative, but has no knowledge of the work of domestic sales staff in the same department, which severely limits the horizons of grassroots employees and hinders the possibility of cross-departmental union of the working class.

II. The situation of departmental personnel

The company's entire overseas sales system has more than 300 employees. In terms of the ratio of men to women, the number of male employees is twice that of female employees, and there is an implicit phenomenon of gender discrimination. The company believes that female sales staff will shift their focus to their families after marriage and especially after giving birth, and will not be able

to continuously undertake overseas business trips, and coupled with security considerations, priority is given to men in the recruitment process, and the promotion opportunities for women are very limited.

In terms of age structure, 75% of the staff are between 25 and 35 years old, with young people forming the backbone of the system, 20% are between 35 and 45 years old and only 5% are over 45. Like most private companies, the company welcomes younger employees far more than older ones and basically only considers candidates under the age of 30 when recruiting.

In terms of specialisation, with the exception of the relevant logistical support positions, almost all of the main overseas sales representatives come from a language course or have excellent foreign language skills themselves. As the company's main overseas markets are in Asia, Africa and Latin America, many of the sales representatives are in fact from small language backgrounds, such as Spanish, Portuguese, French, Arabic, etc. The overseas sales system brings together employees from all over the country as the first tier cities themselves bring together young people from all over the country.

It is worth mentioning that the overseas sales system has a high turnover rate, with only one third of the staff in the whole system having more than three years' service, and a large number of employees who have worked for one or two years leave every year. The main reasons for leaving are dissatisfaction with salary and rejection of overseas business trips.

III. The situation regarding work in the department

As a grassroots overseas sales representative, my daily work is mainly carried out through the internet. This includes introducing products, providing information, quotations and handling enquiries to customers who come to us, following up on the delivery of goods to customers who have placed orders, handling payments, registering products overseas and taking the initiative to develop new customers. Sales representatives who have been employed for two to three years will be assigned overseas business trips, with a specific frequency of about once every two or three months for about ten days at a time, or directly to overseas branches for permanent assignments, but the coronavirus epidemic this year has led to a significant reduction in overseas business trips throughout the year. In the words of the interviewee, "it's not repetitive, but every day there's something new and annoying". The company ranks the performance of its sales representatives on a monthly basis, and although there is no so-called last-place elimination system, this disguised pressure can still lead to performance anxiety because employees don't want to be at the bottom of the pile.

From a system perspective, if a company wants to complete a new project, the decision is usually made by the senior management, i.e. the general manager, who then passes it on to the overseas sales director, who in turn assigns the project to the relevant regional general manager, who then finds the corresponding small regional manager as required, who draws up a specific completion plan and whose sales representatives are responsible for its implementation. Upon completion of the project, the Regional Manager is required to report back to the Regional General Manager and the Overseas Sales Director and the two leaders will assess the completion of the project.

The department operates on a flexible working schedule, allowing staff to clock in between 7.30am and 8am and clock out between 5pm and 5.30pm, provided they have completed eight hours. The lunch break is between 12 and 1.30 pm. Basically, all employees sleep at their desks after lunch for rejuvenation purposes. However, due to the relatively short sleep period, employees still feel tired when they start work in the afternoon. After work employees are able to return home around six or

seven o'clock depending on their commute. Time will pass quickly through activities such as cooking, exercising, playing on their phones and catching up on TV shows, and many employees will be in bed by ten o'clock in order to ensure their energy for the next day. As employees are generally bored and irritated by their own work, many see the end of the day as the happiest time of the day.

It is important to note that a major occupational risk for overseas sales representatives is the threat to person and property when travelling or being based overseas. Companies often send their employees on business trips or to countries and regions in Asia, Africa and Latin America where security is a concern in order to gain profits in overseas markets. The company's only measures to compensate for these harsh conditions are accident insurance and increased travel allowances for certain difficult locations, without any protection to reduce the incidence of injuries. However, accident insurance only covers personal accidents and does not protect employees' property, and employees generally do not have the right to refuse or choose to go on business trips arranged by the company. This has led to employees often being exposed to threats to their property overseas such as armed robbery, for example, one employee known to the interviewee was robbed of cash during a business trip to Africa.

A major point of contradiction is that there are currently no relevant provisions in the current Chinese law for compensation for damage to employees' property by the company during business trips. Although workers can immediately terminate their employment contracts on the grounds that the employer has failed to provide conditions of labour protection or endangered personal safety. However, it is clear that in the overseas sales industry, the majority of companies do not provide adequate security measures for their employees abroad, and in this environment, employees are forced to take risks if they want to work in the industry and accept responsibility for any loss of property. This is why it is common for employees to be worried and fearful before going to a less secure country, but in the end they are often afraid to refuse a company's request to do business abroad and go in order to keep their job.

In the second half of this year, despite the fact that the international epidemic was still very serious, companies resumed some of their overseas business trips and employees had to risk contracting the virus to go to work. This has been a common problem for Chinese companies expanding overseas in recent years. For profit, companies send employees to countries and regions where law and order is chaotic, and do not take certain measures to enhance the protection and compensation of their overseas employees. After all, capital does not take into account the interests of workers. In fact, it is the demand of these companies to develop the markets of developing countries that has given rise to an increasing number of universities offering corresponding small language courses, and these students have a single career path, almost exclusively to become the mainstay of overseas sales in line with the tide of capital expansion abroad. In these circumstances, sales representatives who refuse to travel abroad lose their meaning and value in the eyes of the companies, and if they want to continue working in the industry, they have no other choice but to comply with the travel arrangements.

IV. Salary and treatment within the department

Except for the self-built factories, the company does not cover staff's food and accommodation, and only provides a daily meal allowance of ten yuan. Considering the high price level in first-tier cities, employees basically have to bear their own food and accommodation expenses during the working period. Salaries in the overseas sales system are mainly composed of base salary, commission and year-end bonus. Payday is the 15th of each month. It is important to note that for the same level of staff within the same system, the company will offer different base salaries depending on the area

and products they are responsible for. For this reason, the company maintains a strict salary confidentiality system and prohibits staff from asking each other about their salaries, for example, interviewees only know their current salary, which is 8,000 base salary per month plus around 2,000 commission and a year-end bonus of around 10,000 per year. This measure increases the divide between workers and makes it more difficult to unite and bring together employees within the same department. In addition to this, the company's only benefits are gift cards for the festive season. 19 years ago, the company's performance was on the rise and the annual salary increase was generally 15%, however, from 19 years onwards the company's performance declined due to poor management and began to reduce the salary increase. 20 years after the impact of the coronavirus epidemic, the company's performance fell further and the annual salary increase was simply cancelled.

The second and fourth quarters of the year are the peak seasons for overseas sales, when the workload increases compared to the low season, and sometimes overtime is required to handle the work. However, the company does not pay overtime in accordance with what is stipulated in the labour law, and the company itself sets overtime rates at less than a quarter of what is stipulated in the labour law, and in practice there are cases where overtime is not paid and employees are allowed to work overtime without compensation. And, according to the interviewees, this free overtime is almost the default in the industry. However, the interviewees were satisfied that the company's overseas sales system hardly worked overtime during the low season and not very often during the high season, and the longest overtime they worked was two hours after finishing work, for which the company did not pay overtime. The company buys five insurance and one fund[26] for its employees, but before this year it was only bought on the basis of base salary. This year, the city introduced a new policy which stipulates that employees' five insurance and one fund are directly collected by the tax bureau instead, which means that employees can finally pay five insurance and one fund according to their actual salary.

V. Class relations

As mentioned earlier, due to the huge business of the company's overseas sales system, grassroots employees are generally only involved in the sales of their own region. That is, the regional general manager (mostly divided by continents) is the highest person in charge that the staff can usually contact, with the right to make decisions on all matters in the region and personnel rights.

Below the regional general manager are the regional managers responsible for smaller regions (mostly divided by country), who are responsible for the execution of specific sales tasks in their own region, can manage and lead their own sales representatives, and need to report to the regional general manager. The front-line sales representatives are the real grassroots workers, responsible for direct contact with customers, and need to report to the regional manager.

A clear change in class consciousness can be seen in the managers and general managers. The regional managers are only one level above the sales representatives, mostly young people in their thirties, and usually work in the same office as the sales representatives, and are generally more grassroots in their class consciousness, and are able to represent the sales representatives to the regional general manager in case of disputes. However, the regional general manager is already a middle manager in the company and has a certain amount of power over the means of production and earns much more than the sales representatives and regional managers, so he tends to see himself as a member of the bourgeoisie and lacks an understanding of the grassroots.

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[26] See note 4 in Chapter 3.1

In terms of management, the overseas sales system is relatively strict with its employees. In addition to the usual attendance requirements, there are also strict rules on how employees should dress. Employees are required to wear formal attire to work on a daily basis, except on Fridays. As there have been instances where senior company leaders have come to visit on Fridays during the summer and reprimanded female staff for wearing sleeveless clothes, basically staff are also afraid to wear casual clothes on Fridays and remain in formal wear.

In terms of leave and severance, it is usually relatively smooth for employees to take leave. However, in recent years, the company has started to increase the amount of layoffs due to business problems, and may even lay off an entire product line in a certain region due to poor sales of a certain product, including fresh graduates who have been employed for only six months. Once a decision has been made to lay off employees, the company will ask them to leave on their own, with the promise of some financial compensation. Although the compensation is lower than the statutory compensation for layoffs, the employees basically accept it out of fear of trouble and fear of being affected in their subsequent job search.

At the same time, in a company of this size, there is no trade union, but only an interest group organised by the employees themselves. Many of the employees think that the trade union is a dispensable organisation. It is clear that the brain-power employees in large companies still lack a basic idea of rights and struggle.

VI. Staff life

Most sales reps are young people under the age of thirty and are living in rented accommodation in first-tier cities. Given the high prices in first-tier cities, many of them have no long-term plans to stay, but rather to use their jobs in first-tier cities to accumulate money and work experience so that they can move to second-tier cities to settle down. They do this by renting a single room of less than ten square metres, sharing a bathroom, kitchen and living room with two or three other people. For example, the interviewees live in a neighbourhood close to their companies, where the landlord has converted a two-room house into a four-room house for young workers, with a single room of around 6 square metres and a monthly rent of RMB 2,000.

However, many young workers find that despite having achieved relatively high wages themselves compared to their peers in first-tier cities, the huge cost of living still makes the process of saving money extremely difficult. For example, the interviewees' monthly rent plus utilities was around RMB 2,500, and despite having chosen to cook their own meals for cost-saving purposes, their daily expenses still amounted to RMB 2,500 in addition to the rent, plus around RMB 500 for daily socialising, and some other expenses. As the parents believe that the interviewee has secured a decent job in a big city and has a younger brother at home who is studying, they often expect him to use his salary to support his family of origin. Another worrying phenomenon is the corruption of young workers' minds by consumerism. According to the interviewees, they have a clear goal of buying a house in a second-tier city, so they want to control their daily spending, but many workers around them with the same salary are keen to buy designer clothes, handbags, cosmetics and skin care products that far exceed their means. Some even choose to spend all their wages on their parents' credit cards or take out small loans with fewer restrictions. Even interviewees who were intent on saving began to buy expensive luxury items in order to fit in with the group.

For grassroots employees, the daily social circle is relatively small and basically limited to colleagues. The main daily entertainment is through mobile phones. For example, catching up on dramas, brushing up on Jitterbug, etc. Weibo has become the main source of news and information for

young workers. The sales representatives, who have relatively cordial relations on a daily basis, are generally discontented with the company in terms of pay and benefits, but this is still at a rudimentary stage, as can be seen from the indifferent attitude of the employees towards the trade unions, which has not been translated into a willingness to unite and fight. Once their rights have been infringed, the first thing that comes to mind is to seek help from HR, but HR, as the spokesman for the capital, is entirely determined by the attitude of the leaders and is not well placed to defend the interests of the workers from the employees' point of view. In such cases, the workers who are in a weak position usually choose to give up their rights.

VII. Summary

In recent years, with the acceleration of China's capital expansion abroad, there has been an increasing number of brain-power proletarians working in overseas sales in first-tier cities. They work in the headquarters of large enterprises with overseas sales systems. Compared to traditional domestic sales, they generally have more specialised expertise (e.g. small languages) and therefore have relatively strong bargaining power, and companies can still offer them relatively high salaries, and their exploitation and oppression does not seem to have reached a level similar to that of groups such as domestic sales and programmers.

However, problems remain. Firstly, the relative independence of overseas sales has led to a general lack of contact and understanding with workers in other sectors, and the wage secrecy system has invariably divided overseas sales internally, resulting in a lack of conditions for interdepartmental union externally and a lack of real solidarity and honesty internally.

And without solidarity among workers, individuals alone cannot defend their rights. The capitalists discriminate in the recruitment and promotion of employees on the basis of gender and age, open up overseas markets at the expense of their personal and property safety, and lay off employees by forcing them to leave in order to avoid compensation. This is partly due to the fact that the industry as a whole is currently in a state of flux. This was partly because the overall treatment in the industry was already relatively good compared to other industries, and partly because the influence of years of personal struggle made them instinctively believe that the current social order could not be changed, that there were only two classes of people, the exploiters and the exploited, and that the only way to leave the ranks of the exploited was to try to become an exploiter. But they soon found that despite their hard work, they could not break away from the class they were in. The high cost of consumption in the first-tier cities made the accumulation of wealth incredibly slow, and the dream of making the leap to class by working for the capitalists seemed out of reach. This has prompted an increasing number of overseas salespeople to commit to consumerism, paralysing themselves with unrestrained material pleasures while ignoring the real contradictions in social life.

Nevertheless, I am optimistic about the awakening of class consciousness among this group. On the one hand, due to the increasing willingness of Chinese companies to explore the markets of developing countries, the number of national enrolments in language courses, especially in small languages, is increasing day by day, and in some cases there is already a trend towards overcrowding. In the future, more and more graduates will enter the overseas sales job market. When the professional skills of sales representatives are no longer scarce, companies will inevitably lower their salaries and exploit and squeeze them more and more. On the other hand, due to the increasingly complex international situation, our overseas sales business is not doing well. In particular, this year's coronavirus epidemic has added to the woes of the overseas sales industry. Lower profits have caused capitalists to further begin to sacrifice their employees, and even the large listed companies in this report have simply cancelled their annual salary increases this year.

This bodes well for the crisis in the sector. And with lower wages, discontent is beginning to creep in among this group. Although it is only at a nascent stage and has not yet reached widespread awakening and solidarity due to the lack of scientific theoretical guidance, a single spark can start a prairie fire and if the oppression of capitalists intensifies, I believe more and more people will start to reflect and act.

Part 4 The Workforce in Medium and Large Internet Companies

Chapter 13 Research on a medium-sized Internet gaming company

Editor's note: This is a rather good research paper in which the author describes the basic situation of a medium-sized gaming company. In this article, the author describes the basic structure of the company, from which we can see a hierarchical sequence from the brain-power proletarians (technologists downwards), to the emerging petty bourgeoisie (technologists to senior technologists), to the bourgeoisie (technical partners upwards). They work in different jobs, have different positions in the workforce and receive different incomes in the distribution, some of them being able to appropriate the surplus labour of others without compensation.

In this article, the author also describes the various violations of the law by the company. The author clearly reveals how, with the economic downturn, companies have specifically increased their level of oppression of workers. In this the author particularly mentions the legal department, which acts as a lapdog of capital and establishes various norms that make it more difficult for employees to defend their rights.

In this article, the author also describes the state of mind of those employed. These people, "most of them look glorious in the eyes of others and feel miserable themselves. At times they feel that they are a proletarian as soon as they are indifferent, and at other times they resent other proletarians or are resented by other proletarians for betraying their class and appear to be very divided." And the supposedly high salaries of these people (especially the brain-power proletarians) "are earned at the expense of almost all their personal time. At the same time this income is embarrassing, seemingly giving them a high degree of freedom at the consumer level, but in reality finding that they can't afford anything that would change their lives and their class. Rather than earning a high salary and enjoying life with abandon, internet workers spend what little time they have left in a frenzy of analgesia, numbing themselves with consumerism to make themselves feel the value of living a meaningful struggle."

In response to capital's oppression of them, the author analyses, "We are all the same, some sell our strength, some sell our bodies, and now that the value of flesh is being pressed lower and lower, some people are beginning to choose to sell their brains, which are currently available at a decent price. But in essence, we sell ourselves. Living ourselves more and more like parts, with less and less ego and more and more work. Everyone originally hoped that they could become a wood and form a forest with others, but they are gradually being polished by the world to become firewood, and when they burn slowly they are complained by capital that so much wood is rotting in the ground and they can't even be firewood if they want to be."

The author's language is so precise and incisive in describing the state of these practitioners.

Finally, the author wishes for a society without corporations, a society where everyone is a partner.

The author's final vision is one that I do not fully share. The elimination of capital is not a return of mass production to small production, but the elimination of the pathetic capital properties of mass production itself (i.e. making the company universally owned), while retaining it.

However, out of respect for the author's work, I have left the author's reflections intact.

Here, I hope that friends will refrain from any personal attacks during the discussion, and that we should protect any well-intentioned thinking, even if it is temporarily at odds with our views.

For many people, immature criticism of capital is a bridge towards scientific socialism. I thank the author for his hard work and believe that the author's thinking today will build the author's bridge towards scientific socialism tomorrow.

I. Basic information

The company is a medium-sized game company, currently the company has more than 700 employees. The company has its own pop-up game IP, which was developed into multiple product lines, but it does not have the resources or the core competitiveness (cultural attributes, technical heritage, etc.) of the first-tier (Tencent, Netease and other giants).

The founder of the company belongs to the second generation of highly educated rich people and has a high starting point. Therefore, the company's financial situation and performance pressure are better than other companies, and the company has a relatively "pensionable" reputation in the industry, with less encroachment on the rights and freedoms of employees.

In recent years, competition has become more intense and the company's performance has been declining, so it began to gradually reduce the rights and interests of its employees and introduced relevant regulations to increase the cost of employee rights and interests.

II. Management system

(i) Division of labour and departments

Departments	Workplace Personnel	Administration	Legal Affairs	Platform	Finance
Number of people	600+	18	6	41	17

The company's R&D department is autonomous in the form of studios forming different business groups under the head of each studio, each studio has a similar composition, basically divided into four types of work: programming, art, planning and testing, each studio is relatively independent (e.g. labour contracts, staff requirements) and responsible for the results, the public sector consists of personnel administration, finance, platform (similar to the combination of the operation and maintenance department and the distribution department of other Internet companies). The public sector consists of HR administration, finance, platform (similar to the combination of O&M and distribution departments in other internet companies) and legal departments. The legal department has only recently been established and has taken a number of initiatives since then.

(ii) What the studio does

The following is a description of the work of the studio.

The planning department is similar to a product manager in the internet industry, with a more detailed division of responsibilities depending on the type of game. The department is the initiator of the project and has a greater influence on the overall work (see example later). The department has high academic requirements, with no less than 985/211 students[27] recruited by the university.

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[27] 985/211 universities are two categories of advanced institutions. "985" refers to the selection of 39 universities proposed in May 1998 to be built into first-class universities with an international advanced level;

The main work content is based on the version objectives of the studio head (usually the company's vice president or similar level), with the head of the planning department (producer and main planner) dismantling the requirements, and then the specific planning to improve the requirements program. Most of the work of the planners is also executive oriented, with no personal influence on the direction of decisions.

The program department is mainly for software engineering programmers, with high academic requirements and no less than 985/211, but most of the program's work is to achieve the repetitive work of the performance layer, without technical growth and accumulation, and without access to the underlying framework design and more technical content of the work. In most cases, this wastes a lot of time and increases the contradiction between the planning and the program.

The art department is relatively autonomous (art quality in the game industry has a high weight, so some companies have a high degree of autonomy or even dominance) and focuses more on achieving better visual effects (original drawings, models, movements, special effects, etc.), but tends to be detached from the requirements themselves. This often leads to the art department giving what they think is a good looking design (e.g. painting style, presentation content), prioritising unimportant content, and cutting out important things due to tight deadlines. They are more costly to communicate with the planning department and are prone to frustration with their own work content, as well as conflicts with the planning department (changes in requirements, disagreement with designs, etc.).

The testing department is often the most stressed department, their work content is constrained by other jobs and they work backwards from deadlines, so they work under more pressure and bear the consequences of problems derived from rework etc. upstream. At the end of the release more programmatic issues (bugs), planning issues (design bugs), etc. break out, which can easily lead to conflicts with the program planning department. To some extent the company passes on the cost of communication and trial and error between different job types to the staff.

(3) Decision-making a head-scratcher

The company's decision-making is often a head-scratcher. When the head of the studio or the head of the planning department has a new idea, it is often to completely overturn the previous plan and redesign, and will advance to the program as soon as possible. Here is a typical example.

One time, the person in charge of the studio said at a meeting: "I recently watched the XX drama with the background of the Tang Dynasty and the martial arts style is similar to ours. The assassination of their assassins feels very good. Each department must push forward and add some elements to make this kind of feeling of prosperous Chang'an[28]."

The head of the planning department called a meeting in order to implement the studio head's instructions and said, "This way, we can add a stalking game, change the main plot and stuff the stalking game into it. We'll talk to the artists about the scenery requirements, find the feeling of opulence, and replace the material in this version. The work schedule remains the same, but time can be squeezed in. Also, all the planners go home and watch the XX drama to get a feel for it."

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while "211" is 112 universities to be built as national key training universities in the 21st century. 985 universities are considered better than 211 universities. 985 universities are all 211 universities, but 211 universities are not necessarily 985 universities.

[28] Chang'an (today's Xi'an) was the capital of China during the Tang Dynasty.

The battle planner and system planner had a problem: "If you're stalking, some of the underlying logic of the battle has to be modified, and you need to discuss it with the program. Besides, the stalking gameplay itself has to be designed from scratch. Also, it's too tight to come up with a plan today and try to do it in 2 weeks."

The plot/level planner started to complain: "If that's the case, we'll have to go through the mainline again, but it's still two weeks out and there's no features! How are we going to make it to the mainline?"

The head of the programming department and the head of the testing department complained while pressuring the staff below them: "If we add a new game, the bottom layer of the battle has to be changed, the program can't spare the manpower, and you need it in a fortnight, there's no time to test it. Fine, we'll make a neutered version first, no guarantee of quality." "You don't leave time for testing at all, we don't guarantee stability when we do new features in the pro-sealed version. The stability package can't be typed out all overtime, no one is leaving."

The head of the art department directly disliked: "If we have to change the style again, then the previously scheduled stuff will be pushed back ah."

This is a typical head-scratching decision. As deadlines often remain the same, staff have to increase their workload and even work constant overtime, with the costs of trial and error being absorbed entirely by the staff at the bottom. This working pattern leads to uncertain and stressful work content.

(iv) Hierarchy and Salary System

Program Rank	Salary Range	Planning Rank	Salary Range
Technical partners	?? + equity	Producers	?? + equity
Senior Technical Expert	50k – 65k	Executive Producer	30k-50k + project bonus
Senior Technical Specialist	40k – 55k	Master Planner	20k – 30k
Technical specialists	30k – 45k	Team leader	15k -20k
Veteran Engineers	20k – 30k	Combat, systems, values...	10k – 15k
Senior Engineers	15k -20k	Executive Planner	9k – 12k
Internship / School Recruitment	12k – 15k	Internship / School Recruitment	7k – 10k

Note: The above table is based on the program sector and the planning sector as examples.

Ownership determines distribution and status determines income. So, firstly, let's examine the hierarchy within the company.

The head of a studio is often an executive of the company (CTO[29], President, etc.) and has the greatest power, enjoying the corresponding resources and distribution rights of the company according to the historical revenue status of that studio. The head of the studio has the power of appointment and dismissal and the power to dispose of property, such as appointing and dismissing

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[29] Chief Technology Officer

the head of the studio's department, deciding on the direction of projects and the percentage of bonuses that can be distributed.

The department heads (editor's note: seems to correspond to the technical partners and producers in the table above) are often the de facto controllers in the game development team, with the power to appoint and dismiss personnel and dispose of property delegated by the studio head. The heads of departments can decide on their own recruitment criteria and actual decisions, and the heads of departments can decide on the percentage of bonuses to be distributed within their departments.

Technical experts (e.g. in the direction of back-end, front-end, UI frameworks[30], etc.) or planning team leaders (systems, battles, values, levels, etc.) are just senior part-timers who can arrange and assign specific tasks. In addition, they are also the main source of evaluation for the appraisal of subordinate staff.

Further down the line are the specific executives.

Generally speaking, a fresh graduate is an engineer, a senior engineer after one to two years of work, and a senior engineer after three years of work, but the ranking is not based solely on the number of years of work, but more on the amount of work experience and the level of technical skills demonstrated in one's CV and in interviews. From the technical specialist level upwards, in general, consideration is given to whether or not one has the appropriate level of technical skills, but also to whether one has the appropriate management experience. The more senior the position, the more complex the appointment and the less the experience and qualifications of the appointee are taken into account.

Salary adjustments for employees are also relatively uncertain, basically a certain amount of salary adjustment for each department, which is allocated to members by the department head himself, so employees are afraid of their supervisors. If you don't get on well with your supervisor, it is easy for your salary to stay put. In addition, the company's poor performance, there will also be an overall reduction in the amount of salary adjustment. Example: researcher A is doing school recruiting in the company and has been doing close to five years of programming, entry salary 11k, 17k when leaving, in close to five years of time only rose 6k far below the market value of the same level.

In general, the promotion of employees (salary and rank) is dependent on the evaluation of leaders higher up the hierarchy and the needs of the department. In addition to the employee's personal ability, salary promotion is affected by the company's business situation and the amount of salary increase; rank promotion is limited by the number of vacancies for promotion. As is the case with most Internet companies, individual effort for promotion is far less rewarding than the right track. The same effort can bring completely different benefits. For example, Guo, who stepped on the wind at every step of the way, could be financially free at the age of 29, and the industry has also heard that ordinary numerical planners from Netease's Yin Yang Shi project started at 5W[31].

iii. Systems of oppression, exploitation and culture

(i) Progressive cuts in benefits

The company is one of the more prestigious and less stressful retirement-oriented companies in the industry, but just like the illusion of superficially high salaries in the internet industry, the seemingly

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[30] User Interface (UI) is anything a user may interact with to use a digital product or service.
[31] 5W or 5 *wan* is 50,000.

wonderful benefits seem fragile when the company is underperforming or trying to squeeze more surplus value out of its employees.

The benefits advertised in the early days of the company, such as annual trips, soon existed only in historical documents. The meal allowance of $25 per day for working overtime until 9pm was applied to food and beverage invoices of a value greater than that amount, meaning that company expenses were tax deductible from food and beverage, and the employee reimbursement process was extremely lengthy and time-limited.

The employee handbook prohibits the exchange of information on salary, staff rules and other related topics (with the threat of dismissal if violated). During the interviews, it was also clear that employees in medium and large game companies are more likely to be "self-interested", wanting to fight for their own rights and interests, and preferring to protect themselves in the face of unspoken industry rules to ensure that their "current good" status is not infringed upon. They are less willing to disclose salary information, etc.

Bonuses are paid out gradually over a number of years (mostly half a year or even a year) and sometimes not at all when revenues are poor. Therefore, it is not possible to know how bonuses were paid in the early years, only that they were paid in this way. Upon further investigation, the company has not paid out project bonuses for the past 3-4 years (data from new projects launched in recent years), including the company's core hit IP sequels[32], the company's largest investment in the core projects over the years.

(ii) Increasingly stringent systems

The company's legal department has been supplemented by a process of filling in the gaps in the relevant systems, organising the selection of "staff representatives" and conducting a representative assembly to try to democratically implement the company's new staff code, which has been published as the result of a collective staff resolution.

The following are of particular relevance to the interests of employees

1. the hours of work and clocking in are set in accordance with standard working hours, but it is stressed that the company can adjust working hours according to production conditions and that employees are free to cooperate.

2. overtime work must be approved, but by default no applications are allowed to be submitted for normal overtime work (i.e. only free overtime on weekdays) and a maximum of 8 hours on weekends.

3. Employees are entitled to leave on statutory holidays, but if they are unable to take leave for work-related reasons, they are not considered to be working overtime.

4. Employees shall be given priority to apply for statutory annual leave. In practice, employees who apply for any leave other than annual leave will be forced to adjust to annual leave by HR.

5. Transferring leave can only be used after application, and transferring leave that has not been taken during the year needs to be applied for voluntarily, and is void afterwards. Some colleagues have been working overtime every day for several years, but they are not allowed to use their vacation and annual leave at all.

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[32] An IP or Internet Protocol is a unique address that identifies a device on the internet or a local network.

6. By default, overtime cannot be commuted when you leave a job, and if you ask for it, you will be "legally" allowed to transfer your overtime after the handover, i.e. 200% of your overtime will at most be refunded to you as if you were working normally. However, most employees have to give up their time off due to the time limit for starting their next job.

(iii) Offences in various types of overtime leave

Weekday overtime. It is forbidden to submit applications for this type of overtime, and depending on the studio, some compulsory overtime is worked until 9 or 10 o'clock every day. There is no overtime pay for this type of overtime.

Weekend overtime. A maximum of 8 hours/day may be requested without overtime pay, and a transfer may be used in accordance with the rules. However, the studio may not always approve the transfer. Unused compensatory time off cannot be discounted and will be voided if it is overdue. If a transfer is available at the time of departure, it will be granted as described above, but employees are often waived due to the time frame for starting their next job.

Overtime on statutory holidays. The Company avoids statutory holidays for overtime work whenever possible. The Legal Department has not encountered overtime work on statutory holidays since the new rules were established, so we do not know how well they are being enforced.

Annual leave (3 times your salary). Highest priority for use, those who have applied for other leave types first will be forced to amend by HR.

Reverse leave (2 times salary). Sub-optimal use, approved by the person in charge depending on the project. It is understood that a project team of employees who sprint all year round, with daily 996 and occasional 997[33], often cannot use the reverse leave even if it is available.

Routine leave such as accidental/sick leave. Last used. If such leave is applied for, it will be forcibly changed to annual leave in accordance with the regulations, not sure how strongly the regulations are currently enforced (people in the games industry are less used to taking leave). Sick leave requires a hospital certificate, but depending on how busy the studio is more requests for leave are often not granted.

On the whole, the company does not pay overtime voluntarily and the leave system has many irregularities. Employees can only rely on arbitration and other means of defending their legal rights to overtime and leave. However, the Legal Department has refined the normative processes and elements, making it difficult for employees to defend their rights. In the case of leave of absence, for example, employees need to apply several days in advance and the person in charge of multiple links approves; this results in most leave of absence processes being non-compliant, and in the event of a labour dispute, the company can use this regulation as the basis to claim that the employee has taken leave in breach of the regulations, resulting in the employee losing the case.

(iv) Changes in working conditions

The most notable change compared to the company's historical reputation in the industry is the extension of labour hours and the increasing incidence of overtime. Whereas in the past overtime was mainly due to the characteristics of the gaming industry such as the launch node, the current overtime is used as an important means to amortize staffing costs and hedge against poor decision making. The head of the department even said publicly, "It's like this in the industry, if others work

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[33] 996 means working from 9am to 9pm six days a week; 997 extends that to seven days a week.

overtime we lose if we don't, this model is quite good and we intend to introduce it to the company".

The company is indifferent to the health of its employees, even rationalising it as a feature of the industry. The manager said, "My stomach/cervical spine/heart ...... is not good either, I can't help it, this industry is like this, if you want to make a head, you have to fight, you young people have to fight more."

As the horse-trading effect in the company and the industry intensifies, most people are chaperones and are working under increasing pressure to not be eliminated. The pressure to perform is cascading down from management and the pressure on the company's performance requires individual studios to find ways to generate revenue and improve the competitiveness of their products, and departments have no choice but to oblige. Employees are required to do the same project in a shorter time frame, which leads to more work. Decisions made by superiors make the outcome more uncertain, and colleagues fall into a pattern of dumping each other's problems internally, with everyone passing on problems rather than solving them.

In terms of income, it is true that in the early years it was higher than other industries (emerging industry dividend), but rather than a good salary package, it was the high success rate in the early years of the industry. In the mid-term, due to the more mature R&D system, and the resource advantages of the big companies, small and medium-sized companies can only try to occupy a place with their creativity and new ideas, at this time most of the practitioners' salaries are on the high side (not as big as the gap between the early stage and other industries), but the risk of unemployment is high, and only the top companies maintain a stable and competitive salary. The company has now reached a bottleneck, with the big players methodically upgrading technology, laying out new categories, harvesting talent at high salaries and acquiring and integrating innovative studios. For most people, salaries are virtually unchanged from before (the squeeze has intensified across all industries, diluting incomes), while labour intensity has increased extremely, and the purchasing power of real income has shrunk extremely.

4. Staff thinking

As mentioned above, most of the employees are in a state of prudent protection, while the remaining employees are more extreme. The Darwinian tendency of the freshman society seems to be heavier (also suffered too few beatings), and some saw the violent dismissal of employees in the game industry a while ago and even think, "This is the way the industry is, if you can't stand it, don't come here. If your health is bad, it is blackmail to ask the company for compensation." There are not many fresh graduates like this, but it is easy to occupy the voice of employees, and even be promoted as "excellent employees", forcing other employees to exploit themselves. Those over the age of 30 are more accustomed to "touching the fish"[34], thinking that "this is the case in this industry anyway, it's easier here".

In this atmosphere, the company has also formed a vicious circle. It has to pay a cost higher than the market price before it can recruit the remaining people from the big factories. In the case of higher training costs, the middle-level talents it has finally cultivated under this atmosphere and treatment, will be easily poached by big factories. The high turnover rate of core personnel makes it difficult for the company to build its own core competitiveness and talent training system, forming a vicious circle.

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[34] See note 5, Part 1.1.

Most of the Internet practitioners are glamorous in the eyes of others and feel miserable themselves. Sometimes they feel that they are a proletarian, sometimes they dislike other proletarians or are disliked by other proletarians for betraying their class, and they appear to be very divided. I understand that most internet workers are paid well in exchange for sacrificing almost all of their personal time. At the same time this income is embarrassing, seemingly giving them a high degree of freedom in terms of spending, but in reality finding that they cannot afford anything that can change their lives and their class. Rather than enjoying life with a high salary, Internet professionals spend their little time left to feel the pain and paralyse themselves with consumerism so that they can feel the value of the struggle to live a meaningful life.

We are all the same, some of us sell our strength, some of us sell our bodies, and now that the value of flesh is being pushed lower and lower, some people are choosing to sell their brains, which are currently available at a decent price. But essentially, we sell ourselves. Living ourselves more and more like parts, with less and less ego and more and more work. Everyone originally wanted to be a part of the forest, to form a forest with others, but the world is gradually polishing them into firewood, and when they burn slowly the capitalists complain that so much wood is rotting in the ground and they can't even be firewood if they want to be.

Personally, I have a different view of the future than most people, and fighting for benefits and so on is essentially, in my opinion, a fish out of water, as long as it is within the framework of the company, it is playing under the rules set by others. At least in the field of brain workers, I tend to think that in the future there will be no concept of a company, and that everyone will be a partner (both A and B), each taking what they need to do business together. A model similar to that of self-publishing, strengthening the individual and dissolving the company into a single individual who actually creates value.

Chapter 14 Research on a Unicorn Internet Company[35]

Editor's note: This is an excellent research report. It describes in detail the company's hierarchy and labour process, and gives a specific account of how the company oppresses its employees and how they react to the company's oppression. From the report we can see that the vast majority of people in the company are at the bottom of the hierarchy, the typical brain-power proletarians, and a small number are managers, of whom the lower and middle management are the emerging petty bourgeoisie and the senior management belong to the bourgeoisie. The brain-power proletarians are complaining more and more in the face of enormous oppression and the main form of resistance at the moment is still only passive resistance like leaving their jobs, but the seeds of solidarity are already being planted in their hearts.

I. History of development

The company is an internet start-up which, in 2016 and before, had been in a lukewarm state with only one or two hundred people as there was not enough market demand for its business. There had also been a large percentage of layoffs before the business transition. The decision to change the direction of the business was made in the second half of 2016 and, taking advantage of the windfall at the time and the particular circumstances of competition in the industry and the correctness of its strategy, and even more so thanks to the hard work of all the employees, the company began to grow by leaps and bounds. At the end of 2017, the company had around 800 people and, by the end of 2019, had grown to over 5,000. By this time, the company was also reaching tens of millions of active users per month and billions in revenue per year. Within two or three years, the company had grown from a very small startup to a very large quasi-unicorn company.

II. Management System

(i) Division of labour and departments

Departments	Technology	Operations	HR Administration	Legal	Customer Service	PR	Finance
Number of People	1000+	3000+	100+	20+	100+	10+	10+

The company is first divided into departments according to the division of labour, but also according to business lines to divide the operational departments. Similar to the division of functions within a typical internet company, there is a technical department responsible for hardware and software technology, an operations department responsible for business operations, a customer service department, a public relations department, a human resources management department, an administration department, legal, finance and so on. Also similar to many companies, each major business line is managed by a corresponding division, and each division is managed by a vice president. The responsibilities and approximate size of these departments are described below.

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[35] A unicorn company, a term in the investment world, generally refers to a company that has been established for less than 10 years; its valuation is more than $US1 billion, and a small number of companies have a valuation of more than $US10 billion. It is not only a high-quality blue chip stock with unlimited market potential, but its business model is difficult to replicate. The term was coined by supporters of China's capitalist development who claim that unicorns represent "nobility, pride and purity".

Technical department: This department is divided into two main sections, hardware and software, and has approximately 1,000 people in total, most of whom have a bachelor's degree or higher. During the company's start-up period and up to the size of 1,000 people, the company's position in the talent market was not high, so its educational requirements for entry-level staff were relatively low, and college degrees were also allowed at that time. Later, when the company became larger and had a certain popularity in the market, and thus became more competitive in the talent market, the entry requirements were raised to more than a bachelor's degree, or even more than a bachelor's degree from a better university.

The software department is responsible for developing software services. Within the software department there are large technology development groups (including back-end and front-end) that match each business line, as well as general-purpose technology groups such as basic development, big data, data analysis and algorithms. The hardware department also has separate groups according to each business line.

Within the technical department, in addition to programmers, there are product managers responsible for product design, testers responsible for product acceptance, and also project manager groups (project managers who are only responsible for helping to supervise the progress of a project, but have no power themselves, not really managers). The collaboration between the programmers, testers and project managers is generally as follows: the product manager is responsible for designing the hardware and software product solution according to the operator's requirements, which is then handed over to the programmers for implementation, and after the programmers have implemented it, the testers will test it according to the established plan to ensure that the product's functionality and performance can pass acceptance before going live.

Within the technical department, there are often conflicts between product design, development and testing. For example, sometimes the product designer may think that the developer has not followed the established plan and therefore ask for changes, and the developer may be forced to work overtime because of this, or the developer may think that the product designer has not made the plan clear; the test may also fail to pass the developer's code results and ask for changes, and if the developer always makes mistakes, the testers are forced to work overtime and may also be upset. If this conflict is not handled properly, then the product designer and the developer can easily fall out and even get into frequent arguments. At such times, it seems that the product designer is the representative of the management and the developer is the oppressed worker. However, such conflicts between employees of equal status but with different job divisions are only internal conflicts, and sometimes the conflicts are actually brought about by labour-management conflicts. If they are handled well, if they understand each other's difficulties, and if they understand that they are all working for the same company, and that there is no need to make things difficult for each other, then they can get along well.

Operations: The operations department is the largest department, with over 3,000 people, making up the majority of the company's staff, and it is divided into two main sections, user-facing and device-facing. As mentioned earlier, the operations department is not a separate and complete department, but is divided according to business units, i.e. each business unit has its corresponding operations department.

Company-facing equipment operations. The company has a large number of devices for users and therefore needs people to maintain and operate them. The operations staff have no educational requirements and are the equivalent of general factory workers in the company. In addition to the full-time operations staff, there are also part-time operations staff, who are relatively inexpensive.

User-oriented operations, i.e. responsible for user growth, revenue growth, etc. They need to develop advertising strategies, pricing strategies, etc. to achieve their goals based on the needs and habits of users. Big data killing is one of the strategies they use to achieve revenue growth.

As the operations department is directly oriented towards the needs of the users, they are the demand department for the rest of the company and they occupy a strong position in the company.

Customer service department: The customer service department is mainly responsible for receiving inquiries and complaints from users, and there are about 100 of them. The volume of user complaints fluctuates greatly from month to month and quarter to quarter as they are highly correlated with the volume of orders. The company outsources a large part of its work so that it can immediately reduce staff and save costs when demand is low. The customer service department needs immediate access to user profiles when answering user questions, so it also needs to develop a system to extract, present and analyse users, which is also a requirement for the technical software department.

Public relations department: The industry is one that is closely related to the policies of various cities. A poor grasp of government relations and policies can lead to huge losses, so a special department is needed to develop and maintain relations with the government and to be able to grasp government policies.

Human resources department: responsible for staff recruitment, attendance, rewards and punishments, etc. It is an extremely important department for the company to manage and oppress its staff. There are two main parts, the first part is responsible for staff recruitment, this part of the staff needs to help recruit according to the requirements of other departments, so the relationship with other departments is more equal and relatively cordial when getting along. The other part is modelled on Ali's[36] political commissar system and consists of political commissars assigned to each business and technical department. Many of them are the lapdog type, fawning over the top and despising the bottom, forming a pair of snobbish eyes in the long run. Many people say that companies such as Ali and Huawei use Mao Zedong Thought to manage their companies, which is actually nonsense. They are just using some of the words of the time. The political commissars of the Red Army were political workers who safeguarded the proletarian line. What is the proletarian line? Equality between officers and soldiers, democracy for soldiers (soldiers' committees), fighting a war to build a society that eliminates the exploitation of human beings? Now Ali's political commissars, however, are lackeys who guarantee the bourgeoisie's oppression of the working people. There is a qualitative difference between the two.

Administration department: responsible for serving the leaders and staff. Firstly, it serves the leaders by setting up the venue, serving tea and water during various receptions and meetings, etc. Secondly, it is to serve the staff, such as the maintenance of the office and various equipment, the supply of evening snacks, etc.

Legal department: research of legal policies related to the company's business, formulation of contracts, litigation, etc. In terms of contracts, for employees there are only two contracts, namely the option contract and the employment contract. The legal department then works out how to

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[36] Alibaba Group Holdings, established by Jack Ma in 1999 is one of the world's largest retailers and e-commerce companies. In January 2018, Alibaba became the second Asian company to break the US$500 billion valuation mark.

maximise the benefits to the company and how to deprive the employees of as much as possible in these two contracts.

The finance department: omitted.

(ii) Hierarchy and payroll system

Grade	Salary Range	Grade
Researcher	60k – 75k	M5
Senior Technologist	50k -65k	M4
Senior Technical Specialist	40k – 55k	M3
Technical Specialist	30k – 45k	M2
Veteran Engineer	20k -30k	M1
Senior Engineer	15k -20k	
Engineer	Approx. 15k	

Ownership of the means of production determines distribution and status determines income. So, firstly, let's examine the hierarchical divisions within the company.

Look at the division of ranks according to programmers. Firstly, according to the technical hierarchy, there are engineers, senior engineers, veteran engineers, technical specialists, senior technical specialists, researchers and so on, and then upwards there are vice presidents, presidents and so on. Secondly, according to the management line, they are divided into manager, senior manager, director, vice president and president. The manager corresponds roughly to the technical specialist, the senior manager corresponds roughly to the veteran technical specialist and the senior technical specialist, and the director corresponds roughly to the senior technologist or researcher.

Generally speaking, a fresh graduate is an engineer, a senior engineer after working for one to two years, and a senior engineer after working for more than three years, but the evaluation of the grade does not simply depend on the number of years of work, but more on the amount of work experience and the level of technical skills shown in one's CV and interview. From technical experts upwards, generally speaking, in addition to the required technical level, consideration will also be given to whether the candidate has the appropriate management experience. Of course, if the person is a related person or has been sent by an investor, then it is likely that the general qualifications will not be met. The more senior the position, the more complex the appointment and the less the experience and qualifications of the appointee are taken into account.

Senior engineers and below are generally pure labourers, i.e. front-line workers. With very few exceptions, technical specialists and above are generally managers. A brief examination of the ratio of frontline labour to management is in order. In fewer cases, three to four front-line workers or more are likely to be managed by a technical expert; in more cases, one to twenty front-line workers are managed by a technical expert or senior technical expert; on average there is about one front-line manager for every ten front-line workers (a front-line manager is generally a technical expert).

What is the main job of this first-line manager? First of all, the first line manager does not actually spend most of his time in direct production activities (i.e. writing code), his main job is to plan the project, communicate resources across departments, manage people within the group, etc. The expression "either in meetings or on the way to meetings" is a good illustration of what happens when you are too busy with meetings to actually do anything. As managers, they have their own way of surviving. Such managers may not write more than a few lines of code a month, but are constantly making grand plans and bragging about them in meetings. For them, it's not enough to

bury their heads in the sand, it's important to get the PowerPoint right, to blow up the project and to get the relationships right. Very often, a project is not really proposed for the benefit of the company, but for their own standing in relation to engaging in performance.

For every 3 to 4 first-line managers, there is a second-line manager (senior or senior technical expert) above the engineers, veteran engineers and senior engineers, and the second-line manager manages about 50 people (the range can be 20 to 30). The heads of department are the executives of the company, and they form an executive meeting that can decide on the general policy of the company's operations. Of course, this executive meeting is not democratic, but is decided by the boss (i.e. the president), and the opinion of the investors is also extremely important.

The salary of an engineer is around 15k and generally increases by around 30% for each step up the ladder, but this is only an approximate level and there is a considerable difference between the same steps. The year-end bonus is usually 2 months per year, but not all of us get it. The company, in order to press its employees better, will widen the gap in the year-end bonus, according to which it does not have to pay a penny more (or even less), but also to motivate and urge the staff to work overtime.

Engineers, veteran engineers and senior engineers, responsible for specific tasks and with heavy daily burdens, are at the bottom of the company and are brain-power proletarians. However, they are able to save around 100,000 yuan a year and still have some avenues of upward mobility, so their ideology is influenced to some extent by petty-bourgeois or bourgeois ideology, and some of them are also competitive and believe in the bourgeois way of getting rich.

Technical experts, senior technical experts and senior technical experts, who are separated from their specific jobs, belong to the middle and lower management of the company, have a certain right to organise production and are generally paid more than 500,000/year, and belong to the emerging petty bourgeoisie. Although they do not hold the means of production, they have a closer relationship with them in production than the brain-power proletarians, are able to organise production de facto and therefore have a higher status and receive more remuneration than the brain-power proletarians.

Researchers (corresponding to directors) and above are generally paid more than 1 million/year and have options worth millions to tens of millions of dollars, which can only be cashed in if they go public, so they press their employees urgently to get the company listed soon. These people are not engaged in production, but possess a large amount of surplus value and belong to the bourgeoisie inside the company.

(iii) The labour process

Here's more about how Internet companies actually manage the labour of their employees and how they control the progress of their work. Programmers are engaged in mental labour, non-standardised labour, and they have a certain degree of control over their own labour process, just like craftsmen in the days of workshop crafts. Although the programmer has some control over his or her own work, the company will find ways to constantly increase its control and pressure.

Progress control: Generally speaking, each project team will have a project manager (of equal rank) who will help to break down the tasks, breaking down a task that might take a month to complete overall into day-by-day tasks, so that the overall progress can be monitored daily and a certain range of issues can be communicated and collaborated on a daily basis.

Division of labour: A project will be split into sub-tasks for each person according to their manpower and strengths, which will be interlinked and interdependent in terms of schedule. It is important to design the project from the outset so that the sub-tasks of each person are clear and the interdependencies between the sub-tasks can be designed. Sometimes someone will finish their sub-task first, and then they will be assigned to help someone else, which does not give them a direct bonus. There is also frequent sharing of technical knowledge and discussion of technical solutions between employees. Overall, there is a good rapport between staff at the same level who work with each other.

Product and testing: The product designer is also constantly monitoring the progress of the developers and the quality of their work. Product design and testing are the equivalent of quality inspectors in a factory, so there is often some conflict with the developers. If rework is required, overtime is inevitable.

Product launch: A characteristic of internet products is that they often go live in the middle of the night in order not to affect the user experience, and as a result developers may be forced to stay up late or even overnight every now and then. Some companies even simply delay their start time by a few hours and add in overtime to allow employees to leave work late at night. Staying up late often takes a deep toll on the programmers' bodies and affects their family life.

III. Oppression, exploitative systems and culture

Like other companies, this company has continued to adopt a variety of methods to increase exploitation as it has grown. These included eliminating or reducing benefits, increasing workloads, extending working hours, reducing end-of-year bonuses and so on. The following follows a rough timeline to illustrate how the company has gradually increased its oppression of employees.

In 2015, the company was still relatively small and the owner hadn't been a capitalist long enough so he appeared to be relatively humane . The company's history shows that working past 8pm was considered overtime, and this was recorded in the documentation as a basis for employees to request time off. In addition, there are 10 days of annual leave, far more than at present. As a result of this management policy, the company's workforce is more stable and the work is more solid.

Later on, the company decided to change its business direction. In order to quickly complete the technical transformation and open up the market, and also to save manpower costs, the company selected some people to enter a small black room, where they worked intensely for a long period of time, working overtime like crazy. As the boss also took the lead in working overtime, the technical staff felt valued and cared for, so they persevered through this period. Later, when the business finally grew, there was no longer a good reason to work overtime in the darkroom and it was cancelled at the request of the staff. This history of crazy overtime work and leadership in the front became the history of the company's serious development, and also became the heritage of the company's culture and a compulsory course for new employees to join. The boss also believes that the ability to work overtime and suffer is the entrepreneurial spirit. He had to consider what the technical staff would think if he did so, and whether they would protest, go on strike or resign en masse. The company was still too small and was in a critical period of development, and the stability of the workforce was a matter of great concern, so he did not dare to take such a risk.

As the business grew further, the total number of employees in the company continued to expand. At this time, some small management moves began to be made. In the spring of the company's reform, a new HR leader was appointed who enforced the boss's will to get a good grip on the workforce. Firstly, the annual leave was reduced from 10 days to 5 days. Secondly, they began to pay

more attention to attendance: in the past, it was enough to punch in the card once a day, mainly relying on the management of the leader to register the attendance. This is a relatively humane method. Now it is stipulated that the card must be punched in before 10 o'clock, otherwise it will be considered late. In fact, many employees often get off work late because they have to publish or various things. In the past, if they got off work late, they could come in late. If this is stipulated, sleep will be seriously insufficient, which cannot help but cause people to react. It is said that in some companies the middle technical management reacted directly to their bosses about the unreasonableness of this rule and it had to be abolished. This should be regarded as a symbol that technical middle management still represents the interests of workers to a certain extent, and also a symbol that technical staff have a certain status in the company. The company's increased oppression of employees to this point met with a backlash and had to be suspended for a while.

This state of affairs continued for about a year, which coincided with the company's smoothest business growth and the fastest expansion of the business. At the end of the year, employees generally expected a salary increase or bonus commensurate with the pace of business development. Instead of a corresponding increase in bonuses, there was generally less than in the previous year, as far as salary increases were concerned. This is a relatively obvious reflection of the difference and opposition between the interests of capital and labour. This difference cannot but affect the motivation of employees.

However, the year-end bonus and salary increase were only the beginning, as capital was just beginning to show its fangs. The following year, the company soon underwent a dramatic change. Many of the old employees complained: "The company is no longer the same and the boss is no longer the same". Here are some of the changes in the company:

Firstly, the company introduced Ali's 'advanced' system and recruited a large number of hrbp[37], or political commissars, to help managers at all levels implement the company's people management system. Many of them are well versed in the ways of the workplace and know how to be the lapdogs of capital. Secondly, many technical managers with experience of working for Ali were brought in. This way, it is very quick and direct to bring in a set of Ali's way of managing people and pressing them. On the one hand, they pressed hard, raising the bar for employees and forcing them to work overtime; on the other hand, they challenged the less oppressive, less ass-kissing managers: they had undoubtedly been trained by the big monopoly capitalist companies to be more superior in both ass-kissing, pie-drawing and brutal pressuring. Again, prestige is created by firing or getting rid of some people. Some of the new managers who are brought in do not have a strong capitalist stance and are therefore fired by the bosses in disguise, which undoubtedly puts pressure on other managers and employees.

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[37] The Chinese text uses these English letters. The stand for Human Resources Business Partner. The definition of a HR business partner is an experienced human resource professional who works directly with an organization's senior leadership to develop and direct an HR agenda that closely supports organizational goals. Rather than working primarily as part of the internal human resources department, the HR business partner works closely with senior leadership, perhaps sitting on the board of directors or collaborating regularly with the C-suite. C-suite, or C-level, is widely-used vernacular describing a cluster of a corporation's most important senior executives. C-suite gets its name from the titles of top senior executives, which tend to start with the letter C, for "chief," as in chief executive officer (CEO), chief financial officer (CFO), chief operating officer (COO), and chief information officer (CIO).

In this atmosphere, many of the old employees left, while many of the capital's lapdogs joined, and many of the new employees did not know each other and were therefore spread out, which quickly changed the overall atmosphere of the company. Firstly, there was a noticeable increase in overtime work. In the past, leaving at eight o'clock was considered overtime, but now it seems that leaving at eight o'clock is like being lazy, and many people are forced to leave work after nine or even ten o'clock. What's more, there are some brand new teams that use the excuse that the business is new and implement a 996 working system, while not giving a dime more than others in wages or a dime more in bonuses, which completely shifts the risk of figuring out new business onto the employees. In addition, there were originally two annual salary adjustment opportunities, the result of this year was that the two raises were all canceled. There are some employees in the company for two whole years have not increased wages, while they do not know how much prices have increased. Finally, there was a reduction in the year-end bonus and it was not given to some employees. Even with this, the boss still says that the employees do not work hard, are not motivated and have no sense of entrepreneurship. One of the boss's comments was, "Look at people like Ali, they are so big, but the lights in the building are still on at 10 or 11 o'clock at night". In the eyes of the boss, employees are just work machines, even if they have already gone home and can only sleep, people are still not satisfied and want to squeeze some more out of this base. Yes, this is the influence of Ali, this is the benchmarking role of Ali. Ali's control and exploitation of the workforce is undoubtedly a benchmark in the industry, something that every boss can only dream of, which is why Ali's work system, Ali's management style, Ali's managers have become the pursuit of one boss after another. It is also because of this that the company's employees will not only scold their own bosses, but also Ali's bosses.

IV. Staff thinking

Faced with the oppression of capital, employees are first of all complaining and dissatisfied.

Most of the dissatisfaction relates not to a pay rise, but to not enough year-end awards. In their view, learning from Ali is not a big problem, but you cannot just focus on how people oppress employees and exploit employees, without giving them the corresponding salary and bonus. Undoubtedly, Ali is already a kind of high-intensity labor and serious exploitation company, but after all, it can still have a relatively higher annual salary (not hourly wages, in fact, in terms of hourly wages it may be lower); this way of learning is really aggravating the oppression and exploitation of others.

Secondly, the tough and inhumane approach of the leaders. The hard rules of what time to leave work, playing with attendance, scolding employees for not working hard enough, such a practice is completely not to treat employees as human beings, shows no respect for employees, and no doubt, people feel insulted.

Third, the bad effects of overtime and super stressful work on people's lives. There is no time to rest and no time to exercise for a long time, and their health has deteriorated; single people have no time to fall in love, and those with families have no time to spend with their families.

Fourth, the pompousness and blindness of company bosses and leaders. It is often the case that the leaders have not planned the direction and programme of work at all, and then they try desperately to make the employee work overtime to complete his ill-developed programme. In the end, the employees put in a lot of effort to get the job done, but they don't get the job done, and the blame is placed on them. Moreover, it is often the case that those who are able to suck up to the leaders and flatter them are treated better, even if their work performance is mediocre. This situation also

undoubtedly increases dissatisfaction with the leader. Of course, such dissatisfaction may be directed first at one's immediate supervisor or at a higher level, or sometimes at the top of the company. However, such pomposity and blind command undoubtedly come from the top. On the one hand there is hard work without rest, and on the other there is a waste of work and of youth through pomposity and blind command, which is certainly irritating. Such waste is too much!!!

What do people do when they have complaints and grievances?

The first idea that comes up spontaneously is to leave, as the saying goes, if this one doesn't work, I'll change one, and if I don't deal with this leader, I'll quickly change to another company and another leader. This is exactly what the vast majority of people think. However, the employment environment is getting worse and worse, 996 is getting more and more rampant, it seems that every company is getting worse, so where can we go? This is undoubtedly the question on every employee's mind. As a result, many people will have the idea of starting their own business, and the idea of changing careers. However, there are risks in starting a business, the Internet has become unrealistic, and other industries have no advantage in starting a business, many of those who go to start a business have hit the water.

In such a situation, people have to gradually think that 996 is a common problem faced by everyone, fleeing is not the way out, and there is little hope for upward mobility, only by unity is the way out. And 996.icu[38] is undoubtedly the beginning of such solidarity.

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[38] See note 1, chapter 2.7.

Part V Other Proletarians

Chapter 15 Research on the working life of civil service support staff in a region

I. Basic situation of support staff in the region where the research subject is located

(i) Nature of the research post.

This study is about the working life of "support staff" who support the work of certain categories of civil servants in the system. These positions are referred to here as "support staff". It is important to note that the difference between "support staff" and "civil servants" is different from the difference between "temporary workers" and "regular workers". The "support staff" is essentially a separate position, but works in conjunction with the "civil servant".

(ii) "Recruiting auxiliaries" and "non-recruiting auxiliaries".

The research subject's district, A, recruits auxiliary staff by examination, and a college degree or higher is required to take the examination for recruitment to this category of auxiliary staff. However, there are a number of positions that are not officially called "auxiliary staff", but are also known as "auxiliary staff" in the private sector, and whose actual job content is largely the same as that of the recruited auxiliary staff, which are collectively referred to below as "Non-recruiting auxiliaries" are referred to as "recruiting auxiliaries" when they are recruited by examination, and "civil servants" when they are employed in civil service posts. "Non-recruiting auxiliaries are not subject to any academic qualifications. There are more non-recruited support staff than recruited support staff.

Where the term "support staff" is used as the subject of the following description, there is no difference between "recruiting support staff" and "non-recruiting support staff". The examinations for auxiliary staff are a vocational aptitude test + a professional qualification test. All recruited auxiliary staff are dispatched in the form of an employment contract with a third party company and are then dispatched to their jobs.

(iii) Age, gender and geographical distribution of auxiliary staff.

The recruited auxiliaries are divided into service auxiliaries and civilian auxiliaries. In previous years, for example, 10% of the total number of recruited auxiliaries to be recruited in District A were female. There are almost no women among the non-recruiting support staff. Based on the experience of the research participants, the region is entirely local in terms of both recruited and non-recruited support staff. The age variance of the non-recruited support staff is large, with the highest age reaching over fifty years, and many of these older support staff having been in the profession for over ten years. None of the recruited support staff were over 35 years of age.

II. Basic personal information of the research subject

The research subject started working as a support staff in 2016, with three years of experience as a non-recruiting support staff, and then passed the examination to start working as a recruiting support staff, with two years of experience as a recruiting support staff. He works and lives in a suburban area of a developed city. The research subject is responsible for (1) video surveillance coordination and (2) field investigation. The following will describe the work of the support staff for surveillance and exfiltration separately.

III. Work content of supporting staff

(A) monitoring auxiliary staff work content.

The post is implemented in a flip-shift system, and the post is manned 24 hours a day. A day's work is mainly sitting in front of the computer, through the video monitoring of relevant information. If the video shows abnormalities, that is, manual intervention. You can go to the bathroom at any time during the course of your work. The survey respondents personally believe that the content of the work they carry out is well suited to be replaced using automated solutions such as AI.

The civil servant responsible for monitoring has a similar job description to the support staff, but is also responsible for directing the work of the support staff. In addition, the enforcement actions must be carried out by the civil servant and the support staff can only assist, as only the civil servant concerned has the power to enforce the law.

The most tiring part of the working day is in the mornings, which can be a little busier as sometimes there are data reports to be done in the mornings, which require some office software skills. Support staff are often required to follow the work out. Meetings are held one day a week, depending on the mood of the civil servant in charge. From time to time, there are leaders in the monitoring room who come to look at the monitoring, ask the support staff to retrieve some data, etc. This usually makes the support staff feel more nervous.

(ii) Field investigation support staff work content.

The work of field investigation support staff, whether recruited or non-recruited, is to assist civil servants to check the relevant personnel and to investigate violations of the law.

The work of civil servants at checkpoints is similar to that of auxiliary staff, but they are also responsible for directing the work of auxiliary staff. In addition, enforcement actions must be carried out by civil servants, and auxiliary staff can only assist, as only the civil servants concerned have enforcement powers.

(iii) Temporary additional work for support staff.

There may be times when there are large events in the area (including large concerts in the area) and the support staff may have to be temporarily adjusted, for example, by deploying some support staff to maintain order. The workload is usually more intense during events, so most support staff do not want to be involved in any type of event.

There may be times when support staff are required to work overtime, usually for large events or unexpected situations, but the pay remains almost the same in these cases.

IV. Auxiliary work unit support accommodation and activities

Accommodation. The unit provides free dormitories, some of which are bunk beds in quadruple rooms. As all auxiliary staff are local to the region, they only use the dormitories when they are on duty or working night shifts.

Meals. Breakfast, lunch and dinner are available every day in the unit canteen, which is shared with the civil servants. The lunch break is from 11.00 to 1.00 pm and the dinner break is irregular. After 5.00 pm, you go to the canteen to eat on your own and then return to your post for other support staff in the same post to eat.

Cultural and recreational activities. The unit has a reading room and activity room, but the research subjects themselves have not been there, and most colleagues in the unit have never used the reading room or activity room, as this would make the leaders feel idle.

V. Management structure of support staff

(i) Subordinate relationship.

In terms of management structure, there are several support staff under the supervision of a single civil servant, whether in the Control Room or in the field, and the nature of their work is usually the same for support staff under the same civil servant. There is no hierarchy between support staff, nor is there any promotion, but nominally, support staff who have been rated as excellent for a number of years in a row are given "preference" when applying for the relevant civil service posts. One of the non-recruiting support staff in the unit where the research participant was working was a recruiting support staff member who left after taking the civil service examination.

There were no cases of verbal abuse or assault of support staff by civil servants or other leaders, nor were they aware of any fines.

Civil servants and support staff are generally of the same level of operational competence; civil servants will be slightly more professionally qualified than support staff; and the work will require more rules for both recruited and non-recruited support staff, making support staff relatively slightly more conscientious.

(ii) Job selection

Whether they are non-recruited or recruited support staff, they have no say in which post they are assigned to, unless they can get some connections in order to have the opportunity to transfer to a post they are more satisfied with. Most support staff prefer a freer position, for example, support staff who are transferred to the monitoring room will prefer to do field work, etc., because the monitoring room is closer to the leader, and in many cases work under the supervision of the leader more. One of the research participants had a colleague report a transfer out of his post to another support staff post.

VI. Working hours and leave for support staff

Field exclusion working hours. Auxiliary staff working hours for 4 shifts and 2 runs (including non-recruiting and recruiting temporary workers), do two lots of the two day-one day shift (8 am to 4:30 pm) and night shift (4:30 pm to 8 am). Civil service working hours are 8am to 5pm, double weekends.

Video surveillance working hours. Auxiliary staff work two shifts, 7am to 7pm. Shifts are rotated according to the duty roster and temporary staff whose shifts are on duty are required to work overnight on the same day. Civil servants work 8am to 5pm and have double weekends off.

Statutory holidays. Regular shifts will be covered as usual, with some days of holidays available for regular shifts.

Annual leave, maternity leave and sick leave. Auxiliary staff are usually lucky enough to be able to take annual leave, the standard being five consecutive days. The granting of annual leave is normally subject to the approval of the civil servant in charge, the civil servant in charge's supervisor and the supervisor's supervisor. It is generally unlikely that annual leave will be taken on New Year's Day.

Maternity leave is strictly enforced by the unit. Sick leave theoretically requires a sick leave slip, and most basic sick leave requests are easily approved.

VII. Income of support staff

The average income of the current recruiting support staff is around RMB 5,000-6,000 after deduction of five insurance and one pension[39], all five insurance and one pension are fully paid, and about RMB 1,000 is deducted from the five insurance and one pension, in addition, the recruiting support staff will have condolence benefits on New Year's Day and Spring Festival. The average income of relevant grassroots civil servants in the same city is about 1.7+ times that of recruited support staff.

Non-recruiting support staff usually earn around RMB 4,000, with the same deduction of RMB 1,000 for the five insurance and one pension, which comes to around RMB 3,000.

According to research respondents and colleagues around them, there has been little increase in salary for recruited support staff and non-recruited support staff so far in 2016.

VIII. Other information on support staff

(i) Trade Unions

The unit has a trade union. Recruiting auxiliaries and civil servants have trade unions, while non-recruiting auxiliaries do not have trade unions. Each person is required to pay more than RMB 100 per year to the union, and the union gives out some benefits on New Year's Day, such as cake coupons on birthdays, etc. The research participants were not sure where the office of the union president was, and had not even heard of the concept.

(ii) Leisure time

Apart from using some fitness apps for self-bodyweight training (push-ups, pull-ups, etc.), they also run in the playground in the district and occasionally swim in the swimming pool in the district. The main entertainment apps that the research participants like to use are Jitterbug and B-site, and the main app used to look up information is Zhihu. They also go to the cinema from time to time every month, especially for American comic series (Marvel, DC, etc.).

According to the research subject's observation, the younger colleagues of his support staff like KTV and dinners in their spare time, while the older colleagues like playing cards and fishing (there are more small rivers and lakes in the area).

(iii) Mobility and occupational hazards

Both non-recruited and recruited support staff saw very little mobility and most were old faces. According to the respondents, they were not aware of any support staff positions with common occupational diseases or significant occupational hazards.

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[39] See Chapter 3.1, note 4

Chapter 16 Research on the working life of nurses in a tertiary hospital

Editor's note: This paper is a study of a group of nurses in a tertiary hospital in a provincial capital city. However, the subjects researched in this paper are not representative, as their treatment and working conditions are significantly better than those of their counterparts. However, this does not prevent us from understanding the basic situation of this group.

Nurses in tertiary hospitals earn relatively high incomes and have relatively easy work, and are typically brain-power proletarians. They are engaged in complex labour and their work has a certain technical content, so the cost of reproducing their labour is significantly higher than that of the manual proletarians with simple labour. "After the transfer, including the two years of regulation training, they arrive at around 10,000 per month after five years of work, and around 20,000 after ten years."

The hospital is illegal in terms of provident fund contributions, but the oppression they feel at work is not strong, and although they are dissatisfied with their income, they believe that the overall distribution of the hospital is reasonable. Their overall management is relatively humane, they are able to enjoy regular holidays and have some room for promotion.

It is clear from the article that the composition of their income is related to the hospital's "revenue generation", and that "performance pay is calculated according to the whole department, for example, if your department generates more revenue this month, then the performance pay allocated to each person is also more". This is a natural consequence of the industrialisation of healthcare.

They do not work long hours, but the work is not easy and there is a certain risk of injury. They don't seem to be happy at work; for them, "the happiest time of the day is when they have to leave work in the afternoon."

Overall, this is a group of people who are not sharply contradictory (although they are becoming sharper) and who (the nurses of the tertiary hospitals) belong to the upper strata of the proletariat.

I. Information about the researcher

The researcher works in a tertiary hospital in the centre of a provincial capital city and is currently in her third year of work. In the first two years, she has rotated through four departments, a process known as training, which is a phase in which nurses who have graduated from a specialist or bachelor's degree rotate through various departments when they join the hospital. The current researcher is in the first half of her third year of work.

II. Nurse Management

(i) Management structure

The hospital is divided into clinical and non-clinical departments, with nurses in each clinical department. Each of these non-clinical departments includes the nursing department, the security department and so on.

The first leader of the nursing department is the director of the nursing department. The director of the nursing department is in charge of the head nurses of each major department (the head nurses of all clinical departments are managed by the nursing department), and the head nurses of each major department are in charge of the head nurses of the minor departments under that major department. Each small unit nurse manager is responsible for the nurses in that small unit, and each

small unit also has a management group to discuss management issues, which is usually made up of nurses who have been working in the unit for a long time and have more experience.

The remaining nurses in the unit are not hierarchical, but are divided into different grades according to their title and years of experience. The number of years of experience depends on the length of time the nurse has worked in the hospital, and the title is awarded to the nurse after meeting the length of service requirements and after passing an examination plus a selection process, which includes items such as publications.

(ii) Management

The respondents felt that the management style in their hospital was relatively lenient, with no abusive, reprimanding, or beating of nurses by managers. In some departments, a fine of a certain amount is imposed in case of tardiness, etc., such as paying some money to buy milk tea for everyone.

Nurses are able to take normal leave, which can be requested from the head nurse of the small department. Sick leave is easier to take and requires proof of illness. Maternity leave is around 150-180 days. For annual leave, there are 5 days in the second year of training and 5 days in the first year of full employment.

III. Nurse Staff Profile

(i) Academic qualifications and establishment

Nurses are grade 0 nurses in their first year of work, counting the first year from the end of their regulatory training, after which they are promoted according to their years of experience. Nurses with a master's degree are exempt from training. In terms of establishment, undergraduates and specialists are contract staff, while masters are personnel agents (between establishment and contract staff), with different treatment such as provident fund. Each year, masters, bachelors and specialists are recruited in proportion to each other. Very few nurses have a formal establishment and only a very small number of older nurses have an establishment[40].

(ii) Gender and age distribution

The ratio of males to females is around 1:15 to 1:10. The age range is relatively small, mainly between 23 and 30 years old (at least 60%). 45 years old and above is very rare. The average head nurse and above is around 40 to 45 years old, and the head of nursing can be up to around 50 years old. The hospital has always felt that there is a shortage of nurses, and over the age of 40, nurses do not work the night shift, and some nurses will reach management positions, but will still be involved in clinical work. There is always a relative shortage of people for frontline positions.

(iii) Other information

Geographical area. Respondents were unsure of the proportion of their colleagues who were from rural or urban areas. Geographically, there are very few nurses from outside the province and very few from the local area of the city, with the majority coming from other cities in the province.

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[40] "Establishment" refers to the number of officially recognised regular or permanent staff, usually based on a quota approved by the state authorities.

Mobility. Mobility is relatively high, with the reasons for mobility being mainly job-hopping and not many career changes. Those with three years of service in the same batch as the researched subjects were able to stay 60-70%.

IV. Content of nurses' work

The degree of hard work of nurses varies greatly from department to department, such as ICU and other departments with a high level of emergencies, where nurses have a heavy workload and stress.

Apart from some hospital-specific research, teaching and bookkeeping tasks, the work content of nurses in other non-management positions in the same department is the same, and even nurses in management positions (such as head nurses) are often involved in routine work. The old and new nurses have the same job description, but the relatively more experienced older nurses are responsible for some of the more critical patients, which are more difficult to care for.

(i) What medical and surgical nurses do

Some clinical departments are surgical departments and some clinical departments are internal medicine departments.

The job content of nurses in internal medicine departments: basic nursing care, infusion of fluids and detection of vital signs.

The work content of nurses in surgical departments: in addition to the work content of nurses in internal departments, it also involves pre-operative preparation and post-operative care for patients who are to undergo surgery.

Pre-operative preparation: In the case of cancer requiring surgery to remove a tumour, for example, bowel cleansing, reminding the patient not to eat, antibiotic skin tests, blood tests and injections are carried out; on the morning of the operation, another enema, shaving and disinfection are carried out. Pre-operative preparation will be done in the ward around 7am each morning for patients who are having surgery today and may take one to one and a half hours. Pre-operative preparation is usually done by the night nurses.

Post-operative care: care of various tubes such as drains, wound care (observation, dressing changes, etc.), preparation and input of nutritional solutions, etc. There are additional operating nurses in the operating theatre. The hard work of the nurses is greatly related to the number of patients and the degree of criticality.

(ii) Working hours and day and night shifts

The day shift for nurses generally starts at 8am and finishes at 6pm, working 8 hours (with a 2 hour lunch break in between). The night shift for nurses generally does not end until the day shift nurse comes to work. The night shift is similar to the day shift, but there is much less to do in the evening. Night shifts are rotated and each nurse is rotated in less frequently.

The happiest part of the day is when you are leaving work in the afternoon. The most tiring time is when there is a patient emergency on the night shift, which can be difficult due to the low staffing levels on the night shift itself. Nurses do not need to punch in and out of work. Nurses do not have a preference for day or night shifts, but they do have an attitude towards workload, which can lead to turnover if there is too much work. Unless there is a resuscitation at the end of the shift, you can just

leave at the end of the shift. This is usually the case in departments where there are more emergencies.

(iii) Working hours and overtime mechanism

If there are no emergencies, the mobile staff will rest at home, and if there is a shortage of staff, the mobile staff will come to work to reinforce them, but they will be able to take the same amount of time off afterwards. Due to this mechanism, there is no overtime for nurses.

There are no weekends and nurses work according to a flexible schedule, which varies from week to week and is adjusted according to the actual situation. However, each nurse works a strict 40-hour week (but the researcher stressed that this is not the case in many hospitals and is not representative) and if they work more than 40 hours in a week, they are given the same number of hours off afterwards. The longest the researcher had worked was six days in a row without a break, and the break was made up later. As nurses need to get up earlier each morning, e.g. the respondent's daily commute takes only 5 minutes, but also needs to get up at 7.10am, the respondent feels more desperate when working for six days in a row.

(v) Work-related injuries, occupational diseases and other risks

Work-related injuries: Some departments may have toxic and hazardous substances, for example, nurses may be at risk when dispensing chemotherapy drugs, which may spill and evaporate, or otherwise come into contact with them, which may be harmful to humans. There is also a very small risk of being pricked by a needle, cut by a surgical blade, etc., and of contracting the disease of the patient concerned. These are, of course, highly unlikely events. In the case of work-related injuries, the employer will fully reimburse and help with treatment.

Occupational diseases: there will be some varicose veins, after all there will be prolonged standing.

V. Remuneration package and benefits

(i) Salary

A nurse's income is composed of: basic salary + performance pay + night shift pay.

The basic salary is divided according to the title; the night shift fee is calculated according to the number of night shifts and divided according to the number of years of service; the performance salary is calculated according to the whole department, for example, if your department generates more revenue this month, then the performance salary distributed to each person is also more, and the distribution ratio of the performance salary is divided according to the title and the number of years of service.

The following income situation is based on the experience of the researcher, based on the situation in the hospital where the researcher works, and is not universal. The salary of a nurse, after deduction of about 800 yuan per month for five insurance and one fund, is usually around 2,500 to 3,000 yuan for the two years of training and 5,000 to 6,000 yuan for the probationary period. After regularisation, including the two years of training, you will earn around 10,000 yuan per month for five years or more, and around 20,000 yuan for ten years or more. The monthly salary fluctuates due to different performance income.

The hospital is still expanding and there are many new people coming in, and the salaries are generally lower when the new people arrive . For the very few nurses who have an establishment,

the researcher only knows that their provident fund is a little higher, but the rest is not clear. Nurses' provident fund and social security are paid according to their basic salary.

(ii) Provision of accommodation and food

No accommodation or related allowances are provided. In terms of food, the hospital will provide a monthly meal allowance, which is usually enough to cover the nurses' brunch for a month. The hospital canteen's boxed lunch is 16 yuan a piece (an average boy can eat a piece of the right amount), and the small bowl of food in the hospital canteen is about 20 yuan for an average person. Most of the nurses do not eat dinner in the hospital and only take care of lunch. The taste of the canteen is average, a little worse than takeaway.

(iii) Other benefits

The union gives out things for the holidays, kitchenware, food, four-piece suits, etc. For example, a few hundred dollars in cake vouchers are given out for each person's birthday, and party members are given shopping vouchers. The money paid to the union is deducted directly from the salary. The researcher was not sure exactly how much was deducted, but knew that the money paid was very small.

VI. Daily life and recreation

(i) Trade unions and related activities

The nurses were aware of the existence of the union, but none of them knew where the office of the union president was. The union organises activities such as clubs, such as badminton clubs, but the respondents were not sure of the details of the clubs' activities because they had not participated in them. The hospital has an activity room, reading room, gym, library, etc. Some departments have a separate reading room (a place to study).

(ii) Daily expenses

The respondents indicated that they were not self-sufficient in terms of income during the training and probationary period, and that they were self-sufficient in terms of income after they were regularised. It should be noted here that the respondents themselves are local to the capital city of the province. The following is a rough estimate of the participant's current monthly expenses.

Transportation: around 300 RMB.

Food: between 500 and 700 RMB (excluding the hospital meal allowance).

Entertainment and social shopping: around 1000 RMB.

Rent: 1000 RMB (shared).

(iii) Room rental situation

The hospital does not provide accommodation. Nurses in the field usually share a room with colleagues and classmates, etc., or take out a loan to buy a room. The channels for renting accommodation include internal hospital rental groups, local agents and second-hand landlords. We have also encountered situations where we have been cheated by second landlords, such as finding various problems after moving into a house but have been unable to refund the money.

(iv) App usage

Entertainment apps commonly used by the respondents: WeChat (reads public websites quite a lot), Weibo, Akiyip or Tencent Video (watches anime and dramas), Station B (swipes every day), Zhihu (swipes every day), Xiaohongshu (reads occasionally three times a week).

Apps commonly used by the respondents to obtain information: mainly Weibo, Public, and Zhihu.

VII. Respondents' views on social issues

(i) On the personal salary level of the researched person

After comparing the income of her classmates (who went to work as nurses in hospitals in provincial capitals in other provinces), the respondent thought that her income was low. For example, in her hospital, it took her 5 years of work to reach an income of over 1W+[41], while her classmates who worked as nurses in other relatively poor cities were able to reach an income of over 1W in about 2.5 years, and her classmates worked 7 hours a day compared to the 8 hours a day the respondent worked. But again, the researched person thought that the distribution in her hospital was reasonable.

(ii) On the effect of seniority and years of experience on operational competence

According to the researcher's observation, nursing is a profession that is very much about professional knowledge, proficiency and level of experience. The advantages among senior nurses are rich clinical experience and high operational proficiency, but young nurses also have their own advantages, such as more exposure to new nursing concepts and knowledge, study opportunities such as going abroad, and better research skills.

(iii) On how well nurses and patients get along

The researcher said that she felt that at least 50% of patients at work did not get along well with the nurses, for example, patients would often question you, not believe what you said and look it up on Baidu themselves. Although the researcher felt that her hospital had repeatedly stressed the need for nurses to pay attention to their attitudes, communicate with patients and pay attention to their emotional well-being, and that the nurses were doing a good job, there were still many patients who were not very cooperative, causing the researcher to have some negative emotions at work.

(iv) On "serving the people"

The respondent said that she might not be able to reach the level of "serving the people", but she felt that by working as a nurse in a hospital, she could at least try to help others. When she encountered the "uncooperative patient" mentioned above, she also had the feeling that she did not want to serve him, but she would still control her emotions and do her job well.

(v) On the distribution of wealth in society as a whole

The respondent felt that highly skilled surgeons and conscientious nurses contribute more to society in comparison than stock speculators and capital owners who sit on interest, but earn less, a situation which she considered less than reasonable.

(vi) On ideologies such as socialism

Respondents indicated that they did not know much about these concepts. The only time she knew about them was when she was studying for her recent postgraduate examinations and had seen

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[41] W = 10,000 (RMB)

them when studying politics for the examinations, but she did not understand them very well and could only try to memorise the points. The researcher said that she basically does not pay attention to political events, but she does pay attention to social events.

(vii) Others

The researcher believes that nurses who take part-time postgraduate courses in their own speciality have the same marks as full-time postgraduates; however, part-time recognition after graduation is not high, and many hospitals still require a full-time postgraduate diploma when calculating salaries and evaluating titles. The respondents felt that this was not reasonable, and if this was the case, what was the point of offering part-time postgraduate studies?

The respondents felt that it was more difficult to graduate from a general university in China with a thesis than it was to go abroad to graduate from a general university in some foreign countries (e.g. more difficult examinations, more pressure to graduate, more requirements to graduate, longer time to graduate, etc.). However, in hospitals, in recruitment and other areas where qualifications are required, the degree of recognition of these postgraduate qualifications with different levels of difficulty in graduation is the same, which makes the respondents feel that this is not reasonable. Note that the comparisons here are with 'ordinary universities', both domestic and international, and not with prestigious universities.

When it comes to the issue of postgraduate suicide, the respondents felt that at present, universities are more concerned with the academic level and other professional abilities of supervisors than with the integrity of supervisors.

Chapter 17 Interviews with Didi drivers[42] (private cars) in a first-tier city

I. Working hours

Master Song[43] is a native of Henan, born in 1987. He has been in the city for five years and has been doing dripping for three years. Master Song says, "You have to get out early to make money. I usually get up at 6.30am, collect the car at 7pm and run until after 9pm before leaving the car. During this time, the company launched an incentive (long-term partner award) to encourage us to run the morning and evening peak (7am to 10am and 5am to 8pm), running 400 orders in about two months, and getting about 1,000 yuan per quarter. To run this, I definitely had to get up early and leave late every day."

When asked if he was tired, Master Song said, "What can you do? I used to do courier services. I woke up at 8 o'clock, squeezed the subway for an hour, started work at the company at 9 o'clock, and didn't get off work until 8:30 in the evening. It's half past nine when I get home."

Master Qiao is from Jiangxi, born in 1992, and has been in this city for seven or eight years. Master Qiao used to do desktop maintenance in a company, but after the company praised him, he came out and ran to Didi. Master Qiao said, "I only worked for two months. We newbies have to run more if we want to make money. I always leave the car at 7:00 in the morning (sometimes later) and collect the car at 9:00 p.m. "If you want to earn high income, you have to run more."

Master Li's birthplace and age are unknown, and he has been running full-time Didi for several years. Master Li said, "I get up at 6 in the morning, get the car at 6:30, usually leave the car at 8 in the evening, and rest for an hour in the afternoon. Except for meals and rest, I have to run for 11-12 hours a day."

Apart from the three interviewees mentioned above, other Didi drivers also reported working long hours, generally speaking, running around 12 hours a day. If they run during the day, they basically get the car at 7am and often don't leave the car until after 8pm.

When asked if they usually have a break, Master Li said, "If you want to take a break, take a break, we are very free." But Master Song said, "We look free, but every day when you open your eyes, two hundred dollars out (here refers to the cost, later described in detail), you have to run this money back ah. For those who run Didi, who dares to take a break, it's good if we can take a day off a month."

II. Labour situation and income

During the interviews, Didi drivers generally said that their work was very tiring and that their income was not high.

Master Song said, "App-hailing cars are too tiring, I want to go back to work, but the money for work is too little. I feel that there is still hope to run an app-car. I once had a lot of Sunday orders, and ran more than 1,000 a day. But this money is paid for with my life. I eat irregularly and now I have a

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[42] *Didi Chuxing* is a one-stop service covering taxi[1], special car[2], Didi Express[3], rideshare[4], chauffeur[5] bus, freight[6] and other services. Users can make free reservations through the Xiaoju Car Rental App or Didi App. Didi is into advanced autonomous electric vehicles which will eventually put many Didi drivers out of work. See its English language website: Homepage - DiDi official website (didiglobal.com)

[43] "Master" (*shifu*) has long been a term of address for drivers of cars and taxis.

stomach problem. In order to make more money, I run 12 days a month on the night shift (night shift single good price high)."

Master Qiao said, " running a car is not only tiring, you not only eat irregularly, but also have to hold in your urine, it's very bad for the body."

About income, Master Song said, "I run an average of more than 40 trips an hour, in a day I'd run 400-500 trips. However, after deducting the expenses, it is less than 8k a month. I'll give you a costing. I am a private car, landed on the license plate of about 200,000, can run eight years, basically calculate down every month depreciation will be about 2k; operating insurance 10,000 a year, maintenance costs more than 1000 a year, charging costs 40-50 a day, these items add up to about 2.2k a month; and fines, I was fined three times this year, a total of 1000 yuan, a parking violation 500, a realization of changing lanes 200, and another one of 300. Add it all up, and it costs nearly 5k a month. It's just under 8k."

Master Song went on to say, "I just started running a car-hailing network, and I was fined 4,000 in the first year mainly for parking violations. I remember a parking violation within the yellow line, fined 1000, and a zebra crossing where I did not yield to pedestrians, fined 500. I am a private car, per kilometre Didi's take is roughly 20%-25% (Master Song said before they took 20%, now they take 25%)."

Master Qiao said, "The company's car is rented by me, and I pay 4k+ a month to the company, and the company buys the operating insurance. By this calculation, the cost per month roughly in 6k." Master Qiao added, "Didi takes 25% to 35% (company car) so newcomers like us, if you want to have a stable income of 1w +, you must run until 11 pm."

When asked why Master Li's turnover is so high, yet the net income is so little, Master Li said, "the car is not worth the cost ah, I have this car licensed at 150,000 (Master Li's own car), in 8 years it must be scrapped, and even if it can run eight years, the cost per month is more than 1500. And then count the daily electricity (40-50 a day), wear and tear, insurance (10,000 a year), fines, the cost is almost 3000 yuan a month."

Other Didi drivers also said that in such a big city, in an hour they can run more than 40 yuan of turnover, 11 hours a day can run to four or five hundred yuan (plus rest, the actual time out of the car more than 13 hours), a month can run about 1.2-1.5w gross income, after deducting costs, the rough income range is also around 8k with fluctuations up and down.

III. Lifestyle

Most of the masters interviewed talked about their lives and their hardships.

Master Song is married, his wife is back home, and he works full time with a two-year-old child. Master Song is under a lot of pressure, "I've mortgaged my body for the car loan and I'm afraid to move, the mortgage is 3k, the car loan is 4k (the aforementioned 8k income is the income after deducting the car loan), what can I do? I can't not buy a house, or my daughter-in-law will make trouble. Buying a house in the county is also for the children to go to school, they can't learn anything in the town schools, the county education is better."

Master Song's life is very frugal, "I eat 30-50 a day, I cannot help it, eating out is expensive. My rent is 600 a month, just a single room, in the city village. There is no water heater, no air conditioning, just a bed and a toilet, and I don't cook. I can't afford to rent a good house, a house with a balcony costs more than 1000."

When it comes to life, Master Song seems to have endless words, "The pressure is too much, my wife is not working. The good thing is that my parents still have some small businesses, and I can earn a few thousand a month. I pay my wife a couple of thousand a month, and I have to pay the rest of the money for the mortgage. I save every day and I probably save about 20,000 a year."

Master Qiao is also married, but has no children. Together with his wife, Master Qiao rents a flat in a city village for 1,500 for a one-room flat. Master Qiao said, "Utilities are more expensive, even if you don't use them, you still give money for them. The total deduction per month is two hundred or so, in fact, the rental expenses is 1700 yuan."

Master Qiao's wife works in a car dealership and does sales, her income is not stable, but roughly speaking, the couple can earn about 1.5w per month. Master Qiao used to be a university student (college), studying computer, did desktop maintenance, also did real estate sales. He had some savings in previous years, but was fooled into doing a small business and lost all his money. Master Qiao said with a smile, "I lost a lot of money doing the milk tea shop, I was young and ignorant and was cut like leeks[44]. At that time with the money we earned it would have been good to buy a house, hey."

Master Qiao is not a frugal spender, "My monthly expenses add up to a total of 4k+, and the family spends a few thousand in total. Every month, I can save a few thousand dollars, but I still have to pay off some debts I owed before (the money I lost by joining the milk tea shop). We are really at the bottom of the social ladder, but of course, it's better than a factory. "

When it comes to owed money, Master Song added, "I used a credit card to buy a house and a car at the time, and now I still owe tens of thousands on credit cards. I have to pay off my credit card every month. I have three POS[45] machines at home, which go back and forth.

Many taxi drivers feel bitter in their stomach when it comes to talking about their lives.

A fifty-year-old master said, "I previously worked in state-owned enterprises, but was then laid off, there is no way ah, all the work you have to do ah, I heard people say you can get money by running for Didi. My son is already working, that is, working part-time, I rely on him, but I still have to earn money to give him a daughter-in-law ah."

A master in his forties said, "I used to work for a company that didn't pay overtime, and now I'm going to sue him. I'm going to sue him now. The proceedings have gone to the second trial and I should win. I was afraid of trouble before, but then I got familiar with it a few times, so what's there to be afraid of. There was no money in the first place, and I deserve this money."

IV. The future

It is difficult for Didi masters from outside to gain a foothold here.

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[44] "Cut like leeks", are Internet buzzwords. A leek is a tough plant, and farmers cut off the leaves with a knife, but they will grow back soon after. Therefore, there is a saying in the Chinese market circle of "cutting leeks", which means that in the eyes of big market players, there will always be a steady stream of new retail investors who will be cut into the market. These people are nicknamed "leeks". They are vulnerable to the selling of stocks by institutions, funds, and large investors, which causes the stock market (or individual stocks) to plummet, ushering in new opportunities for opening positions, and then re-opening positions at low levels.
[45] Point of Sale machines incorporate EFTPOS card readers and is a terminal at the place at which a transaction takes place.

Master Song said, "Now running a car is becoming less and less profitable. There used to be a lot of subsidies, but now there are no more subsidies. In my first year, the turnover was more than 20,000 a month. Sometimes the rewards were six or seven hundred a week. The first few years, there were double subsidies, but now it's a monopoly, he's begun to get cut like leeks. There used to be a lot of coupons for Didi, now Didi has anything and everything." While complaining, Master Song added, "But Didi is successful, it has a high market value. It has invested so much money, but now its market value is much higher than the investment. When the app-hailing car came out, it messed up the taxis badly."

Master Qiao said, "In the past, Didi made money, prices were high and there were not so many vehicles. This year is very special, many people without work start to run for Didi, you hear other old drivers say that many people from other industries have come in to run for Didi."

The platform used to have rewards, but now, with the monopoly, there are no more rewards. The price of a unit has also been adjusted downward, before 30 kilometres was 100 yuan, but now it's down to 60-70 yuan. These two years I make less and less money, last year a day can run six or seven hundred, this year a day will be four or five hundred."

Talking about the future, people generally feel very powerless.

Master Song (with a private car), said "I didn't buy social security myself, and I really don't have the money, so I want to wait a few years before I pay. I don't know what to do in the future, I can't afford to buy a house here for sure, but I have to do it, there is no work to do at home. I'll bring my wife over in a few years. I'll pay off my debts in the next few years and hopefully I'll get over it. This society is like this, if you don't buy a house or a car, there's no pressure, but once you do, you're tied up."

Song kept complaining that his car was expensive, "Hey, this car is expensive, I wanted to run at Premium, but I was not given an upgrade, the salesman said it was screened by the machine, I was so angry. Premium can get you 1-2k more a month, you can buy so many things ah."

Master Qiao (company car) said, "The Didi company doesn't sign labor contracts or buy social security, they rent cars to you. Doing takeaway, and Didi, are all squeezed by capital."

Talking about his future expectations, Master Song said, "In a couple of years, I will bring my wife over. She likes being together too. But when she comes over, I can't run the car like this, and I have to find spare time for her. I hope the car can be upgraded to a Premium, earn 10-20,000 more a year, 5 years on 100,000, I could also solve a lot of things. I also hope the kid can go to university. If he can, I will pay for him to go to university, I will sell my house to pay for him. But the Henan college entrance exam is very intense, hey."

Master Qiao added, "There is no future in running Didi. You drive, there is no difference between two years and twenty years, there is no skill, no improvement. What you earn in one day is one day, there is no future. I want to have a skilled career. I used to study computer science, but I'm too old (born in 1992) to get into programming either. Programmers have a very short life cycle and now you get fired after a few years in the industry. I drive every day now thinking about what's next and what I plan to do tomorrow." However, Master Qiao doesn't seem to be sure what he can do in the future either.

V. Summary

Private car Didi drivers are similar to tenants who bring their own tools of labour with which they perform their labour, but a part of the fruits of their labour will be appropriated by the platform without compensation. Here, we still classify them as proletarians, and this group has the following characteristics in terms of working conditions, working hours and wage income.

Long working hours. In the case of daytime driving cars, for example, they usually start at 7 o'clock and leave their vehicles after 9 o'clock in the evening, more than 14 hours a day.

And because as car drivers, they eat irregularly, hold their urine and sit for long periods of time, stomach problems and prostate problems are common among drivers.

The income is not high and is on a downward trend. After deducting the costs, the income is roughly 8k, which is earned by working 14 hours a day, all year round. The actual hourly income of a drip driver is not much different from that of a factory worker, if the base salary is calculated at 2200 and the overtime is 5 hours a day on weekdays and 13 hours on weekends. In the first few years, the income of Didi drivers was not bad. As the monopoly intensified, the income of Didi drivers continued to decline, which was one of the most complained of things by all respondents.

Awareness. In the interview, I asked Didi masters if they knew about Didi drivers "doing things". Some said they had heard of it, some said they had not, but most people didn't care much.

An overall impression. In previous years, the proportion of Didi drivers who fantasized about getting rich was significantly larger, but now more and more people complain that they can't make money doing Didi work, and their fantasy of getting rich is getting smaller and smaller. However, many Didi drivers still feel that driving for Didi is better than going to work, whether it's a private car or a company car, and Didi drivers feel more free to do Didi driving. They feel they can drive out on their own schedule, take breaks as they wish, work when they want to, and take a day off if they don't. However, this so-called freedom is imprisoned by capital, and the daily costs make them have to leave early and return late. The factory workers still have some rest, while they even have work all year round.

Part 6 Some petty bourgeois groups

Chapter 18 Women who are trapped in the workplace

Editor's note: The author of this article describes two working women in the online education industry in a fluent writing style. From the article, we see two independent and progressive workplace women who have their own pursuits but are also trapped by the oppression of capital; they pursue a good life, but their work leaves them without a life; they have the germ of rebellion, but compromise with the reality of their circumstances.

They are typical of the new age working women whose way of life and consumption represents the way capital wants the middle class to be. Their work and lives are, in turn, in the direction of the upward class mobility that the capitalised media preaches to the underclass. Go to university through education, get into a good company through university, work well within a good company, and live a good life that way. Isn't that the good life outlined to the proletariat at the bottom by the capital-controlled media and education system?

But is such a life, a life? Endless overtime work, tedious processes, indifferent interpersonal relationships, a workplace atmosphere of rivalry, a body weakened by overtime work, a vindictive consumer mentality - is this life? If this is life, it is a life ruled by capital.

When the cobwebs of capital have spread throughout society, when all economic activity is merely activity on the cobwebs of capital, which worker's life is not occupied by endless work, which worker escapes the fate of being drained by capital of his youth for its multiplication? The proletariat does not imagine a good life under the rule of capital, the petty bourgeoisie does, but this illusion is being shattered little by little by capital.

I. Introduction

A said: Only by working overtime nearly to death can we eat well, dress well, and have fun while we can.

B said: The company is a Shura Field[46]. As long as you are in it, you will always see your own shortcomings. You need to go all out to avoid mistakes...

In any case, the disease of the times has inevitably occurred to everyone. When the storm of the times is brewing and breaking out, I only hope that more people will be ready.

The object of this survey is the women of the emerging petty bourgeoisie (it is stated in advance that I do not participate in and do not support any debate on rural feminism, female hatred, and gender antagonism, purely because most of my friends are women).

Subject 1: The product manager of the online education sector of a large factory in the Imperial capital (hereinafter referred to as A). A is currently the person in charge of an educational product. The company where A works adopts the project team system, and the structure of a project team is as follows: the person in charge of the education sector (the big boss, who does not actually

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[46] A Shura Field is a Buddhist concept, which refers to the pit of death between two rival gods. People usually use "Shura Field" to describe a tragic battlefield; in Japanese manga comics it often refers to romantic love triangles. In China, it has come to describe companies where there is excessive competition, rivalry or "combat" between workers.

participate in the promotion of each project, but exists as the general controller of each project), the project coordinator (responsible for coordinating the relationship between various departments in the project and actually controlling the progress of the project), the project leader (the role of A, directly responsible to the project coordinator, although she is the actual promoter of the project, she is always constrained when mobilizing personnel from other departments), each group of cooperating personnel (such as other products, technology, operation personnel, etc.).

The number of people in A's project team varies between 10 and 20, with the number of people increasing or decreasing as the project progresses, and is not completely fixed. In addition, although A plays a practical role in the project team (coordinating the scope of work and progress of the project team), she does not have the power to allocate personnel or bonuses.

Subject 2: The project leader of an online education project in a second-tier city (later called B), who is in charge of operations and has 20+ subordinates, including event operations, new media operations, promotion, etc. B has direct authority over her subordinates, such as interviewing new entrants and approving departures. However, in terms of salary and bonus allocation, B's power is not as great as that of the administration department. The salary range of the post is drawn up by the personnel and finance departments, and it can be retained within this range. In addition, bonuses or excellent employees of the year, etc. are produced by a collective secret ballot taken by the administration, but B has certain rights of recommendation.

There are, of course, many differences between the two companies in terms of internal structure and personnel, and this article will explain as much as possible on the basis of a selection of common points.

II. Basic information

(i) Personal circumstances

They were all born in small towns/rural areas and entered the city through higher education. They are perceived as highly educated women and are the beneficiaries of the current education system. However, they have a lot of dissatisfaction with the education system and eventually chose to work in the online education industry. Product Manager A, with a monthly salary of around 3W[47], project bonus and year-end bonus at the end of the year, is an older single woman who rents a flat in the second ring, a single room, facing the sun, with a monthly rent of 4500 RMB (equivalent to an average worker's monthly salary). B, the head of operations, earns 1.8W+ per month, year-end bonus, married, bought a house with the support of both parents, both of them pay the mortgage together, childless (the reason is that both of them are too busy to care about having children).

(ii) Basic information of the company

Online education platforms have developed to a certain extent in recent years, especially in adult education and exam training. During and after the epidemic, online education really stood on the wind, earning enough traffic and gaining more favour from venture capitalists.

A's company has roughly the same online education platform as B's, with a product team, R&D team, teacher team, classroom teachers and teaching assistants, and a team specifically responsible for operations, with specific positions such as data analysis added to the operations team.

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[47] W (*wan*) = 10,000.

In A and B, you can see two contradictory states of affairs, on the one hand, because of certain setbacks in promotion (A was the actual driver of the project, and the project was quite effective, but in the first half of the salary adjustment, A went from the expected 20% salary increase to a bonus including an Apple watch, because the immediate boss "passed on" the benefits to his own cronies However, in the first half of the year, the company saw and acknowledged the coldness of the system and the lack of humanistic temperature because the COO and CFO[48] of B's company had been demoted due to the expansion and IPO plan, or the turmoil brought by the large-scale restructuring of the company (for example, some senior figures were forced to leave after the COO and CFO were demoted due to the expansion and IPO plan[49]). On the other hand, because they see that the upper management, such as bosses and direct bosses, work overtime, and are influenced by the "struggle" culture promoted by the company, as well as the external pressure of high prices and high consumption, they believe that only by working overtime and hard work can they finally get a place in the company. In a word, they see that the room for advancement is being squeezed, but they are also holding out for a chance. This is one of the manifestations of the weakness of the petty bourgeoisie.

In addition, when asked if the company discriminated against women after maternity leave, they both said that they were not aware of it at the moment, and that all the employees in A's company were post-90s, most of them unmarried and a few married with no children. However, she overheard that women who had given birth did have problems concentrating and were less productive. When asked how this situation could be resolved, B said helplessly that she could only work overtime, as the workload was fixed and her own efficiency had dropped, so she could only catch up by working overtime. B admitted that her subordinate rarely used breastfeeding leave (according to the relevant provisions of the Labour Law, breastfeeding women are allowed one breastfeeding leave per day), and that she had the impression that her subordinate would only leave one hour early 1-2 times a week.

III. Overtime and welfare situation

Overtime is a common phenomenon for online education platforms, and there is no overtime pay. Overtime can be counted as transfer time[50], but the company's staff handbook or personnel induction training will state that transfer time will be reset to zero on New Year's Day or Chinese New Year every year, which means that unused or unused transfer time will be written off after New Year's Day or Chinese New Year.

The company A works for has overtime of more than 996, and I was told several times by A that she was still working overtime when I contacted her at 11:00 p.m. A's company itself is closed for small and large weeks, and works late into the night (11:00 p.m. to 2:00 a.m.) every day. In addition, mobile phone software such as Nails, Enterprise WeChat and the company's own work software extend A' s working time at home, which means that even if she can go home earlier, she is still tied

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[48] Chief Operating Officer and Chief Financial Officer.
[49] IPO = Initial Public Offering or offering of shares in a private company to the public in a launch on the Stock Exchange.
[50] Transfer time is an adjustment in time off, also known as "returned rest", a Chinese word, which means to adjust the work and rest time. For example, there could be an adjustment of normal working hours if employees are required to come back to work, or have to work on holidays.

up in work at home. In A's words, she sleeps for 4-5 hours a day, of which another 2 or 3 hours are spent dreaming about work.

During the conversation, A had mentioned the confined product development in the pre-project period (which was about a month). During this time, the company did not even allow the employees to use their mobile phones, they had little contact with the outside world and were in a 12+ hour work schedule every day. The mental state was tight, causing A to suffer from constant insomnia. A was diagnosed with acute cystitis at the end of a closed development period when she went to hospital because she was unwell.

Overtime was also the norm in B's company, not as long as in A's case, but employees were required to be on call at all hours if there was an event or an exam period. According to B's description, there were subordinates with up to 400 hours of transferred leave (that is, an average of nearly 1.6 hours of overtime per day), which was nullified by the company's New Year's Day clearance rules[51]. Online education, the need to seize the market is also known as the traffic entrance, before the competition to launch courses, traffic acquisition rate and traffic conversion rate[52], etc., is an important indicator of the staff KPI[53]. Therefore, compressing the project cycle as much as possible has also become a competency standard for the person in charge, and these are things that require employees to work overtime to achieve. In addition, at Company B, most of the live courses are held between 7:00pm and 9:00pm, so most of the operations staff need to stay in their positions during this period.

Not only that, but employees also suffer from the tedious task of reporting and summarising. Take company B for example, company B employees have to "report early and summarise late" every day, every morning there is a project meeting, every day after work they have to write the daily work record (here the emphasis is on after work, because if the work has been submitted before the end of the day, it will be determined by your superiors that your workload is not saturated), and every week they have to write the weekly report (summary of this week's work and to organise the next week's work). Employees are already very tired, but they have to write these things to cope with their superiors, because the daily and weekly reports are the main reference for them to evaluate their work attitude. In addition, employees have to go through the process again in the workshop to complete daily task follow-up and reporting. The complicated paperwork, processes and institutionalised work add to the burden of employees, but it facilitates internet companies to train people into standard pieces of work. Under such a system, people become working machines, repeating every action according to instinct. The company is thus able to keep using young people, i.e. those who are cheap and manageable, who have no family commitments and who have the energy and will to work a lot of overtime.

It is also worth noting that both A and B mention that the company has some recreational spaces such as staff lounges and billiard rooms, but very few people actually use these spaces and facilities

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[51] Accumulation of entitlement to overtime pay is wiped out at the start of each New Year.

[52] "Traffic" refers to the flow of attention given to a product by potential customers. The formula for sales is sales = traffic x conversion rate x unit price. The conversion rate refers to the successful enticement of customers to go to the next step in the sales sequence. If 100 potential customers enter page A, they then have to be enticed to enter page B as the next step in securing a sale. If 20 people enter page B from page A, then the conversion rate is 20%.

[53] As is the case in capitalist companies outside China, Key Performance Indicators (KPI) are a stick used to increase labour productivity and exploitation of employees.

for recreation, and most of the time these spaces are used as temporary meeting rooms by one of the departments.

A's company's insurance is based on the actual salary, but the probationary period for positions such as product manager is 6 months. B's company's insurance is based on rank, with the minimum salary for general employees and the actual salary for middle management and above.

IV. The situation of relations between colleagues

If, in Marquez's writing[54], solitude became a characteristic of the Buendia family and indeed of the whole town of Macondo, it is no exaggeration to say that it is slowly becoming the way of life of modern man. In a way, modern man is a 'man in a trap', and the 'isolation' under the epidemic has only become a striking phenomenon through the accidental epidemics, but the state of 'isolation' has long seeped into the lives of urbanites.

A's company is a large factory with more complex personnel relations, so from time to time there are courtroom drama-like scenes. For example, at some project progress meetings, ostensibly for the smooth promotion of the project, there has actually been "recruiting" before the meeting, and the meeting has turned into a "stand-up meeting".

A said that, apart from the technical and operational aspects of the project, other colleagues were very rusty, and were usually busy with their own work. There are various small groups of colleagues who are more familiar with each other or who are close to each other. These small groups have become one of their main channels of communication.

In B's case, she knows the people she has worked with for a long time, including some of her personal life, but she does not know the newcomers or even her subordinates, and the company she works for is also implementing a SOP process[55], which, to put it bluntly, means moving the factory assembly line into the office environment, making each executive a member of the assembly line in order to save time and efficiency.

The cubicle-style work environment, which was intended to facilitate communication, has increasingly created a state of 'silence' that is extremely difficult to break and even feared by everyone. As a result, once you enter the 100+ workstations in this open space, you become part of the "silence".

The corresponding situation is that company group building is becoming more and more like a "task", and some or even most young people have a mentality of avoiding group building (dinner, karaoke, villa party, outreach training, etc.). Even if they get together, most of them are acquaintances looking for acquaintances, and acquaintances are piling up. Of course, for short or long trips, most people have a welcoming attitude.

V. Personal growth

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[54] Colombian author Gabriel García Márquez wrote a famous novel, *One Hundred Years of Solitude,* which tells the story of the Buendía family, whose patriarch, José Arcadio Buendía, founded the (fictitious) town of Macondo. The book is very fatalistic and its characters trapped by their own histories.

[55] SOP stands for Standard Operating Procedure which is a management tool for making operations more routine and aiming for uniformity of performance. Workers under an SOP regime often find it soul-destroying and crushing their initiative and creativity.

A is a postgraduate student of a well-known university in science, and has completely left academic research, only following the developments and research results of some famous figures in academia, such as Shi Yigong[56], and major events in academia, such as the controversy about the Nobel Prize winner in biology[57]. She have very little time for personal use, and if she has spare time, she will spend it on popular variety shows and TV series. Most of her knowledge of major news at home and abroad comes from WeChat self-publishing tweets and Weibo, but she pays relatively little attention to it. "After a few days, the news becomes old news, and the world is still the same, whether I know it or not." This statement shows both her disappointment at the fact that hot stories are always buzzing for a while without any relevant in-depth tracking reports, and the alienation of modern people, especially some young people, from a sense of community.

Although B is a graduate of a liberal arts college, most of the books she reads now are professional tools such as "One Step Forward" and "How to Communicate Effectively", etc. Although B has a natural empathy for the underprivileged and a sense of righteous indignation towards some social phenomena, she is not as concerned with current affairs as she is with industry hotspots and developments in competing companies.

Of course, in the case of serious overtime work, for A, "life" means watching a few more episodes of TV shows or variety shows when she doesn't have to work overtime. On the other hand, the phenomenon of revenge spending[58] also emerges in A. For example, during the Eleventh Golden Week[59], she will revenge spend continuously, in her words: she usually does not even have time to go shopping, and occasionally she has time on weekends, but there is no one to go with, so she has

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[56] Shi Yigong (born 1967) is a structural biologist and academician of the Chinese Academy of Sciences. Shi Yigong received his undergraduate degree from Tsinghua University in 1989 and his Ph.D. from Johns Hopkins University in the United States in 1995.

[57] China's first Nobel prize in the sciences was awarded to Tu Youyou in 2015. She shared it with several non-Chinese scientists for their work on the anti-malarial drug artemisinin. In relation to the controversy, see this Scientific American article: China's First Science Nobel Prize Exposes Stresses on Country's Research - Scientific American .

[58] Revenge spending refers to the behavior of restricting people's consumption needs at a certain special period or occasion, and once the ban is lifted, it is followed by a consumption craze. For example, the Covid-19 epidemic has forced many people to stay at home, so the consumption that could have been done had been restricted, so it developed into retaliatory consumption after the ban was lifted. In addition, we can also see this phenomenon in e-commerce festivals such as double eleven, June 18, etc., Everyone will wait for the on-line goods and shopping carts, and then retaliate on the same day to seize all the purchases. The double eleventh is an online shopping festival which dates from Nov.11th each year in China. June 18th is the anniversary of JD.com (京东) one of the Top 2 biggest e-commerce companies in China. The company was founded by Liu Qiangdong on June 18th, 1998, and its retail platform went online in 2004. Over the past 10 years, Jing Dong (JD.com) has put a lot of effort into creating and promoting commercial campaigns with unmissable discounts on its best-selling products, in order to create an "emotional attachment" in the hearts of consumers. So every year during the month of June (until the 18th), people in China get excited and start planning their purchases. Soon other Chinese e-commerce giants (Alibaba, Tmall, Secoo) also started their own campaigns during this period, so much so that the 18th of June became one the biggest Shopping Festivals of the year.

[59] There are three Golden Weeks in China when a week-long holiday is supplemented by the working days on weekends to create a 7- or 8-day holiday period. One occurs at New Year, one at Labour Day, and one at National Day and the Mid-Autumn Festival. Originally designed to boost the domestic economy and domestic tourism, there have been calls to abolish the Golden Weeks on the grounds that they are too disruptive of ordinary economic activity.

to eat and play well when she can have someone with her. For B, although she purchased a house with the support of both parents, the two of them also have to pay the mortgage together and there is still some financial pressure. As she works in the education industry, she is more sensitive to the uneven distribution of educational resources and the inequality of education. When she thinks about having children, she also tries to prepare for their education fund in advance, so she feels that she has experienced a greater "consumption downgrade" than when she was single.

VI. Opinions on the 996 situation[60]

Although A has a lot of complaints about the current situation, she has accepted the 996 status quietly because her salary basically meets her requirements and because overtime work has become the norm ("I have to work overtime everywhere I change jobs"). When asked if she felt that the eight-hour workday was a right she deserved, A said, "It sounds great, but it's a shame it can't be implemented. Even if it was written into the Labour Law, it would still be useless."

B finds the overtime situation acceptable. She thinks it's a time of career advancement and the workplace is like sailing against the current, if you don't advance, you will fall back. With fierce competition, someone younger and more capable could replace you at any time, so you have to work overtime to improve yourself so that you can be invincible.

When given a hypothetical scenario where a colleague objected to overtime and was named and criticised by the boss in a meeting, what would their attitude be? A thought that she would support the colleague in spirit, but might not dare to stand on a united front with him or her, while B thought that her colleague had committed a workplace taboo and would not stand up for him or her. If competing companies were working overtime on projects, we would suffer a disastrous defeat and not be able to gain a foothold in the market.

In addition, when asked about the three worst things in their lives (and the things they would most like to change), A thought they were: 1. working too much overtime and being trapped in a work situation, becoming a work machine; 2. the people who have the power to make decisions on projects "don't know how to educate" and once the product is launched and gets some market response, it tends to leave a bad taste in your mouth; 3. colleagues are too indifferent to each other, especially on business trips, when it is clear that it is a day trip, but everyone goes their own way.

B thinks it's bad: 1. it's hard to handle the work-life balance, so I'm always hesitant about having children; 2. it's hard to deal with inter-departmental coordination tasks, which can lead to delays in the project as a whole; 3. the market is changing rapidly, there are always new ways and new hot spots, so there's too much to learn and too little time for self-enrichment.

To sum up, the emerging petty bourgeoisie of today still carries contradictions and weaknesses. Although they understand to a certain extent that 996 is a squeeze on their lives, they choose to compromise or even automatically become part of the overtime culture when they do not see a concrete solution. In addition, although they seem to be more satisfied and in control of their future and their current life, they are also very confused and unsettled inside.

VII. Afterword

This was originally written in the editor's note, but as it is rather long, I am afraid it will affect your reading of the original article, so I have moved it to the afterword.

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[60] 996 = working from 9am to 9pm six days a week.

In this article, the author describes two independent women in the workplace, who have the following characteristics.

(1) Both were born in small towns or in rural areas, and through their own efforts went to university to study in prestigious schools.

(2) After working in the workplace for a period of time, they have been promoted to certain positions. One of them is a product manager of a large factory and the leader of a project, while the other is a project leader with more than 20 subordinates.

(3) Salary income is significantly higher than that of first-tier workers, one of them (in the imperial capital) earns around 50w per year before tax, the other (in a second-tier city) earns around 25w per year before tax.

(4) Both have a certain degree of autonomy in their work, but A's authority is more limited to coordination and has no authority over others, nor does she have authority over personnel or the distribution of bonuses, while B has authority over her subordinates, but not much authority over the distribution of bonuses.

(5) Both suffer from endless overtime work, and the problems caused by this overtime work (e.g. inability to balance work and life, etc.) rank first in their top three worst problems.

(6) Both are keen to maintain a competitive edge in the workplace or to be promoted further, which makes both of them to a certain extent actively or forcibly accept the overtime culture, and they are relatively less likely to fight when their rights are violated.

These two women are representative of the many women in the workplace who are part of the middle class in Europe and the United States, financially independent, with a glamorous background and a successful career. The author classifies these two women as "emerging petty bourgeois". Such a categorisation, it is assumed, will give rise to a variety of views, and here the editors give their own in general terms.

Lenin had a classic definition of class: "A class is a group of people who have different positions in a certain system of social production in history, who have different relations to the means of production (which are for the most part expressly defined in law), who have different roles in the organisation of social labour, and who therefore receive their share of social wealth in different ways and in different amounts. The way in which they receive their share of social wealth differs. A class, as it is called, is a number of such groups, one of which is able to appropriate the labour of the other because of the different positions they occupy in a certain socio-economic structure."

In Lenin's time, the petty bourgeoisie were mainly subsistence farmers, small merchants, small workshop owners, etc. They held the means of production and used them mainly through their own labour, acquiring money through commodity exchange. The petty bourgeoisie are not employed by capitalists and largely do not employ people (or very little), i.e. they do not take the surplus labour of others without compensation or have their surplus labour taken by others without compensation. They are oppressed by capital, yet they carry the dream of becoming rich, have an acre of land to hold on to, and are always wavering between resistance and compromise.

This is the traditional petty bourgeoisie. However, as social life has developed, so has the connotation of the concept of petty bourgeoisie. The emerging petty bourgeoisie is another important group that differs from the traditional petty bourgeoisie.

The emerging petty bourgeoisie is a group that has emerged in response to economic development. After the Second World War, as the economy became more complex, and as the ownership and use of monopoly capital were separated, the managers of large companies were born as a new group. This group was subdivided into two classes, the executives and the middle managers.

In the case of US listed companies, for example, executives may not nominally enjoy any shares in the company, but they have decision-making power in the purchase and disposal of the means of production, in what is produced and how it is produced, and in the distribution of salaries and bonuses regarding the personnel under the company, i.e. they de facto dominate the means of production of the entire company. As a result, they also receive a salary commensurate with this dominant position (the average realised salary of the CEOs of the 350 largest public companies in the United States in 2019 was $21.3 million), a salary that is much higher than the labour they put in, a salary that undoubtedly derives from the surplus value of the many workers. In this way, this group of executives of large companies who do not even nominally own the means of production has undoubtedly become an emerging bourgeoisie.

Below this group is a group of middle managers who carry out the will of the executives and organise and coordinate labour in a concrete way. The people in this group are mainly department managers or people at the corresponding level in large and medium-sized companies. They have the power to actually arrange labour in their own department (this area of labour), can dominate their subordinates in the performance of labour, have a certain say in the promotion, remuneration and bonuses of their subordinates, and their remuneration is significantly higher than that of the workers at the grassroots level. Such a group does not nominally control the means of production, but their position in the "social production system" is clearly superior to that of the grassroots workers, and their role in the "social organisation of labour" is also better than that of the grassroots workers, so they are also able to get more salary than grass-roots workers. For example, in some large traditional companies in second-tier cities, the salaries of department managers are in the hundreds of thousands of dollars. However, the main source of their remuneration is not the surplus value of the workers, but their own labour. Their class can therefore be likened to the traditional petty bourgeoisie, which we call the emerging petty bourgeoisie. This group, like the traditional petty bourgeoisie, is also oppressed by big capital, but some are reluctant to give up, and the realistic possibility of a modicum of enrichment haunts them, constantly wavering between struggle and compromise.

What distinguishes the emerging petty bourgeoisie from the cerebral proletarians is the importance of the emerging petty bourgeoisie's dominance in labour and its power over bonuses and personnel of other workers, but this itself has to be seen dialectically. The head puller of a production line[61] in a factory can also distribute labour and has the right to decide whether the general workers work overtime or not (and therefore determines the general workers' overtime pay), but the head puller is paid about the same as the general workers, 4-5k, and their ideology is similar to that of the general workers, and they will basically side with them in the struggle, which is clearly not part of the emerging petty bourgeoisie. On the other hand, the investment banking staff of certain large brokerage firms may not have any subordinates, but the average annual salary in a capital market cycle can reach 50-80w per year, they have cars and houses, talk about financial management, think

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[61] In the factory, "pulling" refers to the various production lines in the factory, including installation, repair, quality inspection and packaging. The production line is called "pull" in the factory, and each "pull" has someone in charge, and the person in charge is called "head puller".

about getting rich, and are farther away from the grassroots working people, so it seems more appropriate to classify them as the emerging petty bourgeoisie.

In this article, the author describes two women in the workplace who have all the characteristics of the emerging petty bourgeoisie, but not all of them, but starting from the main contradiction, the author classifies them as emerging petty bourgeoisie.

You are welcome to discuss this point with your friends.

Finally, I would like to thank the author for his work and the two interviewees. I wish the two interviewees well in their work and hope that the two interviewees will work less overtime and live more in the future.

Chapter 19: Small-scale interviews in one of the more affluent rural villages in the north

Editor's note: This article researches the basics of one of the wealthier rural villages in the north, broadly describing the structure of the village, its economic production and the villagers' profile, and is the first rural interview in our series of this research, which is very rare. In our research we see that this affluent northern village relies on cash crops to increase the income of its people. Even when engaged in agriculture, the division between rich and poor is already very clear, with large households appearing to hire workers, while other small farmers are only able to sustain themselves with their own labour. But smallholder work was not resistant to natural disasters, and a single illness depleted the life savings of one of the interviewees, which undoubtedly served to further accelerate the class divide. In this, we also see that there is a near shortage of young adult labour in the countryside, and that those who remain in the countryside find it difficult to leave the male population.

Of course, as the author points out, this is a small study and there is still a lot that is not well understood. Therefore, I would like to invite more people to do what they can with their own facilities.

I. Background of the research

The county in which Village A is located has cash crops as its main industry and source of income, and according to information, the per capita disposable income of all residents in the county was RMB 16,159 in 2019. Of which: the per capita disposable income of urban residents was RMB 25,427; the per capita disposable income of rural residents was RMB 11,108.

I noticed on my way by car through the rural areas of the county that most of the rural areas in the county are large plastic greenhouse operations and very well developed in agriculture compared to the rural areas in the surrounding counties. Village A is one of the examples of agriculture in the county. Village A started to grow a certain fruit gradually around 2010 and the benefits were relatively good in the first few years, and the increase in price of a certain fruit in recent years has boosted the development of the village, and the whole village now grows the fruit. We understand that the price of a certain fruit has increased about four times compared to ten years ago, and that the price fluctuates very much (it has been increasing). We went and interviewed two village officials in August 2020. Only five villagers were interviewed as many people happened to be away on farming at the time of our visit.

II. Basic information about the village

(i) Population and land

Village A has a total of five hundred and eight households, including seventy-one poor households. According to the village cadres, basically every household grows fruit because of the good market in recent years, so the young people have basically returned. However, according to our interviews and observations of villagers, the agricultural labour force is still dominated by middle-aged people in their forties to sixties (many of them have also returned because their families have income from farming), and only some young people in their thirties are involved in agricultural work, while there are almost no young people in their twenties who are working outside the village. The village has a large number of people who have bought houses in the county. According to the village cadres, the situation of male singles in the village is very serious and the bride price is not very high (it rarely exceeds 100,000), mainly because the women all go to the city.

Each household in village A owns an average of around five acres of land, with some wealthy families having more than twenty acres (through the transfer of land use rights), and these 'large' households employ people all year round (mainly short-term temporary workers from neighbouring villages) - the demand for labour for this fruit is very high.

According to the villagers, the fruit is mainly worked by hand and much of the work cannot be done mechanically, which does not seem to make the village a base for large-scale operations. The village officials responded that there were "very few, only a few", and the villagers only mentioned in the interviews that there were "big families", "there are dozens of acres of land for big families, I don't know exactly, it's all very chaotic now", so I was unable to find out the exact figures.

According to our interviews with villagers, the village's land tenure is mainly owned by people from the village, while a small number of farmers from other villages who are related to village A have contracted land in the village.

(ii) Economic situation and product sales

According to our survey, the net income per mu[62] of land in village A is between 10 and 20,000 yuan. As the fruit requires a large shed and a high initial investment of between 40,000 and 50,000 mu (according to the village clerk, a single investment can last for ten years), villagers who have newly planted the fruit in recent years are basically burdened with high loans (mainly interest-free). The farmers do not actually have a lot of disposable income. In addition, most of the villagers have joined a co-operative, which is said to be free of any fees, and in recent years has paid a few hundred yuan in dividends each year (compared to a few dozen before). (The village cadres say that the main target of the e-commerce service is the "few" large households in the village, who sell more). But here I think there is a contradiction: "a few" large households with "more than 20 acres (as the village cadres said in the previous article)" do not seem to me to have a large sales volume, so I guess the village cadres are hiding something in this regard. According to the villagers, because of the high quality of the fruit in the village, sales were mainly made by merchants who came to the village to buy it, and this year, when the epidemic was severe, it was not harvest time, so sales were not hampered, and one of the interviewees said that "it took a month to sell it all". In addition to the merchants, the few 'smallholders' we interviewed (around 5 mu) would sell out through a 'site', none of whom mentioned the word 'co-operative' in detail, while on the way I found a number of private intermediary buying points in the town, which we did not investigate at the time, which is a pity and a shortcoming.

The village's income has increased a lot for most families after the full-scale planting of a certain fruit. The village cadres said that the current special hardship families in the village are mainly caused by some natural or man-made disasters. These special hardship families are currently given public service jobs in the village - sweeping the floor for four to five hundred yuan a month, while they have an annual income of four to five hundred yuan per mu after transferring the village land. As far as our interviews with two very economically disadvantaged families are concerned, there is some basis for this statement. The village cadres also proudly said, "When the poverty alleviation officers came to our village in the past two years, they said from time to time that many of us poor households exceeded the required income." (This is roughly what was said).

(iii) Infrastructure

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[62] One mu is equivalent to 0.165, or about one fifth, of an acre.

In terms of roads, we found that all roads in the village and from the village to the cultivated land have been cemented, and according to the village officials, the cemented roads to the cultivated land have just been built in the past two years. In contrast, in my home village, the road to the farming land has not been cemented until now, which indeed shows the wealth of village A. The number of cars in the village is not particularly high as far as we can see, with electric three-wheelers and electric vehicles being the mainstay.

In terms of housing, there are some gaps in village A, but the lower end of the scale is high and we did not encounter any particularly dilapidated dwellings. Some of the dwellings have a tendency to be diversified, with unique styles and new facilities, and should be among the more affluent group in this village.

In terms of education, there are no kindergartens or primary schools in the village, and village officials say they all died out long ago. More children go to the kindergarten in town and are transported by school bus every day.

In terms of health care, the village has a health centre with a local doctor and medicines are relatively cheap. Also, there is a family doctor system in the village, with free home examinations (seems to be common in all villages).

III. Summary

Village A is one of the more affluent rural villages in the north and is not very indicative of the wider poorer rural areas of China, and the scale of our interviews was too small to provide sufficient insight. However, the interviews did give us some insight into the situation of farmers in the richer villages (which cannot be compared to the richer villages in Jiangsu, Zhejiang and Shanghai). In general, the average income level of farmers in the village is indeed high. However, most of them still work as small farmers, and when we asked village officials about farms, the answer was that there are no farms in village A. They are basically family-based, and "there is no possibility of farming in our village in the next five years". In this case, even in villages with an agricultural advantage, households with inherent deficiencies (natural or man-made disasters) and ordinary households are still poorer than the "big" ones, and the gap between rich and poor remains wide. In my speculation, the land holdings of the larger households in the villages are more severe than the situation we interviewed. In fact, the villagers were not dissatisfied with the disparity between the rich and the poor. It is evident that in the richer villages, villagers engaged in agriculture seem to be much less class-conscious than workers.

Whenever I remember the old days, there are always many emotions. Personally, I was born in a small city, but as a child I spent all my summer and winter holidays living in an ordinary northern village and witnessed the sadness and joy of the traditional agricultural countryside. On the one hand, the "bouncy cars" of my childhood, the vans of a few years ago, and now the domestic cars, have gradually brought the countryside into the orbit of modernity; on the other hand, the morality of the countryside continues to deteriorate (gambling is the norm in my old village), and the grassroots cadres continue to deteriorate (a friend's father "said things" and loved to call village cadres to back him up), and almost all of my childhood village mates have gone to the assembly line. What magic. It made me ponder what it would have been like if we had continued to insist on collectivisation back then.

Appendix: some interview excerpts

Specific interviewees (select two of them)

(i) Female C

Fifty-six years old (her husband was beside her the whole time I was interviewing her, very introverted and rarely spoke).

C has a family of five and has been growing a particular fruit for eleven years, with her husband and son currently being the main labour force. The grandson is accompanied only by his father, and his daughter-in-law works outside the home, coming home once or twice a year; C's son, who had previously worked outside the home, came home to help with the farming after a bout of cancer four years ago. The illness basically drained the C's family's savings (which, thanks to the high income from fruit farming, they allegedly could not have afforded to treat otherwise). When asked about the disparity between the rich and poor in the village, C did not express any dissatisfaction, "the people in other houses are good and earn more money". We overheard a conversation about the first thirty years and C's negative attitude towards the previous era. C had more trust in the village cadres.

(ii) Male B

Sixty-eight years old. B's wife has been paralysed for over ten years and is largely cared for by B himself. At the same time, B needs to cultivate land. Due to the size of the loan, B was hesitant to grow fruit until two or three years ago when he made up his mind to take out a loan to grow fruit and called his son (who had been single) back from Shenzhen. B was also very trusting of the village officials, saying that they had provided a lot of technical support when he first started growing a particular fruit.

(iii) Village officials

1. "So how is the marriage situation in the village now, that is, are there many single men?"

Village cadres: "Quite a lot, there are very many bachelors in almost all villages, not just ours"

"And since this village is relatively wealthy, is it relatively better?"

Village cadres: "It doesn't have much to do with being rich or not, but the key is that once people hear that you live in the countryside, they don't want to know you. Now at least half of our village has bought a house in the city, and seventy to eighty percent of families have bought a car, but even so, they still can't find a daughter-in-law".

2. "And what is the situation of these special hardship cases?"

Village cadre: "For example, there is a family whose husband died in an accident, whose father also died, whose mother had a brain attack, and who is left with a daughter-in-law and two daughters, who have no labour, such that there is no way to farm at all."

3. "What are the returns from the farms in the neighbouring towns?"

Village cadres: "Not particularly good, some have very low profits and the investment is still very large"

Part 7 The Transformation of the Mind of a Typical Individual

Chapter 20: A worker's change of mind

Editor's note: This article is a very rare account of a manual labour proletarian's experience of his own ideological transformation. From this article we can see that the acceptance of Marxism by the proletariat is a historical necessity, but in this necessity there are various contingent factors. In our present society, only a small number of proletarians will encounter enough contingent factors to facilitate their acceptance of Marxism, but there will undoubtedly be more and more of them.

I. Ignorance

I was born in 1992, and in order to circumvent the problem of over-birth fines, my ID card was changed to 1995 (3 sisters were from 1990, which had to be three years apart).

I graduated from junior high school in 2009 and went into society, and at this time I was clueless. The first job I did was as a stainless steel apprentice in my hometown. It was a typical small workshop with one boss, one master and one me. The boss took on the work and provided the materials, the master provided the skills and I was responsible for doing the work. The working hours were not long (8am to 6pm, with a two-hour break for lunch), but they were very tiring. Sometimes I couldn't resist standing up to stretch my back, but my legs felt numb and even cramped. The stainless steel apprentices are responsible for polishing, which involves a lot of dust, which is very hard on the lungs. I was getting 600 dollars a month without any social security, I didn't even know what it was at the time.

The work was tiring, but after all, it was in my hometown and I lived and ate at home, so there was no pressure. I was also injured at work, once learning to cut stainless steel and cutting my finger, but it wasn't serious. At that time, I was muddled and had no idea, but I was carefree. Although I had no freedom at home and no space for my own independence, I felt happy with my life. One day the master asked me to install a sun tile on the top floor (7th floor), but there was no protection, just a rope. I was terrified and repeatedly told the master that I was afraid of heights and that something would go wrong, and because of this, the master laid me off. It was the first time in my life that I lost my job.

I remember clearly that it was the World Cup in South Africa. Although I was unemployed, I wasn't sad and was quite happy to have a lot of time to watch and play football. But that didn't last after all, and then a close junior school friend introduced me to his aunt's catering business, and from then on I started a five-year career in the kitchen.

My friends have been down to the restaurant, but most of them are not familiar with catering, so I will give you a general introduction. Take my first restaurant as an example, this catering restaurant has about 15 people, except for the owner, the other people positions and salaries are roughly as follows: (1) Three people at the helm of a spoon. The first spoon, salary 6,000-7,000 yuan. For the second spoon, the salary is 5,000 yuan. The third spoon is paid 4,000 yuan. (2) Two people at the table. First anvil, salary 4,000 yuan. Second anvil, salary 3000 RMB. (3) Two people for side dishes, salary 2000 RMB. (4) Two people for each of water table, cleaning and wrapping, salary 800-1000 RMB. (4) Cashier someone, wages 600-800 yuan.

A spoon is a big brother, the boss is basically invisible, the big brother is the boss to us, the ruling class. Some of the big guys are the ones who pack the kitchen (not many pack the kitchen), for example, the boss gives him 50,000 a month and he then takes this money to hire people, in which

case the oppression is a bit heavier. A spoon has its own circle, which is equivalent to management. There is a head anvil in this circle, who is responsible for purchasing and can sometimes make some money. If we complained, they would threaten us, "If you don't want to work anymore, then leave."

The working hours are usually from 9am to 8pm, with a break from 1pm to 5pm (sometimes you have to go to work even if you have customers coming at noon) and two days off per month. The work is usually done at 9am and breakfast is at 10.30am (the next meal is at 4.30am). I work at the water table, killing fish and making seafood, and the working hours are not much, but I am tired. We worked in a very dirty environment and our clothes always smelt like we were in the kitchen, which would never go away. Sometimes the boss would go out at night to gamble and lose money, and he would scold us, the helpers. One time he lost more than a thousand dollars and when he was cooking a banquet that day, the people below him took the wrong plates, the octagonal ones instead of the square ones, which was not a big mistake, but he scolded them severely.

I was initially paid $600 with food and accommodation, which I thought was pretty good at the time. Our boss was very stingy and didn't even get anything for New Year's Eve, but the good thing was that there were no fines. There was no social security for small restaurants like this, and I had never heard of overtime pay.

With a job like this, you basically can't save any money at the end of the year.

I have changed several restaurants in my hometown and they are all similar. The worst is one restaurant where the owner's wife has connections with the government and specialises in tour groups. There were often tour groups coming over at noon, and when you were told to work overtime, you worked overtime, with no breaks at all, and of course, no overtime pay.

Up until this time, my mind was still muddled, but I had the idea that I was young and I wanted to make a go of it, I wanted to make a name for myself.

II. Hard times

In 2014 I arrived in my current big city with a dream, together with a friend. When I first arrived, I was particularly curious about the big city, with its steel and modernity. There is a saying that if you hate someone, you send them to New York because it's hell, and if you love someone, you send them to New York because it's heaven. It's so true, and I think that's true of every big city.

I came here and worked in the kitchen again. This time the shop was smaller, with three brothers, me and my classmate, making five people. I worked from 9am to 10.30pm every day (with a break from 2pm to 5pm) and had half a day off every week. The pay was about a thousand, without any overtime pay or social security. The work is very tiring, I used to work only on the water table, but now I am doing the water table and the loading alone, which is equivalent to doing the work of two people. The working environment is bad, smelly and dirty, the food is very bad, and the boss often scolds people (but does not deduct money). In addition, the work takes its toll on the stomach and I eat breakfast at 11am, lunch at 2pm and dinner at 10.30pm. This little boss works hard, sleeps late and gets up early, but is unusually stingy and unconscionable. He often gave rotten fish to his customers, for example shouting at me to kill a rotten chub[63], and scolding me if I didn't listen and dared to kill a good one.

In November 2014, the owner went out of business. I had fallen into a pyramid scheme by mistake to find a job, and the thousands of dollars I had managed to save were almost wiped out. I came to

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[63] A type of ray-finned fish.

the big city full of hope, thinking I could make a name for myself, but reality poured cold water on me. I was so confused and didn't know where to go. That's when I started reading Chicken Soup for the Soul[64]. Chicken soup was toxic, but it had a positive effect on me at the time, it gave me a glimmer of hope. I continued to look for a way forward and I went to a lot of historical places, I wanted to broaden my horizons and I thought it would help me in the future.

In May 2015 I went home to work as a mobile phone promoter. The base salary in this industry is very low and mainly depends on commission. Our performance at that time was 20 units a month. In order to achieve the performance, we all went to work at 8 o'clock until 10:30 p.m., with two days off each month and no overtime pay. The most I ever got was over 4,000 a month, but such good times were rare. I made some money in the beginning, but then the market got worse and worse, and in the second half of 2016 I started to make ends meet and had to borrow money to get by. Consumerism was prevalent at that time and I didn't have much money, but I did buy, for example, mountain bikes. Now that I think about it, I shouldn't have spent that money at all. In June 2017, our shop collapsed again, and it was like the 3rd shop I had closed down. I was forced out of work and became a Buddhist youth. I ate and slept in my cramped rental house. When I got bored, I went to the special bookstore next door to read a book. I loved a book written by a man called Big Ice at that time, which I now think was chicken soup for the soul, but it did a lot to save me from the brink of decadence.

III. Oppression and turnabout

I couldn't go on declining, I had to go and find my own way. At this time I still had the idea of getting ahead, I felt that my hometown was only the CBA and the big city was the NBA[65], I couldn't just play the CBA, I had to go play in the NBA. at that time I watched a movie about the Jedi and it made me so excited that I felt like a Jedi, I thought of myself as a light Jedi and imagined all the people who were oppressing me (like my dad) as dark Sith, I wanted to fight them, I'm going to go to the big city and find more Jedi.

In November 2017, I returned again to my current big city and was introduced to a large electronics factory. It was here that I first learned what social security was, what a housing fund was, and what a degree was good for.

As I couldn't adapt to night shifts, I didn't have to work long before I switched to a retail giant to work as a shop assistant. And that became the first turning point in my life. When I came to this retail giant, I set myself two goals: firstly, to work here for two years and secondly, to get a tertiary degree (I enrolled in a tertiary course at the National Open University).

This retail giant has all sorts of local accolades and the shop I was in was one of them, initially with around 100 employees. I was assigned to the fresh food department to kill fish because of my experience at the water table.

This shop made me fully appreciate the oppression of capital. I had been working in this shop for over 40 days straight without a single day off. In 2019, the retail giant underwent a dramatic change, as the company's rapid expansion had led to financial losses. The company shamelessly carried out "optimisation of employment", which, to put it bluntly, meant laying off staff. We had more than 100 people in the supermarket at that time, but it was later reduced to just over 50. There was not much money, but more to do, 50 people to do all the things that 100 people used to do.

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[64] See Note 1, Chapter 2.5
[65] CBA = the Chinese Basketball Association; NBA = (US) National Basketball Association.

It was at this time that I met an older man from Jiangxi who was the janitor of our shop. The uncle was from Ganzhou and had a somewhat see-saw, somewhat realistic personality, but he became the leader of my thoughts. He thought I was not bad at the time, he didn't eat, drink or gamble after work and liked to talk to people about current affairs (I liked watching Lao Liang's show) and he started telling me a lot of things I had never heard of before. I remember clearly now that he told me about Lenin, what the state was and what the law was. He once told me about Chairman Mao, and he asked me, "So many people cried when Chairman Mao died, were all those people stupid? Were they all brainwashed?" I couldn't answer, and he went on to say, "How could they be stupid, so many people, think about it." Then he gave me an example, "When Chairman Mao was in power, people were so close, I would come to your house to help you during the farming season, and next time you would come to help me, but now? What has become of it!" He also concluded, "Human relations were very good under public ownership. In those days, we learnt from Lei Feng[66], Qiu Shaoyun[67] and Huang Jiguang[68]. Now, on the surface, they are still learning from them, but behind the scenes many people say they are fools. Why is that?" He also told me many other things about Chairman Mao's time, and I was curious about him as I listened.

At this time, a classmate of mine deepened my interest in this kind of thinking in another way. I had a classmate who, when he went to university (at the age of 26 for further education university) had an argument about an issue and he said he didn't like me and just spat at me, "I'm not in the same class as you". At the time I was angry but also curious as to what class was and I wanted to find out. On another occasion, this student gave me the message, "Your father always says that everything is fate, which is not true, this is idealism". When he was done, he also gave me concepts like materialist dialectics, and I was curious. This is when I started to take a great interest in Marx. Although he argued with me and was unkind to me, he was, for me, the second initiator of my thinking. I couldn't understand a lot of things at that time, but it didn't matter, I wrote down what he told me, just like a cow eating grass, eating before digesting.

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[66] Lei Feng, (1940-1962) was born in Wangcheng, Hunan province, and orphaned at an early age. His was a life devoted to the socialist cause, filled with the revolutionary will to work arduously for self-improvement and the heroic spirit of being ready to take up cudgels for a just cause without care for his own safety. Sadly, that life was cut tragically short – Lei died in 1962 at the age of just 21 when, as a member of a transportation unit of the PLA, a telephone pole, crashed into by an army truck, struck him. A diary infused with his devotion to socialism was found and published, leading Mao Zedong on March 5, 1963, to initiate the 'Follow the examples of Comrade Lei Feng' campaign.

[67] Qiu Shaoyun was born in 1931 in a rural village in Tongliang district, Chongqing city. He joined the People's Liberation Army in 1949 and earned recognition in the campaigns that were ordered to exterminate bandits. In early 1951, Qiu signed up with the Chinese Volunteer Army, taking part in the Korean War. In October 1952, Qiu died a martyr's death. In the struggle for Hill 391, Qiu and his unit crawled closer to the enemy position, using hay and twigs as natural camouflage. The enemy used incendiary bombs dropped by airplanes to try and smoke out the Chinese units. Qiu became trapped in the ensuing brush fire and in order to honour the other 500 Chinese soldiers taking part in the assault, he did not move and burned to death. In 1953, Qiu was made a Hero First Class. The Democratic People's Republic of Korea, moreover, made him a "Hero of the DPRK" and awarded him two medals.

[68] Huang Jiguang (1931-1952) from Sichuan Province joined the Chinese People's Volunteers Army in March 1951 to fight against the Americans in Korea. He fought bravely and won a third-class merit citation. At the battle of Triangle Hill (or Shangganling as called in Chinese) in October 1952, Huang Jiguang's unit attacked an enemy blockhouse. After hurling his last hand grenade, Huang hurled himself against the machine gun slit, blocking American fire and sacrificing his life. As a result of his heroism, the People's Volunteers Army soldiers overran the position and annihilated two battalions of the enemy. Huang was posthumously given the title of "Special-Class Hero". North Korea awarded Huang Jiguang the title of "Hero of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea", a Gold-Star Medal and the Medal of the National Flag, First-Class.

IV. A qualitative change

The real change in my thinking came after the epidemic. We resumed work after May, but the staff was again reduced. The management gave me a heavier workload and I was now the only one doing the work that three people used to do. Working nine hours a day, with only one day off a week, and without any overtime pay, my resentment grew. I kept talking to Uncle Jiangxi about this, about what I thought, about the information I knew, and he felt that I was getting more and more radical and even a bit dangerous in talking about this, and he was less willing to talk to me. In fact, I was less willing to talk to him then either, but I didn't give up thinking about it further.

In July 2020, I bought the Manifesto and read it in one go, not really understanding much of it, but I kept hoping to figure it out. Then I bought Mao's Selected Works and read the first one, which talks about who can be united and who cannot, who are our enemies and who are our friends. He wrote about bookstore clerks, peasants, workers and capitalists, and I felt as if all of them, and felt that the great man's thinking was really transcendent. So I looked up some of the public WeChat accounts myself and read Chairman Mao's stuff. I wanted to find out what communism was and whether it could be achieved or not. I looked for things to read everywhere, and it was in this process that I really changed, and I learned that there was no wage labour in socialism, no oppression of one class over another, no unpaid appropriation of other people's labour by anyone.

It was also in this process that I put together my entire experience. At first I was carefree and knew nothing; after 2010, I gradually had the idea of getting ahead, an idea that had been with me for a long time, sometimes strong and sometimes broken in the middle; it was only after I experienced an electronics factory and a retail shop in 2018 that this idea was finally broken, and only then did I slowly feel that I was poor not because I didn't work hard, but because "people have a good father". After studying Marx, all this became clearer, and looking back on my experiences in the past few years, I felt that Marx was so right, I had worked hard all my life, and for what? It was at this time that I understood what exploitation and oppression meant.

Right now, there are still two forces fighting inside my head, the idea of trying to move up the ladder and the idea of Marx. Maybe this fight will continue for a while, after all, it is painful and desperate to learn the truth at first. But so what? Romero[69] said to see life for what it is and still love it (some chicken soup for the public's soul it seems), and I would like to be that person.

I especially like watching the NBA, and I especially like James[70]. I know he's a capitalist, but I still admire his perseverance. If I were to compare my life to a ball game, my goal would be to join a team and win our proletariat championship.

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[69] Possibly Archbishop Romero of El Salvador (1917-1980), a prominent campaigner for social justice and opponent of the reactionary military junta that ruled his country at the time of the Salvadoran Civil War. He was assassinated by the reactionaries in 1980 while celebrating mass. There are collections of his quotes available on the Internet.

[70] LeBron James, a professional basketball player for the LA Lakers of the NBA.

Chapter 21 Transformation amidst ups and downs: Confessions of a descendant of an SME owner

Editor's note: The author of this essay is the descendant of an SME owner whose family has experienced major ups and downs, and in the midst of which the author's thinking has changed considerably.

When the author's father started from nothing and went from being a proletarian to a boss, the author naturally embraced certain propaganda and became a standard "little pink"[71]. The author discovered during his study abroad that the children of bosses were pink because they were the ones who profited.

When the author's father's business went bankrupt and the author was reduced to a proletarian again, the author experienced the bitterness of society and the struggle of his mind. All these experiences constitute the inevitability of the author's change, but inevitability always opens the way through endless serendipity. After the author's chance second brush of "Let the Bullets Fly"[72], the pop-ups that filled the screen prompted the author to understand the words he could not read. In the end, a young man returns to the truth.

This article is brilliant and deserves to be read carefully by all my friends.

I. Initial awareness before university

Before 2008, my family was a standard poor family, my father worked in a relative's factory, but was not taken seriously, even his salary was not taken care of because he was "related". His favourite saying was "I only had 20 yuan in my pocket for New Year's Eve". I was a primary school student at the time, born in a small town, with limited access to information and little perspective on society, occasionally stirred up by the cynical comments on the internet, apart from studying and having normal fun.

Forced to make ends meet, my father left a relative's factory and took out a loan to set up his own factory because he understood the technology involved. It happened to be a time when home appliances were going to the countryside as well as a full-scale promotion of real estate and infrastructure, following the social wave, and my family thus made the leap.

The days of poverty spanned most of my childhood, but I really don't remember much about them, and so it was a natural progression for me to embrace mainstream thinking as I began to develop a world view after junior high school.

After junior high school, I could feel a slight change in my family, but the impact was not very great, even though they changed to imported cars, but it had nothing to do with me. My biological parents were a matchmaking union, with no emotional foundation, and thus they divorced early. The concept of mother and father was also very alien to me; in short, I was not really close to the

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[71] The term Little Pink originated on the website Jinjiang Literature City, when a group of users kept strongly criticizing people who published posts containing negative news about China. Within Jinjiang Literature City, this group became known as the "Jinjiang Girl Group Concerned for the Country", or the Little Pink, which is the main colour of the website's front page. According to Zhuang Pinghui of South China Morning Post, 83% of the Little Pink are female, with most of them between 18 and 24 years old. More than half of the Little Pink are from third- and fourth-tier cities in China. Because they support the CCP's policy of "socialism with Chinese characteristics" and are very patriotic, they are viewed favourably by the capitalist-roaders in power in China.
[72] "Let the Bullets Fly" is a feature film directed by Jiang Wen, which was released in China on December 16, 2010. The film tells the story of Zhang Muzhi, a gangster who changed his name to be an honest official, "Ma Bonde", took office as the county magistrate of Goose City, and started a fierce battle with the bully Huang Shilang who guarded Goose City.

relatives around me. They earned their own money and were busy with their own affairs, while for my part I thought this was what it's like to be a small-town family member in a big city and compared myself to my peers. In fact, in the middle of the town, almost all the children were not well educated at home, their parents were busy with work and the children spent most of their time at school. I am ashamed to have been part of the incitement to participate in the first place.

After high school, students have basic values and world view. High school students will start to compare family status, compare clothing, compare mobile phones. The high school I got into at that time was not very good, but there were many children born from rich families. The top one was the child of a shareholder of a local listed group, considered the school's popular figure. Most of the children from well-off families are given preferential treatment by the teachers and have their studies relaxed (I'm not sure if this is considered preferential treatment or not), but it depends on the individual child and the family's upbringing. Some families may not bother with the promotion pathway of subjects because they have the means to produce, such as the school's popular figure who is a sports student, but most of the wealthy families still support their children's studies with favourable conditions, and the best high schools in the town are, in terms of the town's proportion, the best. In short, money is the only way to go to a good high school (of course, it requires a certain amount of connections), and in the case of wealthy families, sending their children to a good school is all about the so-called "connections" and "insight".

During high school, some of my teachers would say things like "if your parents were shareholders in a listed company, you wouldn't have to study hard, but you're not, so you have to work hard". Of course, I didn't think of myself as being at the bottom of the social ladder, and I agreed with the idea that "hard work will make you successful". I also took it for granted that I would not have to work hard to be successful and that the property would be given to me later.

Based on this idea, in high school, my study attitude was not very good, but not bad either. Two of the three years were divided into intensive classes, and I was assigned to them because I did well in the final exams (of course, they were the bottom of the intensive class). Because I was at the bottom of the class, the senior class teacher had summoned my parents to meet. My father was not in charge of the factory at that time, but had gotten a project through his contacts, and he was basically out of town for the three years I was in high school, so it was my stepmother who was called over. Once again, I would like to thank the teachers for their selflessness and dedication, as you are the guarantee of a better life for the children of proletarian families under the existing system (relatively, in my opinion nowadays, this does not fundamentally change the plight of the children of proletarian families, but it is good that the teachers are there to help them. The presence of good teachers allows them to be exposed to a wider world of ideas and to make their own choices).

II. Studying abroad and the pinky stage

After graduating from high school, I enrolled in an out-of-province university with a second grade in the province. The gap in educational resources was already visible to the naked eye, and it was easy for students from a certain province (most of them) to take Grade 4 if they wanted to in their freshman year, but not for local students (most of them), so there was a situation where universities in a certain province registered themselves for Grade 4 in their freshman year while universities in the local province needed to be restricted by their schools. People are only allowed to register in their second year, and only some of those with good English grades can take the exam in their first year. The gap between urban children and rural or small town children is also very obvious, for example, rural or small town children don't know how to buy a high speed train ticket and are afraid

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of it, while some rural and small town children don't know anything about the hobbies and interests that urban children usually talk about. (This is also in the eastern provinces.)

After half a year of university, I found that I didn't really like my major, so I proposed that I wanted to go abroad. My family had actually made such an arrangement in high school, but I put it on hold because I was working on an engineering project at the time and was a bit strapped for cash. In the eyes of me and my family, going abroad was all about gold-plating, and after that I could enjoy my existing resources better and get better contacts, and studying, reading and doing problems seemed worthless.

Because I didn't pass IELTS 6 (I was really five, not studying well), I also did a year of matriculation abroad, and then transferred from matriculation to university, the so-called matriculation is equivalent to spending more money to save the cost of effort to enter an internationally reputable university.

At the matriculation stage, except for some children from "middle class" families who study extra hard, most people just muddle through, and skipping classes, bar hopping, sex and brand names become the calling card of many people's lives abroad.

I had a classmate whose family got him into an international exchange program at Beijing University through connections, so he could get a double diploma after attending the university here, but his studies were poor and he didn't take it seriously, and was still studying for his matriculation when I left, even considering buying a diploma afterwards. I have to wonder how most small town do-gooders can't get in for a Beijing University diploma no matter how they try, but for the rich and famous, it's just a breeze to get.

After the matriculation you can go to university. The educational resources of foreign universities are indeed very good, theory and practice will be combined, even pre- or various group work is also a necessary criterion for assessments, which is very personally exercising. All aspects can be improved, also therefore, if you want to stay abroad you have to work hard, tens of thousands of retake costs is also a threat for everyone. The better-off families abroad generally have a lot of options, or rather, a richer life, and studying and doing problems are not necessary for them. To give three examples: one student likes boxing very much, he studied a sports-related major at university, and spends a lot of time training in Thailand in a year, and seems to prefer to be a boxer; one student usually studies quite seriously, and during the epidemic he directly arranged to do an internship with a certain professor at Harbin Institute of Technology. There are also those who take time off to start their own business or go to their boyfriend's family bank for an internship, etc. Of course, there are also families where studying is a must: because if you don't study well, you really have to go back to inherit the family property. All in all, with the educational resources stacked against them, many children from wealthy families are actually very good and hardworking.

Some of my high school classmates also went abroad to study, and they occasionally exchange views at gatherings. In our eyes, some children from "middle-class" families who are indulged in sensory stimulation and consumerism are the most deplorable, and they are more than inferior to others. Under such circumstance, they will quickly degenerate abroad, and there are many girls who sell their bodies. The children of the rich say that they are afraid to look for a girlfriend abroad because they cannot be sure if it is true love or if they are just looking for possessions. In their eyes, the family is the basic unit of private ownership, and assets are distributed and inherited within the family, so it is unacceptable for outsiders to enter the family and usurp them. In addition, the few people invited to these gatherings are the "future rich", and most of the discussions are about the

market, the current situation of the family, what we can do if we start a business, etc. Even the future capitalists are beginning to subconsciously defend their own class rule and form alliances with other capitalists.

In foreign countries, apart from some students who go abroad because they believe in neoliberalism, most people will be natural pinkos, and so am I, because we all have a vested interest and see things in a fundamentally different way from the proletariat, e.g.: there is a street in the centre of a foreign city where a light rail is being built, and it has been under construction since I first arrived, and 2 years later it is still not finished, and we often laugh at it. "Their co-ordination and administrative skills are so poor that they can't finish a light rail line in two years, which would have been finished in China long ago. Also, their working hours are so short, the wages are so high, and the workers are so comfortable. Yes, but what is the use of their high wages and comfort? They are born at the bottom of the social ladder and have no avenue for advancement. High wages and the 8-hour working day are just a corrupting influence on them so that they don't try to move up the ladder. (I'm embarrassing myself as I type this, help)".

I fell into a kind of mindless frenzy where I thought that I had the resources and experiences I have now because my family worked hard to get them, and that if others worked hard they could naturally get them too, and that as for foreigners' efforts not working, it was because they were class-consolidated. Yes, the Chinese bourgeoisie and nationalists such a double standard that we would think that classes are already solidified abroad and acknowledge that there are classes abroad while not acknowledging that there are also classes at home. We are just fine, we have a fast-growing economy, our people can easily make money and get rich, we are not bourgeois, we are just hard working rich people.

III. Family changes and social beatings

In my second year of school abroad, in 2018, one of my father's investments went sour and most of the family's money went into it, to the point where I started selling off my assets, my standard of living plummeted, I stopped eating out for every meal abroad and started learning to buy my own food and cook. In fact, around that time, capitalists in general had some cash flow problems and their standard of living was more or less gradually declining. During that half year, the monthly allowance of 20,000 yuan was no longer remitted to my account on time, and I experienced the feeling of being threatened by being put on a blacklist for not being able to pay the rent (far better than the eggshell tenants[73]), and then I went back to my country and didn't go back to study, as my family could no longer afford to "gild the lily". My thinking had not yet changed either, I was still the same pink, but I was starting to feel a bit desperate for my future, which in fact was a testament to the inconsistency between my words and my actions. I had said I would succeed if I worked hard, but by then I had realised that hard work doesn't make you successful, otherwise I wouldn't have felt a bit desperate.

At first, I helped out on my father's projects, working long day shifts, 12 hours a day, from 12 noon to 12 pm, which were the standard working hours in this line of work, and the staff in the company

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[73] "Eggshell tenants" are renters of comparatively high-end white-collar apartments whose rent is paid to apartment owners through a platform run by an asset management company called Eggshell Apartment. Tenants pay Eggshell every six months and it pays the apartment owners the weekly of fortnightly rent. Problems occurred when many renters became homeless, locked out of their apartments because rental payments had not been paid by Eggshell. However, Eggshell continues to operate with more than 400,000 apartments in 13 cities including Beijing, Shanghai and Guangzhou. In January 2020, Eggshell was listed on the New York Stoc Exchange.

still called me Young Master, and although I didn't like it a bit inside, I accepted this inequality in status, hypocritical to the extreme. But at this time, I also began to come into contact with the proletariat and learn about their lives. There were people around my age who had children and went to work in Shanghai, but the money they earned was not even enough to cover their living expenses and rent; there were people who did not go to school and came out to work to mix with society and immediately went to a nightclub to spend the money they earned; there were also receptionists who hooked up with some boss and spied for some boss. For the first time, I felt the triviality of life and the difficulty of the people at the bottom (there was no such concept as class at that time). During the New Year period, the staff intermittently went home for the New Year. My work arrangement was that I stayed at the front desk for 12 hours a day, and at this time, I thought in my heart, I am working for myself, the company is good, and my life also improved, so I did not feel very tired, and was quite motivated. But after that the company didn't hold up and all the family's assets were deducted and my family went back into the proletariat.

After that I had to go to my biological mother's side of the family. They rented me a room and let me find my own job which was in a milk tea shop. I was tired of standing for 9-10 hours a day, unlike when I was helping out in my father's company. I lost my motivation at this point. I was no longer working for myself and it was obvious that I felt all kinds of negative emotions, also known as " alienation of labour". I was so out of touch with my life at work that I felt incompetent when I saw others working so well.

The second job was in sales at pre-school education company, working 9 hours (with a conscience already), selling courses on the phone every day, and during the training I was even taught that I could use my physical appearance to my advantage to pander for customers. For the first time, I felt the advantage that comes with my physical appearance when I am a commodity - I became a commodity. So the mechanical and repetitive work went on for a month. In my eyes, similar early childhood education institutions could be described as a scam, consuming parents' anxiety, teaching nothing and even bringing deception into their discourse. I stopped looking for a job and spent my days at home, playing games, watching videos and occasionally reading about economics (my major).

That time again coincided with the boom into...[74] At the same time, I pinned my hopes on my father and longed to return to my old class, the fact that even after the capitalist had lost the means of production, there was still the resource of "connections". In this circle, "connections" are to some extent more important than the means of production themselves, so that the capitalist may fall out of the class but has the opportunity to return to it; at the same time, my former classmates have tried to drag me into the business together (the little party I mentioned earlier), which also shows the bourgeoisie's "solidarity". Anyway, I started to give up on myself and stopped saying things like hard work will make you successful, I started to recognise that there is a class barrier in this world and that people who have nothing may never be able to break it. (It was still too pretentious, not that I couldn't do it, but that I didn't want to, and I became a deserter when everyone else was putting up with life.)

IV. Dramatic change of mind and communism

All these experiences constitute the inevitability of my change, but inevitability always opens the way through endless serendipity. By chance, I had a second viewing of "Let the Bullets Fly". A screen full of pop-ups saying things I didn't quite understand, I started researching and then, learning things

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[74] Left blank in the original text.

I hadn't thought about (of course there were a lot of conspiracy theories in there too, but it did hit me hard at the time). Someone suddenly woke me up and I was even more confused then, and that confusion pan became clearer and clearer to me as I fell back into the dirt and struggled with the ground, whether I wanted to admit it or not. But what was the point of not admitting it? Even my father had to admit that in this day and age, all the opportunities have been taken from them, and the young have lost their chance.

I started to become resentful, complaining to people about why this was happening, and then denouncing it, and then accusing. Maybe it was because I really felt that way, or maybe it was just because I had fallen down the ladder and couldn't go back.

Once I slowly calmed down, I started to read some books and began to really see myself as a proletarian, as well as studying some bits and pieces of theory. For me, having studied economics (albeit half-heartedly), some of the economic theories appealed to me and were easily accepted, and once I began to accept them, the underlying logic in my thinking changed and my view of society and the world changed radically, I knew the root causes of one economic crisis after another, the predicament the bourgeoisie was now facing, and the changes I was going to face in the future.

I think that the economic base determines the superstructure and definitely applies to the spirit and the mind (literally the economic base x). When one understands political economy, there are answers to many things in history and politics, so I think that economics is also an essential subject for comrades to study, after all, it is also the basis of society and can help to understand it better.

In learning to distinguish between good and bad (be it doctrine or policy), I learned that what is good for the majority, for the working and peasant masses, is good, and what is good for the minority and bad for the majority, is bad. After learning this, I was able to break free from nationalism quite easily.

With the deepening of the contradictions and the economic crisis, I think that the standard of living of the lower and middle class capitalists will gradually decline, and among them there will be many bourgeois families who will lose their means of production and become proletarians, and perhaps many who will transform their thinking to accept themselves after experiencing what I have experienced.

Comrades, when the bourgeoisie is at its strongest, it is when they are at their weakest. The storm has not come, but it will come. --But until then, I still have to read more, I've still learnt too little theory.

Chapter 22 From 50 cents to communists: the change of mind of a son of a state enterprise

Editor's note: It is an inevitable trend for young people as a whole to reacquaint themselves with Chairman Mao and return to Marxism. This is determined by the general environment as a whole, not by anyone's will, and the trend is becoming more and more obvious.

Whether young people, as individuals, can reconnect with Chairman Mao and return to Marxism is full of contingency. This is determined by a series of factors such as the individual class background of the young people, their upbringing, and other social relations.

Each of the young people who have reacquainted themselves with Chairman Mao and returned to Marxism have taken different paths and experienced different things. The author of this article, initially a *meifen*[75], saw Chairman Mao as a tyrant; after the lies of the publicists went bankrupt, the author went to "50 cents"[76] under the influence of various patriotic propaganda. The author was "ecstatic" over Huawei's "dazzling achievements" and proud of Ren Zhengfei's[77] familiarity with Mao's Selected Works. However, under the education of reality and the author's own study, the author eventually moved towards Marxism. The first manifestation of the author's move towards Marxism is that "I realised that class is the first attribute of man, not nationality." This gave the author "a new understanding of patriotism".

Young people of integrity and good will, with simple feelings, love their country as a matter of course. Some young people stop at patriotism, but more and more of them, through the bridge of patriotism, end up in communism, and this trend is inevitable.

I. My "50 cents" and the *meifen* stage

In general, the change in my view of Chairman Mao has been a constant throughout the process of my personal ideological transformation. This process, in terms of the political spectrum, is the process of moving from the right end all the way to the left. This transformation arose from rational analysis and constant theoretical study, rather than from those empty slogans.

I was born into a relatively conservative-minded family. Both parents were employees of a state-owned enterprise in the northeast from the time they graduated to the present. They both came from poor backgrounds and although it was the 1980s in the countryside, it was inevitable that they would sometimes go hungry. My grandparents' generation was very hardworking and managed to put my parents through university under such difficult conditions. After they joined the workforce, state-owned enterprises had already been restructured at that time, and even they, the "valuable" university students working in research institutes, had to work back and forth with front-line workers during day and night shifts in order to conduct research, which was even harder than 996[78]. The leaders of their state-owned enterprises, on the other hand, were paid a lot of money to build a

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[75] The word *meifen* originated from the online war of words, and it was born in response to the Internet spies who praised the United States and slandered China. It generally refers to individuals or groups that are employed by the United States or pro-American and anti-China forces to engage in cultural and propaganda work.

[76] "50 cents" is an internet catchphrase referring to people who get paid by the Chinese government to say good things on the internet about China and "socialism with Chinese characteristics". For each post they can earn fifty cents.

[77] Ren Zhengfei (b. 1944) is a member of the Chinese Communist Party and founder of Huawei in 1987. He is a billionaire who has won many accolades in China as an "outstanding private entrepreneur".

[78] 996 = widespread working hours from 9am to 9pm six days a week, usually with compulsory but unpaid overtime.

villa (often called a "mausoleum" at the time) next to the company's sanatorium, and lived quite comfortably. The painful memories of my youth made them often say to me, "You must study hard, otherwise you will have to work hard in the factory as a worker in the future!" Thus, a contempt for and avoidance of the working class gradually developed in my young mind.

I'm sure all of you comrades of a similar age to me had the impression as children that everything in the country was thriving, that our future was bright, and that all present problems could be solved by GDP. And as for Chairman Mao? He delayed an entire generation. Without him, spring would have come sooner and we would have been better off. That was my view of Chairman Mao up until university.

At the same time, in those days, right-wing liberals dominated public opinion on the Internet, or what some people called "publicists" (a term that has been stigmatised, of course). At that time, I was exposed to some so-called "black history" about Chairman Mao and some revolutionary martyrs. At that time, I was convinced that he was a tyrant, a man who wanted to be a royal D[79]. Falling into the trap of neo-liberal discourse, I was disgusted with Chairman Mao.

Three things happened that began to change my view of Chairman Mao, even from *meifen* to "50 cents". Firstly, the bankruptcy of public knowledge. With the rapid changes in society and the rapid dissemination of information, the lies that some *meifen* had been fabricating for years were no longer valid. Secondly, the emergence of "That Rabbit"[80]. This drama brought tears to my eyes and increased my "national self-confidence". Thirdly, my teacher of Maoism. In his course, I heard a series of things that sounded unfamiliar to me, such as the "two participations, one reform and three unions"[81], the "An Gang Constitution"[82], the "four-three plan"[83] and the "Sino-US ice-breaking as the beginning of opening up to the outside world".

At this point, I had a new understanding of Chairman Mao. He was not a tyrant or an emperor, but a lonely revolutionary. But at this time, I still had not stepped out of the limitations of the heroic view of history. My understanding of Mao at that time was like that of Zhang Ma Zi in Jiang Wen's "Let the Bullets Fly", as if the wheels of history were driven by him and the people were just a rabble of "whoever wins, they help".

It was also a time when the trade war was at its fiercest. I would be "ecstatic" over Huawei's "dazzling achievements" and proud of Ren Zhengfei's knowledge of Mao's Selected Works. But at

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[79] Possibly refers to Marshall D, one of the "Four Emperors" of the New World featured in the contemporary Japanese manga "One Piece". D is a representative of evil.

[80] The full title is "Things About That Rabbit That Year". It is a national military cartoon created by domestic military fans and the netizens Backlight Flight. It has been serialized on the Internet since 2012. It uses comics to interpret a series of important events in modern world history and Chinese history.

[81] "Two participations" means that cadres participate in production and labour, and workers participate in enterprise management; "one reform" means reforming unreasonable rules and regulations in the enterprise; "three integrations" means implementing the three-in-one combination of leading cadres, technicians and workers in the technological reform. It was introduced by Mao in March 1960.

[82] The "Angang Constitution" was the constitution of the Anshan Iron and Steel Works. It was developed by workers at the steel works and the local Party committee. Mao Zedong called the management system of "two participations, one reform and three combinations" the "Anshan Iron and Steel Constitution".

[83] Following the withdrawal of Soviet technicians from China by the Khrushschev revisionists, China was cut off from new foreign technologies. In the early 1970s, Mao and the CCP leadership adopted the "43 Plan" whereby $4.3 billion worth of complete sets of equipment would be imported from advanced capitalist countries including the US, West Germany, France and Japan. The Plan aimed at "improving people's livelihood".

the same time, I also have a doubt: some "state mouths" and "state teachers", while calling on their own people to be patriotic, have themselves gone to the United States to enjoy the blessings early. We are all Chinese and should be fighting for our motherland for the rest of our lives, but we have made a farce of "anti-Americanism is doctrine, going to America is business". Whenever people used this as an example, I felt powerless to argue against it. These doubts also laid the groundwork for my later 'awakening'.

II. The epidemic and the changes in me

This year's epidemic has lifted the veil of shame from some people. With the remarks of the people's tycoon[84], the Tencent Reading article[85], Alibaba's Ant Financial Services[86], the difficulty in renting flats behind the collapse of eggshell flats and a series of other issues, I saw how capital could do whatever it wanted, and the internet was flooded with cries of "hope for Mao's return". The deafening developments of some microbloggers gave everyone (including me) the determination to pick up Chairman Mao's ideas again.

I am ashamed to say that at that time, I was only at the stage of surfing the internet and following the slogans. Sometimes I would reread some of the lame stuff that was passed around by the big V's[87]. It was not until one day, after being severely criticised by a friend on a bar, that I calmed down: I had been shouting long live Chairman Mao's thought on the internet, but I did not know what it was, so what was the difference between me and the "rabble". So I made up my mind, bought Mao's Selected Works and started my theoretical studies.

As I continued to study, I gradually began to admire Chairman Mao. After all, who wouldn't have reason to worship a man who could accurately analyse the class situation in China at such a young age, and who could lead a disciplined yet democratic people's army with equal officers and soldiers and a surprisingly high standard? Just as I was sharing the results with that posting friend with the joy of gaining knowledge, I was splashed with cold water: "Chairman Mao is not a god. The analysis and judgement he made on the current situation invariably came from his in-depth study of the Hunan region and his deep understanding of Marxist-Leninist dialectical thinking. By reading only

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[84] Jack Ma, cofounder of Alibaba. As of October 2021, with a net worth of $42.3 billion, Ma was the fourth-wealthiest person in China.

[85] Probably refers to a controversy caused by multinational corporation and video gaming giant Tencent's attempt to use it financial clout to coerce users into unfair contracts.

[86] Alibaba and Ant Financial are now essentially two different companies, but the two companies were born from Alibaba, created by Jack Ma, and Alibaba is the majority shareholder of Ant Financial, so they are in the same line. Last year, Ant Financial became the majority shareholder of Paytm in India through two investments which helped it become the most impressive payment platform in more than a year, and it is also the fourth largest e-wallet in the world, and the number of users has grown from 20 million last year to 150 million. On November 1 this year, Ant Financial signed a strategic cooperation agreement with Thai payment company Ascend Money, which is said to be Ant Financial's plan to acquire 20% of the shares of Ascend Money, through which Thai users can use mobile phones to achieve shopping, catering consumption, taxi and public payment. At the same time, Alipay has partnered with a number of international payment institutions, including Worldpay in the United Kingdom, Concardis and Wirecard in Germany, Ingenico in France, Recruit in Japan, ICB and KICC in South Korea, Supay in Australia, Magic Compass and IE money in New Zealand, Webmoney and Qiwi in Russia, and Boleto in Brazil. And, of course, there's First Data and Verifone, the two biggest payment institutions in the U.S.

[87] Big V refers to Weibo users who are personally certified on Sina, Tencent, Netease and other microblogging platforms and have a large number of followers. Because certified Weibo users have a nickname with an icon that resembles a capital letter "V", netizens refer to such certified users with a large number of followers as "Big V".

Mao's anthology but not Marxism-Leninism, one fails to understand the source and soul of Chairman Mao's thought and inevitably follows the evil path of using mysticism to analyze Chairman Mao."

That posting friend also very kindly shared his list of books: including but not limited to What is to be Done? (Lenin's famous book that critiqued the Economists and TUC and systematically presented the idea of the vanguard), The State and Revolution (Harmless Statue of God, The State as a Product of Class Contradiction), Anti-Dühring (The Encyclopedia of Marxism), etc. I read these works very carefully and these books finally answered the doubts I had in my mind. I realised that class was the first attribute of man and that nationality was not. It also gave me a whole new understanding of patriotism and my mind gradually moved towards communism.

Now, I also found that Chairman Mao was, from the beginning to the end, a revolutionary who came from the masses and went to the masses. During the Jinggang Mountains, his bottom-up line was loved by the lower and middle ranks, and after the founding of New China, he became the "Red Sun" because he "let people talk and the sky would not fall". A true proletarian fighter would never be able to say such heroic and childish things as "whoever wins, they will help".

Since then, I have come to realise that some of the big V's are mere formalist "Maoist leftists". At the same time, I have, as far as possible, encouraged those who are stuck in chanting slogans to read more theories and get to know Chairman Mao's thought systematically, just like my friend who criticised me for posting. Many of the masses that Chairman Mao faced at that time were peasants full of feudal ideas, and even these people were able to become staunch revolutionary fighters of the proletariat; today, with the development of the productive forces, the size of the ranks of the proletariat has long since ceased to be the *wu xia a meng*[88] of that time. Under such circumstances, what reason do we have to complain?

Mao is not a bible, and Mao Zedong Thought is not some kind of doctrine. A true Marxist has to learn to "renounce" it. On the other hand, Chairman Mao's thought is an extension of Marxism, and to become a Maoist one must first become a Marxist. If one separates Marxism and Mao Zedong Thought, one will fall into the vulgarist circle of "reading Mao and learning how to start a business". In other words, we have to prevent Maoism from being deified and vulgarised. Of course, Mao's assertions at the time had a certain degree of topicality, but this cannot be a reason to deny Maoism, just as we cannot use the limitations of scientific development in the 19th century to deny Engels' Dialectics of Nature, we still have to look at Chairman Mao's thought dialectically.

I would like to conclude this article with the lyrics of Zhang Guangtian's "Mao Zedong".

Some songs sound familiar and full of hope

It's like listening to your speech years ago

So these are the songs of my heart

How beautiful, how beautiful Mao Zedong

Mao Zedong, Mao Zedong, I'll walk with you under fire!

Mao Zedong, Mao Zedong, marching with you!

Mao Zedong, Mao Zedong, walk with you in laughter!

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[88] A Chinese idiom and a metaphor for people with limited knowledge

Mao Zedong, Mao Zedong, march with you through the sea of sorrow!

Chapter 23: Small-town nerds[89] and Maoist thought: my intellectual journey

Editor's note: This article is very well written. Firstly, it is good in that it is highly representative and typical; secondly, it is good in that it is logically clear and draws out a narrative of how the children of the proletariat wake up from the delusion of education to change their class; finally, it is good in that the author bravely points out that the way out for the small-town question-makers lies in returning to the proletariat.

The author of this article is a "small-town nerd", that is to say, he comes from a poor background, relies on his own efforts to get into a prestigious school, but after entering society, he finds that the prestigious school does not change his fate. He is struggling in the cracks of the class, but society does not stop beating him because of his struggle. It is against this backdrop that the author comes across the writings of Chairman Mao. Reading Chairman Mao's writings gave the author new tools to observe and analyse society. The author finally realised the nature of the current higher education, "essentially the bourgeoisie, in order to ease the class contradictions, has deliberately taken out a little resource to distribute to the highly educated people, creating a belief system for the proletariat to obtain a high income by acquiring a high degree ...... Under the poison of highly educated beliefs, the proletariat at large has pinned its hopes on its next generation, given up its rights and interests, and its sense of struggle has been constantly weakened. And the highly educated next generation they have so painstakingly nurtured, the few who have tasted the sweetness of capital and are rapidly turning around to oppress the proletariat, while the others who are struggling for the scraps they have sought but not received, are the small-town nerds."

What is even more rare is that the author not only recognizes the nature of higher education, but also recognizes that the proletariat is the real friend of the small-town nerd: "The real friend of the small-town problem nerd is the proletariat that has painstakingly nurtured itself, just like the frog that has climbed to the mouth of the well, its friend is always the others of its kind who are still struggling at the bottom of the well. Chairman Mao said that the intellectuals are the hair and the proletariat is the skin; if the skin does not exist, how can the hair be attached? The real enemy of the small-town nerd is the bourgeoisie, the people who forge highly educated beliefs. We should not be grateful for this access; on the contrary, this access was forged by the bourgeoisie with the blood and tears of our fathers and should be acutely aware that those who built it are the real enemies."

The author concludes by talking about the confusion of small-town nerds and Marxism, parts of which I don't agree with. For example, the author says, "As the number of students from humble backgrounds who can get into prestigious schools gradually becomes smaller due to the Matthew effect on educational resources, the number of small-town nerds will also decrease, and the group of people who can quickly understand Marxism will shrink. But in the long run, when access is completely closed, more people are bound to take up the arms of Marxism and Mao Zedong Thought (they just won't understand it relatively quickly)." In fact, it is possible that the bourgeoisie will expand its intake in order to ease the pressure of employment, and although the friends being expanded are not the so-called prestigious schools of 985/211[90], the numbers are huge and groups like the small-town nerds will only grow. In addition, it is not only some of the small-town nerds who

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[89] "Small town nerds", is a new item of online vocabulary, and refers to "young students who were born in small towns, study hard, and are good at taking exams, but lack a certain vision and resources." "Small town nerds" originated from a group of more than 50,000 members on Douban.com. The group stated in its introduction that the main function of the group is to "share failure stories" for "failed students" in "985" and "211" universities. They are part of the same generation whose dissatisfaction with social competitiveness has led to the phenomenon of "lying low".

[90] See Note 1, chapter 4.13

have gone to the working people, but also some of the children of urban middle class families who are bravely moving forward in the pursuit of truth, which is something that needs to be seen.

Our friends are all over the world, and our songs are spreading in all directions. As social tensions become more pronounced, there will only be more and more of such people.

I. The confusion of a small-town nerd

I am a small-town nerd from a working-class family, and I was once as confused as most people in this group. It was only after coming into contact with Mao Zedong Thought that I realised that the plight of small-town nerds was mainly the result of a failure to recognise their own class, and that only by relying on the proletariat could they have a real future.

I was born in 1996 in a rural village on the south-east coast that has since developed into a small town. My parents, both post-65, were poorly educated and worked at the lowest level of manual labour. My father was a construction worker whose smell of masonry and concrete accompanied me as I grew up, and the long hours of heavy physical labour left him with injuries and illnesses. My mother was an electronics factory worker, working an assembly line job with two days off a month and more than 11 hours a day (sometimes more than 11 hours, and only the excess was considered overtime), and with a piece-rate wage that left her with little rest. Under such working and living conditions, they spared no effort to belittle their own work, apart from hoping that I would study hard and get into a good university, so that I would never be like them.

Under the influence of this philosophy, I worked tirelessly for my university entrance exams and finally got into a 985 university. However, there was no one to tell me what to do after I went to a good university. I had nothing but problems for the previous ten years and there were people in my new environment who were better at it than me, plus I was bored with the science major I was in and even less motivated to study.

A consequence of my high-pressure state before the entrance exams, was that I began to indulge myself. I found that I had lost even my previous nerd-like skills when I graduated. I had failed two exams, had no glamorous resume, and watched many people who were not as good at swotting as I had been in the past go on to graduate school. Perhaps out of jealousy, I began to doubt my past pursuits and began to think seriously about what the aura of high education really meant. When I hit the biggest low point in my academic career, I thought of revolutionaries who had also hit low points in their lives in the past, and I wanted to understand that period of history and how Chairman Mao had come out of his low point in life. Therefore, I bought a set of Mao's Selected Works and was instantly fascinated by it.

II. Mao Zedong's thought has caused a change in my mind

In fact, every Chinese is no stranger to the life and thought of Chairman Mao, but the impression is mostly that of textbooks with their running biographies and grand political declarations, like a mathematical problem for which the answer is given directly and the middle process is omitted, which is somewhat offensive. Chairman Mao explains in detail, in plain language, how he refined his ideas step by step during the revolutionary struggle. Both of my examinations ended in failure, but they did allow me to take to heart famous historical events of the modern era, and I was quickly surprised by Chairman Mao's conviction as I knew exactly the revolutionary situation that corresponded to the writing of each essay in Mao's selection. Chairman Mao's most outstanding characteristic was not his wisdom or literary skills, but his consistent belief in the power of the people, regardless of whether the objective situation of the revolution was at a low ebb, and his

confidence in the people was never at a low ebb. I was strongly attracted by Chairman Mao's ideas, which drove me to learn more about his deeds and Marxist ideas, and to start thinking about my own life and the current state of society.

In July this year, I joined a manufacturing central enterprise, along with several other undergraduates and postgraduates who graduated from 985 and 211. Shortly after joining the company, the leaders (who have a PhD) organised a welcoming wine party and forced the newcomers to drink *baijiu*[91] and to play the game (that is, to have a drink with each person at the table), and I could barely cope with it. After the drinks had been consumed, the leaders started to gather around the only female employee in the room and started to "educate" us newcomers that the company would focus on training us, that we should adapt to the workplace as soon as possible, and that we should learn to say appropriate things to liven up the atmosphere at the drinking party. Perhaps in the past I would have taken these "teachings" as true and aspired to be a leader, but after learning about Mao Zedong's thought, I realised that in the past I was only after the high income and social status represented by a high degree, whereas Chairman Mao was a minister of the Guomindang at the age of 33, but gave up his high position for the sake of the people at the bottom. I have since changed my past pursuits and become a committed Marxist.

With the explosion of small-town nerds, I also learnt online that many people come from similar backgrounds to me and have the same troubles. After reading Mao I knew that there must be a deeper reason for this social phenomenon and I began to try to analyse the plight of the small-town nerd in terms of Mao's thought.

III. Looking at the small-town nerd in the light of Mao's thought

It seems to me that the 5 volumes of Mao's Selected Works are about two issues throughout, one is how to distinguish between friends and enemies; the other is how to unite friends to defeat enemies. These two issues are not isolated but interlinked; as events develop, old enemies are destroyed and then new ones are created, and these new enemies may also be former friends who need to be distinguished again. These two issues cover the whole course of history from individual to national development. I used to think that by going to a prestigious school I would be able to make more friends with the upper echelons of society, thinking that all prestigious students were like-minded friends. But when I realised the gap between myself and the rest of my classmates, I was thrown into doubt. For the small-town nerds, getting into a top school is like frogs that have climbed so hard towards the top of the well that most need to stop and rest and marvel at the size of the world, and hardly know where to go next right away; whereas those with social resources are like a bird resting at the well, having seen the world beyond and knowing exactly where they are going to fly. The biggest delusion of the small-town nerds and the people around them is that frogs that have reached the same height as birds can naturally fly. I thought it was easy for students from famous schools to understand each other, so I shared my experience of studying Mao Zedong Thought with my new colleagues from the same famous school. As a result, they were dismissive, and one of them even said that I had been brainwashed. I really couldn't imagine a CCP member who graduated from 985 graduate school, who would denounce Mao Zedong Thought as brainwashing. At that time, I realized that frogs and birds can never be the same.

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[91] *Baijiu* is a colourless spirit usually distilled from sorghum, but may have other grains as well. It can range from 35-60% alcohol by volume and is usually consumed in quite small glasses at banquets and meals. Probably the most famous *baijiu* by brand name is Maotai.

So according to Mao Zedong's thought, who are the friends and who are the real enemies of the small-town nerds? In the past, high education represented high quality and the assumption of more social responsibilities, but nowadays high education is linked to high income. In essence, the bourgeoisie, in order to ease class conflicts, has deliberately taken out a little resource to distribute to the highly educated people, creating a belief system for the proletariat that acquiring high education will lead to high income, which I call the highly educated belief. Under the poison of highly educated beliefs, the proletariat at large have pinned their hopes on their next generation, given up their rights and interests, and their sense of struggle has been constantly weakened. The highly educated next generation they have painstakingly nurtured, a few of whom have tasted the sweetness of capital, are quick to turn around and oppress the proletariat, while others are struggling for the scraps of food that they have not yet received, and these are the small-town nerds. But they generally despise the manual workers and few, if any, turn back to the proletariat that nurtured them.

Unlike Hinduism, which emphasises the reincarnation of nothingness, highly educated beliefs still have a very small chance of success, but those who do succeed invariably betray the proletariat. Under the influence of highly educated beliefs, more and more parents are sending their children into this only avenue, and with the downturn in the world economic situation making the bourgeoisie reluctant to put up the resources they had originally parted with, the avenue is narrowing, a phenomenon some call "involution".

It follows that the real friend of the small-town nerd is the proletariat that has painstakingly nurtured itself, just like the frog that climbs to the mouth of the well, its friend is always the rest of its kind that is still struggling at the bottom. Chairman Mao said that the intellectuals are the hair and the proletariat is the skin; if the skin does not exist, how can the hair be attached? The real enemy of the small-town nerd is the bourgeoisie, the people who forge highly educated beliefs. We should not be grateful for this access; on the contrary, this access was forged by the bourgeoisie with the blood and tears of our fathers and we should be acutely aware that the people who built it are the real enemies.

In my opinion, small-town nerds are people who can understand and accept Maoist thought. Firstly, we have a certain stock of knowledge and the ability to learn, we know the history of the revolution and can understand and digest the theoretical knowledge of Marxism; secondly, the increased difficulty of acquiring wealth and status for small-town nerds has forced us to re-examine the highly educated beliefs built by the bourgeoisie; finally, small-town nerds are able to understand the condition of the working class, their families of origin are either proletarian or other underclass groups, who are naturally on the side of the proletariat.

We have a strong desire to change the situation of our fathers and mothers, and we should and must extend our sympathy for our parents to the working class and working people as a whole if we are to have any hope.

Opposing highly educated beliefs does not mean that one should give up high qualifications, but that one should not pursue them for material gain. On the contrary, the proletarian ranks need highly educated and qualified people, and they need someone to study in-depth knowledge of Marxist theory. The old generation of revolutionary leaders basically had a solid theoretical background. Small-town nerds should actively study and spread Marxism and Mao Zedong Thought in the present day. However, there are still many small-town nerds who dismiss these theories as "brainwashing". For this reason, Marxist-related courses in universities are largely to blame. The content of textbooks nowadays is always geared towards examinations, and the questions in examinations are simply

about what Chairman Mao did and what ideas he put forward at what time. Apart from being boring and dogmatic, such content is also filled with a heroic view of history. Although there are phrases such as "Chairman Mao relied on the people to achieve victory", there is no explanation of the role played by the people, and the constant repetition of such phrases only reflects the role of Mao Zedong alone. The heroic view of history can stifle human initiative, erase the contribution of the people in history, and make people think that revolution is only the business of one or two leaders. Throughout his life, Chairman Mao devoted himself to mobilising the power of the people and raising their consciousness. The language of Mao's Selected Works is so approachable also because Chairman Mao tried so hard to pass on his ideas to his readers, and he wanted everyone to carry on his cause: "The spring wind blows amid profuse willow wands, Six hundred million in this land all equal Yao and Shun"[92].

IV. The present difficulties of small-town nerds and other Marxists

One is the influence of negative paternal thinking. Under the influence of highly educated beliefs, parents devalue the manual labour they perform, while having a weak sense of rights and struggle, and this thinking more or less affects the next generation. For me, the mud-covered workers were my parents, the group I knew and was closest to, while the well-dressed capitalists in the city skyscrapers did not interest me even if they earned more. And there are many small-town do-gooders who are influenced by their parents and their highly educated beliefs to look down on manual labourers and to be willingly exploited by capitalists.

Secondly, because of the Matthew effect on educational resources, the number of students from humble backgrounds who can get into top schools will gradually become fewer, and the number of small-town nerds will also decrease, and the group of people who can understand Marxism quickly will shrink. But in the long run, when access is completely closed, more people are bound to take up the arms of Marxism and Mao Zedong Thought (they just won't understand it as quickly, relatively speaking).

Thirdly, society as a whole has a mindset that emphasises science over literature. Science and engineering education strengthened people's understanding of the natural sciences and promoted scientific and technological progress. But it has neglected thinking about social issues and the cultivation of the humanities. Except for a few highly qualified scientists, the vast majority of people trained in science and engineering will become a screw in the service of capital operations, a product of the alienation of labour, thus neglecting to think about social humanity. I was also disgusted with my undergraduate major because I understood that the prospect of the major was to spend day after day in a lab, and felt that life was meaningless, when for some people this kind of work is the only opportunity for upward mobility. This is one of the reasons why I went from small-town nerd to Marxist.

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[92] Lines from Chairman Mao's poem *Farewell to the God of Plague* written on July 1, 1958. Yao and Shun were legendary monarchs in ancient China, believed to be saints and wise leaders of the people.